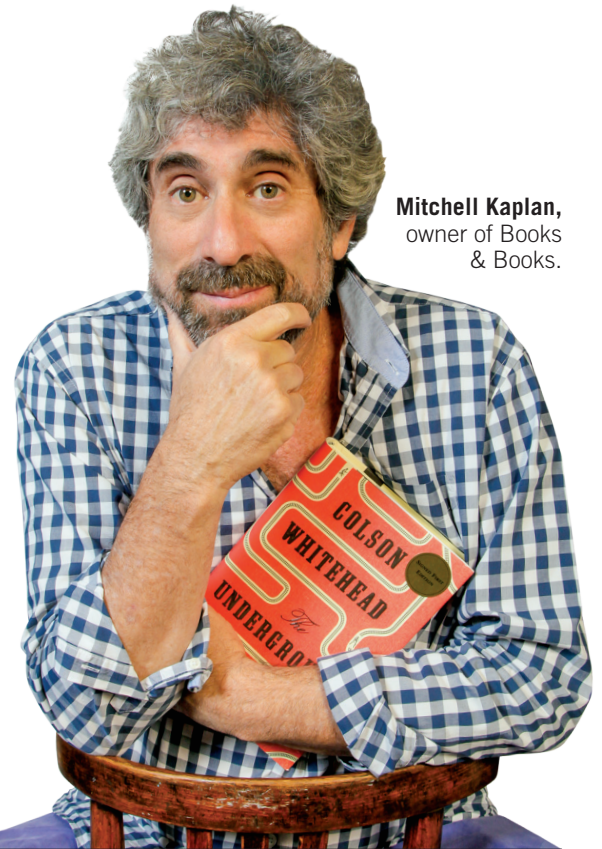


{NEIGHBORHOOD}

CORAL GABLES

There's something dreamy about Coral Gables. From its wide, canopy-shaded avenues named for historic Spanish cities — Valencia, Sevilla, Granada — to its plazas with tiered fountains and quaint roundabouts, Coral Gables is imbued with European romance. Developer George Merrick's 1920s-era planned community designed with a Mediterranean Revival aesthetic has grand and historic landmarks at every turn. Among them: the Venetian Pool, carved from a coral-rock quarry and filled daily from a freshwater well, and the Biltmore Hotel, still captivating at 90 years old with its Giralda-inspired tower. Long known as The City Beautiful, Coral Gables is a Miami cultural hub, being home to the University of Miami, art and history museums, cinemas and theaters, longstanding restaurants — and one legendary independent bookstore.



Mitchell Kaplan,
owner of Books
& Books.

Meet our guide

When **Mitchell Kaplan** founded Books & Books on Aragon Avenue in 1982, little did he know he was doing more than opening a bookshop — he was creating a community. Kaplan's literary embrace of South Florida led to Miami Book Fair International, an annual event that has become the biggest of its kind in the country, drawing hundreds of award-winning authors and thousands of readers. Books & Books has grown to include locations on Lincoln Road in South Beach, at the Bal Harbour Shops, at Miami International Airport and at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts. But the Coral Gables store is where it all started. It's also where you'll find Kaplan most days, engaging in conversation over a working lunch at the courtyard café, recommending books to longtime patrons or introducing authors at nightly readings. "My heart is here," he said of the neighborhood where he met his wife, Rachele, and where their three children were born. His latest endeavor has taken him to Wynwood, where this summer he opened Books & Books & Bikes & Lebo (2602 Northwest Fifth Avenue). It's a pop-up shop that sells bargain books, bikes from No Boundaries and artwork by Lebo, who also painted the store's façade.

'We'll often go on an architectural tour of Coral Gables.'

UM Lake Shalala Student Center



Biltmore Hotel



Where do you go to read?

"During the summer, I find a quiet spot on the **campus of UM**, preferably near the lake that runs through the center of campus. Or, if I don't want to travel far, our back yard. We have an avocado grove next door that gives us some seclusion."
3312 South Dixie Highway;
305-284-2211; miami.edu.

Favorite place to take visitors?

"We'll often go on an **architectural tour** of Coral Gables. We go to the Biltmore and drive around to see the Mediterranean-style homes. My wife is a Realtor, and many writers have engaged her in finding a home here. Michael Ondaatje, author of *The English Patient*, rented a home in Coral Gables for a month to write in."

Best restaurant to take authors?

