

A resort that isn't a resort and why: the unparalleled beachfront Acqualina and its story



Lori Metze [Follow](#)

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The Acqualina Resort and Spa On the Beach. Photo courtesy of Acqualina Resort and Spa.

The unequaled Acqualina Resort and Spa sits directly on a flawless stretch of beach in Sunny Isles, Florida. It was my home in-between homes during a cross-country move from Miami to Seattle just a few weeks ago. The experience gave me the uncommon opportunity to see the resort from dual perspectives—that of a local and that of a tourist. From any perspective, Acqualina Resort and Spa is a world destination resort worthy of top-priority bucket list placement.



The grand lobby. Photo courtesy of Acqualina Resort and Spa.

Exquisitely inspired

From the outside, Acqualina is a grand and gracious Italian estate which was seized by the roof and stretched to the sky. It's easy to see echoes of the architecture of Italy and the elegant style of Lauren Bacall in the building, the lobby and the grand patio overlooking the beach and ocean. Upon stepping inside, I immediately felt the harmony between the exterior and the ornate lobby with high ceilings, mosaic tiled floors and marble columns. What I did not expect was the portal between worlds that I entered when crossing the bridge framed by double waterfall fountains that connects the lobby to the rest of the main floor. One moment I was in Italy and the next, modern Miami. The common areas beyond the lobby are still reminiscent of a stately Mediterranean villa, but with a more contemporary edge woven in.



The sprawling outdoor area with fountain. Photo courtesy of Acqualina Resort and Spa.

Inspired by travels in Italy

During my hotel tour, I found out what acted as muse for this magnificent resort. Acqualina is the brilliant undertaking of brothers Jules and Eddie Trump, who are of no relation to the reality-TV-personality-turned-president. The brothers don't seek the spotlight, but instead quietly build residential and other works of alternative art. They are personally and deeply involved with Acqualina as they are with their other investments. In fact, calling their real estate "investments" doesn't do the relationship justice—Acqualina seems more a creation than a building. The Italian feel of Acqualina came from the Trump brothers' desire to bring their time in Italy to US and coast of Florida. The picturesque setting continues into the restaurants and even more so in the outdoor areas around the pools and especially in the impeccably kept beach lawn. Here's an insider's tip: if you love the beach, but don't care for the sand, lounge on the red outdoor couches on the lawn just inches from the beach.



Inspired outdoor space—the lawn on the beach. Photo courtesy of Acqualina Resort and Spa.

A third perspective

I believe the reason why Acqualina is unmatched in its feel and approach to the guest experience is that the resort is first a home and then a hotel. Acqualina has 98 guest rooms and 188 residences, soon to be more. With this ratio, it makes perfect sense that the staff treat guests as neighbors because in many cases, they are. On the 4.5 acres Acqualina claims, stunning condo homes are part of the main tower, a separate tower called the The Mansions at Acqualina and ground has

been broken on what are being called the world's finest residences, [The Estates at Acqualina](#).



The Estates at Acqualina. Rendering courtesy of Acqualina Resort and Spa.

Beyond your wildest

The Estates' lobby has been imaginatively crafted by the iconic Karl Lagerfeld with a wall of digital art, glamour in the form of soft finishes and natural beauty in the water features and planters. The amenities available to residents are unlike any before offered. An indoor ice skating rink, a Wall Street Trader's Clubroom, meditation areas, a Formula One simulator, and private poolside cabanas (available for purchase) join the more expected features such as a game room, gardens, children's play area, movie theater, golf simulator and billiards room. Interested? [Find out more](#).



The family room of a one-bedroom oceanfront suite. Photo courtesy of Acqualina Resort and Spa.

Just a vacation this time



The study of a one-bedroom. Photo courtesy of Acqualina Resort and Spa.

Since living at Acqualina is out of the question for me, I was perfectly content to thoroughly enjoy a one-bedroom oceanfront suite along with my husband and teen son. As with all things Acqualina, the terms “one-bedroom” and “suite” are severely understated. Besides a sprawling master bathroom and spacious bedroom, our suite also had a study with twin daybed that was able to be completely closed off from the rest of the suite, making it the perfect place for a teen boy to set up his

room. The provided computer monitor was like ice cream for a toddler to Liam who began a Fortnite journey within minutes of unpacking. Our furnished balcony was all I needed for evening meditation time and the full chef's kitchen was the finishing touch that sealed the home-like feel. It's true that quality can be found in the details. Not only was each piece of furniture, carpeting, drapery, mattress and set of linens thoughtfully chosen, but so was each juice and flavor of ice cream in the refrigerator. Those are the little touches that win over travel writers and teenagers alike.

An ideal foundation

Sunny Isles runs from Bal Harbour to Aventura, where the wealthy live, stay and play. The resort rests on 4.5 acres of the best beachfront real estate in the country. In such a location and with the pedigree Acqualina has (AAA Five Diamond, Forbes Five Star, U.S. News #1 resort in the continental US, Andrew Harper #1 family resort in the world, etc.) one might expect pretension instead of what the hotel staff and ambiance have in abundance, *grace*. Upon arrival I was met with a valet's warm smile and at departure, a nice wave from the doorman. In-between, every person I met was equally obliging and genuinely friendly. In my opinion, this is the only reliable foundation for five-star service. I list this last, but each staff member's graciously accommodating manner was what set the tone for our entire stay.



An Acqualina welcome. Photo courtesy of Acqualina Resort and Spa.

My recommendation

Acqualina is my choice for the best resort in Florida and in fact, the entire region. It is one of the top hotels and resorts in the country and should unequivocally be your choice when traveling to Miami. If a Floridian vacation is not on the books for you, it should be, if for no other reason than to stay at Acqualina.

A final note

I extend my appreciation and thanks to Alexandra Wensley for her stories, resort and residences tour and new friendship. Let's do it again sometime soon.