

Everything You Need to Know About Traffic Circles

Also known as “roundabouts”

The following web-based information was submitted by Palmetto Bay resident Donna Cuccaro. Thanks Donna! We then took the liberty to editorialize a bit. We hope you find it information.

Many communities are using roundabouts as safer, more efficient alternatives to intersections with stop signs or signals. A roundabout is a low-speed intersection in which traffic flows continuously around a circular central island. Studies show that roundabouts significantly reduce crashes and crash related injuries, as well as decrease traffic congestion. But they can be confusing to a novice (a.k.a., the typical Miami motorist). These tips will help you to more easily navigate your next roundabout:

Slow down

When approaching a roundabout, slow down and get your bearings. Know where you want to exit the roundabout before you enter. Watch for any warning signs and obey the posted speed limit. Roundabouts ease traffic congestion because drivers are not required to come to a complete stop. However, drivers entering the roundabout must yield the right of way to those already in the circle.

Choose your lane

Some roundabouts contain only a single lane (such as the two presently located in Palmetto Bay), while busier ones may have two or more lanes (i.e., the Coco Plum traffic circle in Coral Gables). Look for signs or road markings indicating which lane you should be in. In a two-lane roundabout, use the right lane if you'll be exiting the roundabout to the right or continuing straight through. Use the left lane if you'll be exiting to the left, driving straight through, or making a U-turn. Take extra care when changing lanes in a roundabout.

Yield before entering

Traffic flows counterclockwise in a roundabout. So regardless of where you enter the intersection, traffic should be approaching from your left. Remember to yield the right of way and then enter the roundabout when there is a safe gap. If there is no approaching traffic, you are not required to stop before entering. This is where a lot of confusion arises; many motorists feel compelled to stop at the yield sign whether or not there

is traffic in the circle. Please remember: It is a “Yield” to traffic sign – not a Stop for no-traffic-whatsoever-in-the-circle sign!

Keep moving

Once you're in the roundabout, stop only to avoid a collision and be sure to use your turn signals to let other drivers know when you're exiting to the right or left. This means you may have to actually use your cell-phone hand to activate your directional and hang onto the steering wheel at the same time. This is apparently a very, very difficult task for many Miami motorists.

Take care

Keep an eye out for pedestrians and bicyclists navigating the intersection.