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Homes

Miami's Wealthy Are Beating the Traffic With Helipads and Private Docks

LUXHUNTERS PRODUCTIONS/NANCY BATCHELOR

Rooftop helipads and deepwater docks have become prized amenities in the South Florida city, which ranks as one of America's most traffic-congested cities.

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By Jessica Flint
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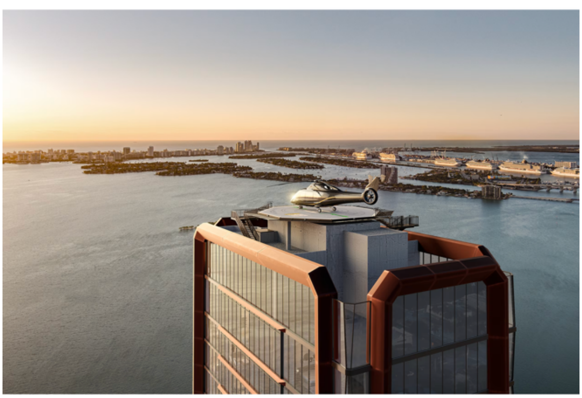
When Ravi Sanganeria was shopping for a Miami condo, standard luxury amenities were an afterthought. The deciding factor was a logistical requirement: seamless access by air and sea.

He walked away from deposits on two local towers to buy a 3,000-square-foot, four-bedroom unit at Villa Miami on Biscayne Bay. Slated to open in 2027, the tower's residences start at more than $2,000 per square foot. "I went with Villa Miami because of the helipad and boat dock," he says.

Sanganeria, 51, a perfumer and food flavorist who primarily lives among multiple European residences, says a helicopter will allow him to reach his Florida business sites in 20 or 30 minutes instead of driving three to four hours. Marine access will cut his weekend commute to his Bahamas home to just two hours by boat. "Time is money," he says.

Sanganeria's mindset reflects a shift in Miami's luxury-housing landscape. Driven by a postpandemic influx of ultra-high-net-worth buyers, developers are building multimodal towers with transit options that bypass increasingly congested streets. In 2025, Miami was the fifth most traffic-congested city in the U.S., according to location technology firm TomTom.

BINYAN STUDIOS



Renderings of the forthcoming Villa Miami, which will have a rooftop helipad. BINYAN STUDIOS

Real-estate and helicopter experts say high land costs, noise issues and airspace limits make ground helipads a hard sell, pushing landing pads to high-rise rooftops, which can provide large landing surfaces in areas where noise more naturally disperses.

Given Miami's scarcity of public helipads, Douglas Elliman's Jay Phillip Parker says alternative transit infrastructure has become an valuable residential draw. He wouldn't be surprised if people are buying into buildings just for helipad access. "They might not even live there," he says.

One of Villa Miami's developers, One Thousand Group, launched the recent condo rooftop helipad trend with One Thousand Museum, a Zaha Hadid-designed tower that opened in 2019. The pad averages 60 flights a year. One of the group's co-founders, Louis Birdman, says the firm is doubling down on an air-and-sea strategy across its pipeline, including Villa Miami and Biscayne Bay's forthcoming Anantara Residences Miami.

The rooftop helipad at One Thousand Museum. ONE THOUSAND MUSEUM

One Thousand Museum residents rely heavily on charters like Helijet Solutions, which sells charter cards starting around $3,300 per hour on larger aircraft. Helijet founder and helicopter pilot Darren Rothell says frequent trips include 25-minute hops to Palm Beach—bypassing a roughly 2½ hour rush-hour drive—and transit to private aviation hubs, golf clubs, the Keys and Dolphins games. Helijet says Miami flights have increased 25% to 30% since 2020.

Other buyers give priority to the water, as boating has evolved into practical transit. Central to this shift is the Miami River, which has become a commercial and entertainment corridor with a dock-and-dine culture. On the river, the upcoming Faena Residences Miami—slated to open in late 2029, with residences starting at more than $1,800 per square foot—will offer private dockage, a 100-foot-long captained house yacht and Venice-style water taxis ferrying residents to waterfront dining

The Faena Residences Miami tower is under construction, but a temporary dock set-up is already built. ORIOL TARRIDAS PHOTOGRAPHY

"I'm in the middle of purchasing a new car, but I'm thinking: 'Do I need another car? I'll be mostly on the boat now,'" says Christian Alexander, 37, a retired business owner who purchased multiple units at Faena and plans to slip his roughly 88-foot Wallywhy200 yacht there for regular hops around the city. Among the units he purchased is a 3,181 square foot residence with four bedrooms and four bathrooms. Unit types in this collection start around $6.999 million.

As condo developers engineer water-transit hubs, single-family home buyers are scaling up their own waterfront footprints in the age of bigger, better boats. "One-hundred linear feet on the water used to be enough to seal the deal for many luxury buyers," says Eddy Martinez of ONE Sotheby's International Realty. "Now we're getting people that want a minimum of 150 feet."

"I've worked with buyers who won't look at a property if it doesn't have the right dockage," says Jill Eber of Coldwell Banker's the Jills Zeder Group. She and her colleague Judy Zeder currently represent a $237 million Key Biscayne listing—President Richard Nixon's former Winter White House—which has a marina that can accommodate a 200-foot yacht.

JILL EBER/JUDY ZEDER/1 OAK STUDIOS

The listing also has a rare private helipad, as single-family buyers face municipal hurdles for air access. "If it were possible to put helicopter landing pads at single-family homes throughout the city, I'm sure you'd have them everywhere," says Eber's colleague Judy Zeder. To adapt, boats are now serving as a link to the sky. "Some people come and go via a floating helipad on the water, then take a boat to their homes," says Compass real-estate agent Nancy Batchelor.

Multimodal demands extend beyond Miami. "We see it in Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach," says Douglas Elliman's Parker, noting that the Miami-to-Palm Beach region is rapidly transforming into one unified corridor connected by air and sea.

Looking ahead, developers view these amenities as foundational. One Thousand Group is already engineering rooftops for electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, commonly known as electric air taxis. "In the future, there will be air taxis, flying cars, or drone deliveries landing on helipads," he says.

Eber and Zeder's Key Biscayne listing has 862 feet of direct Biscayne Bay frontage. JILL EBER/JUDY ZEDER/1 OAK STUDIOS

A $41.9 million Fort Lauderdale estate featuring a private helipad, listed by Douglas Elliman. DANIEL PETRONI