

FORT LAUDERDALE'S CITY MAGAZINE

# GO RIVERWALK

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## OFF THE BEATEN BEACH PATH

EXPLORE A FEW PLACES A FEW STEPS FROM THE BEACH

**F**ort Lauderdale Beach. Synonymous with partying, drinking, co-eds, and all sorts of things, both naughty and nice. With literally tens of millions of visitors to the beach annually, hundreds of millions (if not billions) of tourist dollars spent every year, and tourism being one of our largest industries, Fort Lauderdale Beach is not just important to the City, but the surrounding area as well.

However, I like the less obvious and off the beaten path choices.


For instance, Birch State Park is a gem right next to the beach. Going there is like stepping into another part of the state altogether. There are nature trails, jogging paths, pavilions, playgrounds for kids of all ages (believe it or not I can still do a backflip off a swing set), and paddle boat and kayak rental. The park offers live animal presentations, a mangrove habitat walk, flower shows, and even a tour that includes the Terramar Estate (Mr. Birch's home) and the caretaker's home from the 1940s. They also offer full moon kayak tours where you can paddle in one of the few coastal dune freshwater lakes left in Florida.

If you are hungry how about a bite at Park & Ocean? A relatively recent and welcome addition to the park, Park & Ocean has a full menu and craft brews in a building that can only be described as old Florida cool with a stunning view of the Atlantic Ocean.

So this is starting to sound like an advert for Birch State Park, which I am happy to do because in case you haven't noticed I like it a lot. But, there is also the Bonnet House. A short walk south of the state park is a beautiful 1920s mansion. Located in stunning surroundings, Bonnet House is a hidden gem that speaks to the legacy and history of Fort Lauderdale. And, did you know there is a classic 1940s era Cadillac convertible (a series 62 I believe) parked in the garage? Now you do.

From Bonnet House, you can head out the south gate right into North Beach Village. This area is home to some impressive mid-century modern architecture and is up and coming with shops, coffee houses, and restaurants.

Want a piece of old Florida entertainment? Well, head over to the Wreck Bar in the B Ocean Hotel about 2 miles south of Bonnet House. A slice of old Florida charm with a themed bar (bet you can figure out the theme) and a window into the pool where live mermaids do a show every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

I guess my point is that while our beach is known worldwide as a party spot (we were mentioned in a Marvel movie after all), there are other things to do and I've only touched on a few. I bet if you spend enough time there you'll be able to discover all sorts of off-the-beaten-path options. 



The Birch House

IMAGE COURTESY OF HUGH TAYLOR BIRCH STATE PARK