

Fort Lauderdale: A sunny year-round destination that offers accessible tourism

by *Alexandra Cohen*

This past winter, I was thrilled to make an escape for a getaway to the sunny state of Florida. For the first time, I had the opportunity to visit Fort Lauderdale, which was a real treat. Last summer, “Visit Lauderdale” launched its new VisitLauderdale.com destination website, which includes an accessibility microsite in recognition of the tourism bureau’s new focus on accessible travel as part of its commitment to inclusion. For example, there are a number of beach entrances that are accessible to wheelchairs.

Many Greater Fort Lauderdale hotels, restaurants and attractions create welcoming spaces, with many that include accessible rooms (some specially equipped for the hearing-impaired), as well as wheelchair ramps, accessible outdoor dining spaces with spacious outdoor patios, special sensory-inclusive websites and sensory-sensitive live performances such as those offered at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts. Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport uses the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program with a mission to provide a discreet way for adults and children with hidden disabilities to show that they need additional support or just a little more time with airport processes. In terms of arts and entertainment venues, The Broward Center for the Performing Arts and The Parker both feature accessible amenities so everyone can enjoy a night at the theatre.

Where to stay

There are close to 600 lodging establishments, with more than 37,000 hotel rooms in the area. During my trip, I chose to stay

at the B Ocean Resort, which many people may remember as the former Sheraton Yankee Clipper. In terms of accessibility, the hotel has ramps at the pool, which is also connected to the beach. There is also a ramp available to connect the hotel’s different towers. Both pools feature ADA pool lifts. The resort offers valet parking at the main entrance. There are guest rooms available that feature roll-in showers or accessible bathtubs.

We were thrilled to discover that The B Hotel & Resort partners with the award-winning Boucher Brothers Management in order to pamper guests with deluxe seating while at the beach.

Dining out

There are more than 4,000 wining and dining establishments and 132 nightclubs in Broward County. I experienced a few places during my stay.

Let’s start off with the Naked Crab Seafood Kitchen + Cocktail Bar, which was conveniently located right in our hotel lobby at the B Ocean Hotel and Resort. It was a most convenient place to dine after checking in right at dinnertime. The menu is sourced locally using fresh seafood and produce from local farms. To sample some items on the menu, I tried the crab cake as an appetizer, as well as the scallop risotto and the particularly tasty branzino. This was capped off with some tiramisu for dessert, which was also delicious.

We also experienced Matchbox Restaurant, part of an American chain that opened in 2003. Matchbox currently has 15 locations in the US, including in Las Olas, Fort Lauderdale, which opened in early 2022 and has become known for brick oven pizzas, mini burgers, fresh salads and chef-inspired entrées like Miso salmon and chimichurri steak frites. The restaurant offers several wheelchair accessible tables and a lowered bar area, as well as compliant restrooms. To enter from the parking area,



Beach entrances like this are especially adapted for wheelchairs. Photo courtesy of Visit Fort Lauderdale

guests can use a ramp for the sidewalk/courtyard.

I had the privilege of enjoying a meal at the Lobster Bar Sea Grille while in Fort Lauderdale. The restaurant, located on East Los Olas, offers an extensive selection of seafood, including, as its name suggests, a large array of lobster dishes.

During my meal, I had the opportunity to taste some oysters, the restaurant’s famed lobster morsels (lightly fried lobster with Greek honey-mustard aioli), Dover sole

served with brown butter and a side dish of quinoa mixed with kale, the decadent Whole Lobster & Black Winter Truffle risotto dish, as well as some profiteroles to end the meal on a sweet note. Everything was delicious! The restaurant is fully code compliant with regards to wheelchair accessibility. It seats about 175 indoors and 50 outdoors, and also features two private rooms (one seating up to 60 and one up to 80).

Yes, indeed, Fort Lauderdale is a wonderful place to visit. ■

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