

The Beaches

Oleta River, a pristine waterway that wends its way westwards through the **Oleta River State Recreation Area** (see below).

Beyond Haulover Beach Park lies **Sunny Isles Beach**, where architectural kitsch and older tourists once prevailed. In an effort to change its reputation forever, Sunny Isles Beach has undergone a luxury condominium building boom beachside, irritating most residents, but pleasing city fathers with the massively expanding tax base. These days Sunny Isles Beach resembles more the condo canyon of mid-Miami Beach than the low-rent beach community it was from World War II until just a handful of years ago.

Oleta River State Recreation Area

3400 NE 163rd Street, between Biscayne Boulevard & Collins Avenue, Sunny Isles (305 919 1846). Bus E, S, V. **Open** 8am-sundown daily. **Admission** Per vehicle \$3-\$5. On foot/bicycle \$1; free under-8s. **Credit** MC, V.

The largest urban park in the state, covering around 1,000 acres, Oleta River is another of those splendid

natural wonders that manage to exist in the shadows of condo canyons and metropolitan mayhem. Once home to the Tequesta Indians, who camped along its shores, the river is a habitat for manatees, waterbirds and dolphins. Visitors can explore the river on canoe or kayak, and there is a popular fishing pier. The park is well known for its miles of mountain bike trails, all graded at varying levels of difficulty. A concession offers kayak, canoe and bicycle rentals.

Key Biscayne

The **Rickenbacker Causeway** arcs from just south of Downtown on to two sleepy and physically striking islands: Key Biscayne and its silent partner, Virginia Key. The ratio of models to grains of sand may be smaller here than on Miami Beach, but what the islands lack in superficial beauty is compensated by serenity and lack of pretension. You can get to Key Biscayne by taking bus B from the Downtown bus terminal.

Sightseeing

with domestic flora and fauna – sea turtles, for instance, are fussy about the type of sand they nest in. The state law also requires that replacement sand conforms to a certain grain size and colour. Finally, to maintain a ten-mile stretch of sand for 25 years, at a width of 200 feet, engineers need 12 million cubic yards of sand – and \$120 million dollars.

But Miami will undoubtedly find a way. It has to. As one of the local politicians put it: 'If we don't have beautiful beaches... we might as well be in Nebraska.'

