



Salamander

THE MAGAZINE

NEW IN NOLA

NOPSI HOTEL
REIMAGINES
A HISTORIC
BUILDING

**LIGHTS,
CAMERA, ACTION**
The making of the
Middleburg Film Festival

**48 HOURS IN
CHARLESTON**
Food, history and
the great outdoors

**JUST FORE
GOLFERS**
Specialty spa
treatments for players

**DISCOVER
LOCAL FLAVOR**
Culinary experiences
that inspire travel



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48 HOURS IN Charleston

Rich in history, buzzing with activity and awash with coastal cuisine, South Carolina's Holy City welcomes visitors with legendary Southern charm and hospitality.

By Joe Rada

South Carolina's biggest city feels like a small town in the ways that matter. Church steeples and bell towers rather than bulky skyscrapers accent its low-rise skyline, earning the nickname "The Holy City." Centuries-old homes, tree-shaded public squares and quaint-yet-vibrant commercial districts line narrow streets rooted in Colonial times. Wide rivers and a broad harbor flank the city, making Charleston perfect for leisurely strolls past scenic waterfronts and open-air markets.

Nearby beaches, islands, marshes and gardens provide ample opportunities for outdoor recreation. When it's time to eat, a creative culinary scene nurtures a passion for cooking fresh, local ingredients, especially seafood. When it's time to rest, accommodations range from the intimate and historic to the hip and modern. The city's most exciting new hotel, Hotel Bennett, overlooks iconic King Street and Marion Square Park and offers a level of luxury not previously available for visitors and locals alike.

Besides fascinating history, interesting cuisine and abundant nature, another characteristic makes Charleston a must-experience destination: its warm and welcoming people. This is, after all, a place that has long defined Southern charm and hospitality.



Steeped in History

In Charleston, history is everywhere. One of the country's oldest cities, founded in 1670, it reflects many of the most impactful periods in the nation's past. Evidence of its age can be seen in certain cobbled streets, slate roofs and grave-stones made from rocks that arrived as ballast in wooden ships carrying the earliest goods and settlers into Charleston Harbor.

In a city devoted to preservation, old and new mingle so well that they are sometimes difficult to tell apart. Walk through the Historic District and glimpse courtyard gardens through intricate wrought-iron gates that might have been forged centuries ago or just last year. Find authentic cannonballs serving as decorative elements. Relax on genteel porch swings that look like they have been catching sea breezes for decades, but are relatively recent additions on a public pier in Waterfront Park. Even modern parking decks are designed to blend in.

The narrow lanes south of Broad Street thread Charleston's most exclusive and affluent neighborhoods. A church spire pokes elegantly above dignified homes built in Georgian, federal, Greek Revival and Queen Anne architectural styles. One unique stretch called Rainbow Row features harbor-facing townhomes built in the 1700s and 1800s and painted in vivid pastels, a tradition still maintained.

Wrapping this oldest part of town is The Battery, a seawall erected for defensive purposes but now a grand promenade providing views of

SHOPPING TIP: In addition to the renowned boutique shopping on King Street, enjoy old-school service and a great selection of men's and women's designer clothing and more at Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant. Take an excursion over the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge to visit the luxury department store, which has been a local institution for 50 years.



Charleston, South Carolina, was founded in 1670.

stately homes, Charleston Harbor and distant fortifications, such as Fort Sumter, target of the Civil War's first shots and now a national monument preserving battlements, cannons, flags and other remnants of that era.

Be sure to stroll through Charleston City Market, an 1841 vintage commercial arcade spanning four blocks and filled with artists, craftspeople, musicians, horse-drawn carriages and other vendors. For quintessential Charleston souvenirs, look for the sweetgrass baskets intricately handwoven by local artisans.

Step further back in time with a tour of the aristocratic 1820 Aiken-Rhett House, one of the best-preserved townhouse complexes in the nation, or explore the

Gilded Age 1876 Calhoun Mansion, which is accented with chandeliers and marble busts (it appeared in the movie "The Notebook"). Or see a different take on history at the captivatingly dismal Provost Dungeon preserved beneath the Old Exchange building.

There are so many fascinating aspects about Charleston—its places and people, historic and current—that it's a good idea for visitors to hire a professional tour guide. These storytelling experts are licensed by the city only after mastering their subjects and passing a rigorous test.

"Charleston guides are passionate about this city," says John LaVerne of Bulldog Tours, which offers dozens of walking tours focused on subjects like history, architecture, food and even ghosts, including tours of gardens, pubs, graveyards, chefs' kitchens and more. "We know details people might not find on their own and pack a lot into walks that allow an intimate look at our city. We learn to sense what any given group is interested in and give them more of the kinds of stories they want to hear. Mostly, we love being cheerleaders for Charleston."

Lowcountry Cuisine

All of this cultural exploration works up an appetite. Luckily, Charleston boasts a stellar lineup of innovative chefs who honor culinary traditions while taking creative license with fresh, local ingredients, including copious amounts of seafood.



