



## Part 1 Overview of the Museum & Gardens



*Many people have asked me why I do photo programs. Vizcaya is my best example, over 30 years ago, my wife and I visited Vizcaya. We have either lost any photos taken and time has also erased many of the memories of that visit. Photo programs provide more detail via historical or trivia information with online resources to help us remember and share them with others via acuri.net.*

Vizcaya is America's National Historic Landmark about the Gilded Age on Biscayne Bay in Miami, Florida. Though close to Downtown Miami, close to Coconut Grove, Coral Gables, and Interstate 95, Vizcaya is a secluded area (originally 180 acres, now 130 acres) with a mansion, gardens, and bay front location making it a fantastic site to visit. Vizcaya, according to its online "history," was not imported from Italy but built by local, European, and Bahamian workers and craftsmen between 1914 and 1922, as a winter retreat for James Deering.

James Deering (1859-1925) was an industrialist, investor, world traveler, antiquities collector, and promoter of agricultural technology as Vice-President and Director of International Harvester Company. He attended Northwestern University and MIT before he joined the company in 1880. Born in Maine, a life-long bachelor, he had several homes in the United States (Chicago and Evanston, Illinois, New York City, and even a home near Paris, France). Below is an account of how Vizcaya came about.

<en-academic.com>

"As the story goes, in 1910 Deering was introduced to artistic director Paul Chalfin. They hit it off immediately and together they came up with plans to build a European style winter estate in Miami. After traveling to Italy, touring villas, and buying up decorative antiques for the new project, Deering hired Francis Burrall Hoffman, Jr. as the architect who would build his dream estate upon the 130 acres of Vizcaya Bayfront land that he had purchased from Mary Brickell. The last piece of the creative puzzle was put in place in 1914 when Deering once again traveled to Florence and met a talented young Colombian landscape architect, Diego Suarez. He would be responsible for the design of Vizcaya's meticulously constructed gardens." <en-academic.com>  
That European style of architecture in the mansion includes Mediterranean Revival Style; with Baroque, Italian Renaissance, and Italian Renaissance Revival.

Deering wintered there beginning in 1916 until his death in 1925. It is believed that approximately 1,000 workers helped build Vizcaya. James Deering's estate naming of Vizcaya in Miami came by way of the following:

"Inspired by the Age of Discovery, when European ships traveled around the world in search of new trading routes, James Deering wanted to create a myth that his Miami estate was named after an explorer and should embody South Florida history and legends. So, he must have been intrigued to learn of the Spanish merchant Sebastian Vizcaino, a 15<sup>th</sup> century explorer of the Americas.

The name Vizcaino appeared to capture everything Deering was looking for. In 1914, he wrote to Paul Chalfin that he wanted to modify the name and call his estate Vizcaya, "as Vizcaya is much prettier than Vizcino." He said that the name was easily pronounced and evocative of both Spain and the Biscayne Bay location of his winter home. And he observed that the Spanish caravel – a boat associated with past explorers – could become an emblem for Vizcaya." <viscaya.org>

"James Deering came to Miami hoping the tropical climate would help his pernicious anemia. He enjoyed bird watching and socializing with friends. When Mr. Deering passed away, his life as a private person followed him. He did not have a diary or other person writing." Even photographs of him in Miami were very limited. The photograph shown was taken in his Vizcaya office. <tour display cards>

Today, Vizcaya is operated by a non-profit trust. It is owned and operated by Miami Dade County. The County acquired the property during the 1950s. Ownership timeline: Following Deering's death, the property was left to his half-brother Charles and half-nieces. Hurricanes and high maintenance costs over the years caused portions of the property to be sold to the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine in 1945. It was also owned by Miami's Mercy Hospital. Dade County Art Museum was the next owner. The museum was run by the County. Restoration costs in 1952 were estimated to be over one million dollars. In 1994, the site was designated a National Historic Landmark. The County formed the non-profit operating trust in 1998. <floridainsider.com>





Vizcaya's size and maintenance required a large staff after it was built in 1916. A small village came about to house the staff on the property. The antiques in the main house date from 1500s to 1800s. The gardens took seven years to design and develop; they were completed in 1921. The main house has 34 rooms, 12 for the servants.

"The centerpiece of the house is the **Courtyard**, borrowing from the Italian pattern of Mediterranean architecture, with the halls and chambers surrounding it. The Courtyard was formerly open air but has now been enclosed by an impressive glass skylight to protect the treasures from the elements. The **furnishings and decor** are a priceless collection of items acquired by Deering during his trips to Europe. The house might be "new" for historical standards, but the furnishings are certainly original pieces, some centuries old, that are a real joy to discover as you walk through the halls:

A rug that belonged to King Ferdinand of Spain's grandfather... A section of the ceiling from a Venetian palace...The base of a table from the ruins of Pompei..." <miamiscapes.com>

#### ENTERING VIZCAYA



#### TICKET REVIEW AREA-MUST PURCHASE ONLINE



#### ENTRANCE INTO MANSION



#### COURTYARD-TOUR PREFERRED MEANS OF SEEING ROOMS IN VIZCAYA





## THE GARDENS – INCLUDING THE ORCHID GARDEN



We hope you will enjoy this photo program of Vizcaya. This acuri.net Vizcaya is a four-part series:

**Part 1 Overview of Museum and Gardens. Part 2 The Orchids of Vizcaya. Part 3 The Gardens. Part 4 The Mansion and Grounds.**

Sources: <https://vizcaya.org/>, <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/1529561>, <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/florida/articles/history-vizcaya-villas/>, <https://vizcaya.org/posts/whats-in-a-name/>, <https://floridainsider.com/travel/a-brief-history-of-miamis-vizcaya-museum-and-gardens/>, <https://travelexperta.com/vizcaya-museum-gardens-miami-florida/>, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/vizcaya-museum-and-gardens>, and <https://www.miamiscapes.com/vizcaya-museum-and-gardens.html>.

**acuri.net   John R. Vincenti   Miami, Florida Vizcaya Museum & Gardens Overview**