



Deco Collection captures the essence of Miami Beach

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It was back in the 1990s that Miami Beach began its transformation into the sun-seeker's paradise it is today.

That's when Marcelo Tenenbaum and Jorge Savloff, who would become the coprincipals of Blue Road, began buying art deco buildings on South Beach with the hopes of developing them into historical boutique properties.

"We saw what other investors were doing with some of the art deco properties in the area," Tenenbaum recalled. "The concept was new at the time, but we saw opportunity." The pair already had hotel development and management experience, having investors and partners from Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Argentina, which is their native country.

Twenty years later, Tenenbaum and Savloff have grown their portfolio to 13 properties, now branded the Deco Collection. This hotel brand includes the Iberostar Berkeley, Riviere, Casa, Ocean Reef, Greenview, Crest, Lorraine, Aqua, the Redbury, Hotel 18, Sadigo, the Stiles and Flamingo hotels.

All of Blue Road's Deco Collection hotels are between 30 and 100 rooms and aim to give guests bespoke experiences. "Our goal is to give our guests an experience they'll want to talk about," said Tenenbaum. "Our guests want to try new things and be surprised. We want them to discover what's new, while still showing an appreciation for the history of our buildings."

Their first acquisition, the Riviere, is located on bustling Collins Avenue and was built in the 1940s. Tenenbaum and Savloff took note of the Art Deco Preservation Movement in South Beach and recognized the potential in offering a modern property that maintains a sense of place.

Each hotel in the Deco Collection looks and feels different. Some are more geared toward families and comprise suites with kitchenettes and living spaces. Others, like the Redbury Hotel, appeal to couples and groups of friends interested in indulging in the city's nightlife. Every hotel in the collection also highlights the varied talents of global designers, architects and artists.

"Our clientele is mainly millennials and Generation Xers," said Tenenbaum. "They're looking for stories to take home from their vacation. We want the hotel to be part of those stories."

The Redbury, on the corner of Collins and 18th Street, opened last year and is home to the restaurant Cleo, where the executive chef is of Japanese and Moroccan descent. "The food is like nothing else you'll find on South Beach," Tenenbaum said. Each room also has a 1970s record player, so guests "can listen to Frank Sinatra overlooking the ocean and then head to the rooftop pool," he said.

Also among the newest hotels in the collection are the Casa, which was purchased by Blue Road in 2015 and reopened in January 2017, and the Iberostar Berkeley, which reopened in August after new construction, major renovations and land purchases totaling \$43 million. The hotel, originally built in the 1940s as the Berkeley Shore, features a new 10-story tower that increases the total number of available rooms from 64 to 96, a rooftop garden and swimming pool deck that overlooks Collins Avenue.

Perhaps the most recognizable hotel in the collection is the Aqua Hotel, which has been the venue for "Aqua Art Miami" for 10-plus years during Art Basel week.

Personnel at the Deco Collection are trained to learn the names and preferences of each guest staying with them. "You'll feel special from checkin to checkout," said Tenenbaum.

As Tenenbaum and Savloff have deep roots in Latin America, they have made outreach to the Latin American market a priority. "Fifty percent of the market for Miami Beach is international; 30% percent of that 50% is Latin American," he said. "Our brand is strong there, so when they see us in Miami, they know they will get an excellent experience."

When asked what the difference is between their Latin American clients and domestic guests, Tenenbaum highlights that Latin American clients are generally bringing their whole family and staying for a longer period. "We see a lot of friends and couples traveling together for a long weekend, when it comes to our domestic guests," he said. "But our Latin American customers bring multiple generations and stay for an entire week."

Miami's burgeoning arts scene is assisting with Latin American guests' transition from a three- or four-day stay to a more extended visit. According to Tenenbaum, they come for the beach and stay for the culture.

Because of the high percentage of Latin American guests staying at Deco Collection hotels, Tenenbaum and Savloff have made some adjustments. "Flights to and from Latin American countries tend to arrive in Miami very early in the morning and leave very late at night, so we have made changes in our checkin and checkout times to accommodate that fact," he said.

Tenenbaum and Savloff will introduce their new brand at travel industry shows and events in the coming months. On the website, agents and their clients can review each hotel in the collection and learn about the history of the buildings. "The collection maintains the look and identity of South Beach, while giving clients the custom experiences they crave," he said.