"A toss-up between Nino Pernetti's Caffè Abbracci and Cindy Hutson's **Ortanique on the Mile**. Cindy and her partner, Delius Shirley, are usually there. The food is fresh, delicious Caribbean. It's a revelation for people who have never been. Alice Waters loved it. I always order the clams steamed in Red Stripe beer."
278 Miracle Mile; 305-446-7710;
ortaniquerestaurants.com.

Where do you go to enjoy nature?

“Most people are astonished when they see **Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens**. It gives such a flavor of what South Florida is and has become. It’s interesting how many authors are interested in gardening and exotic plants. Jamaica Kincaid and the late Oliver Sacks loved it there.” *10901 Old Cutler Road; 305-667-1651; fairchildgarden.org.*

How about for family time?

“When we’re all together, we take my son Daniel’s boat out on **Biscayne Bay**. It’s a relaxing way for all of us to reconnect, especially when my daughter, Anya, is in town from New York. We take the dogs and find a quiet spot on the bay, sometimes by the sandbars near Key Biscayne, sometimes near Stiltsville.”

Where to go for a piece of history?

“I love the **Coral Gables Museum**. It’s eclectic. It covers the history of Coral Gables and its sister cities. They have great art exhibits, and they also include work from FIU’s School of Architecture. We have our gift shop there, as well.” *285 Aragon Avenue; 305-603-8067; coralgablesmuseum.org.*

For the art aficionado?

“The **Lowe Art Museum** at the University of Miami. It’s a serious art museum. I never miss an exhibit there.” *1301 Stanford Drive; 305-284-3535; lowemuseum.org.*

Favorite place to watch a film?

“My wife and I love going to the **Coral Gables Art Cinema**. I’m on the Board of Cinema there. It’s great for first-run foreign and domestic films, under the artistic direction of Nat Chediak, one of the cinematic heroes of South Florida.” *260 Aragon Avenue; 786-385-9689; gablescinema.com.*

Where else do you go to seek out books?

“I often find myself wandering through the **Special Collections**



Ortanique on the Mile

Special Collections Department at the University of Miami Library

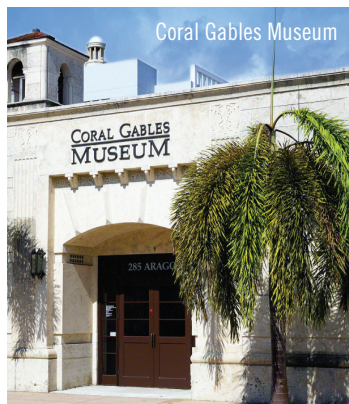


Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens



Coral Gables Art Cinema

‘My wife and I love going to the Coral Gables Art Cinema.’



Coral Gables Museum



No Boundaries

Department at the University of Miami Library with its collection of rare books and manuscripts. Cristina Favretto is the head there and does a wonderful job.” *1300 Memorial Drive; 305-284-3233; library.miami.edu.*

Top boutique in town?

“**No Boundaries** is an indie bike store here in Coral Gables. It’s the kind of place where the people know you by name. The owner, Nicola Stasi, or his manager are

always there. They’ll let you try out the bikes. They’re committed to making sure you find the right bike for you and not just trying to make a sale. They’ve also got shoes, gear, camping equipment.” *220 Aragon Avenue; 305-444-3206; noboundariessport.com.*

Any undiscovered neighborhood gems?

“As a vegetarian, I find myself drawn to **The Beehive** on Bird Road. My son, Jonah, eats there almost

every day. We’ll meet there and have a wonderful time. We like the vegan picadillo. It’s all fresh, good ingredients that never disappoint.” *6490 Southwest 40th Street; 305-663-1300.*

Your go-to watering hole?

“I’m liable to be found sharing a tequila straight up with a friend at the great Coral Gables favorite **John Martin’s**, an original Irish pub.” *253 Miracle Mile; 305-445-3777; johnmartins.com.*

Where to shop for a good bottle of wine?

“I prefer a quiet bottle at home from **Wolfe’s Wine Shoppe**. They’re a local, Coral Gables independent business. Independent bookstore owners love everything indie.” *124 Miracle Mile; 305-445-4567; wolfeswines.com.*

What’s your breakfast spot?

“We often go to **Delicias de España** for breakfast on Sunday mornings. I order two eggs over medium with papas fritas and a cortadito.” *4016 Southwest 57th Avenue; 305-669-4485; deliciasdeespana.com.*

WORDS BY SHAYNE BENOWITZ / PORTRAIT BY ZAK BENNETT