Battery Park features waterfront mansions, statues and old cannons.



Sweetgrass baskets at Charleston City Market



Chef Robert Stehling of Hominy Grill

Charleston lies at the heart of South Carolina's Lowcountry, a coastal plain where meandering rivers, sprawling estuaries and the open Atlantic produce a bounty of fresh seafood. Several indigenous dishes are worth seeking out.

Shrimp and grits, a combination that originated in Charleston, appears in as many variations as there are chefs tinkering with its success. Try it at Hank's Seafood with Andouille sausage, tomato and garlic added, or at High Cotton with okra, too.

She-crab soup, a bisque-like blend of crabmeat, cream and sherry, is ubiquitous in Charleston and a cherished mainstay at venerable 82 Queen and Poogan's Porch.



FIG serves cuisine inspired by the season.

SIDE-DISH TIP:
Just about anywhere in the city, sample the Hoppin' John, a thick mélange of black-eyed peas, rice, onions, bacon and spices.



Okra and shrimp beignets at Hominy Grill

Countless Charleston restaurants serve crab cakes loaded with Atlantic blue crab. Enjoy them in an upscale environment at at Michael's on the Alley or Blossom, or in a more casual setting at Charleston Crab House. Splurge on local oysters—roasted, grilled, baked, fried, stuffed or raw—at Oyster House, Amen Street Fish & Raw Bar, or Coast (Coast's bacon-wrapped sea scallops are superb, too). Even Charleston's craft breweries get into the seafood spirit; Holy City Brewing's Oyster Stout is brewed with oysters for a smooth, slightly briny effect.

An intriguing local marvel called Frogmore stew, or Lowcountry Boil, is a delicious concoction mixing shrimp, smoked sausage, sweet corn, new potatoes, onions, seasoning and whatever individual cooks add to make it their own. It is sometimes served over newspaper to catch its drippy goodness. Bowens Island Restaurant serves it with dockside views of vast marshes and creeks.

Stretching beyond seafood but staying true to the fresh-and-local theme is the guiding principle for many renowned and creative Charleston chefs, including several James Beard Award winners and semifinalists. FIG's chef Mike Lata serves excellent seasonally inspired cuisine, which has included pan-roasted duck breast. The Grocery's chef Kevin Johnson also takes advantage of local, seasonal ingredients, with a fluctuating menu which has featured dishes such as chanterelle mushroom toast, adding whipped ricotta and cured egg yolk to grilled sourdough. Hominy Grill's chef Robert Stehling elevates simple fried green tomatoes, sautéed chicken livers and more into memorable feasts, best accompanied by his trademark biscuits and followed by his signature buttermilk pie.

"What I love about the culinary scene here is

HOTEL BENNETT

Meet Charleston's new luxury hotel.

In summer 2018, Hotel Bennett—the south's grandest new hotel—will open on Charleston's famed King Street and overlooking the city's iconic and historic Marion Square. European in design, the 179-room luxury property features elegant guestrooms and suites opening onto the square, a two-tiered restaurant with outdoor seating, and a stylish bar and lounge. The hotel will also include a spectacular rooftop pool and bar, a luxury spa, a patisserie and over 14,000 square feet of grand event and meeting spaces.



The hotel is named for the Charleston-based Bennett family, is owned by local hotelier Michael Bennett and his company Bennett Hospitality, and is being managed by Salamander Hotels & Resorts. The hotel's historic site formerly housed the west wing of The Citadel, South Carolina's Military Academy, and more recently was home to the Charleston Library.

Hotel Bennett's sweeping lobby will serve as a gathering place for visitors and locals alike. The signature restaurant and its bar open onto dramatic terraces overlooking Marion Square, while Camellias Bar will feature an etched-mirrored ceiling and reclaimed pink marble from the former Charleston Library for its bar and tabletops.

Drawing on the inspirational venue, the hotel's signature spa will create an urban oasis for guests with treatments that incorporate the area's maritime surroundings. The spa will also provide a true King Street shopping experience for those browsing the exclusive retail offerings.

The rooftop experience will feature an elegant, heated pool at its epicenter, and spectacular views of Charleston. By day, the pool, bar and terrace will provide a peaceful retreat for the hotel's guests, serving chilled drinks and creative, lighter fare. In the evening, it will become the city's most sophisticated new gathering place.

Hotel Bennett will also offer corporate groups and destination weddings the most luxurious new event spaces in Charleston, including a 6,600-square-foot ballroom, an elegantly appointed boardroom and a spectacular rooftop event location.

the focus on fresh, indigenous, heirloom ingredients,” Stehling says. “We’re keeping traditions alive but innovating, too. Hominy Grill’s mission when we opened in 1996 was to bring good cooking into a neighborhood setting, which was unusual then but is common now. More and more neighborhood restaurants reflect Charleston’s history and culture.”

Outdoor Pursuits

When it’s time to work off some of those fine-dining calories, head outdoors. Start with a brisk walk along White Point Garden opposite the Historic District’s seawall. Look inland toward mansions, gardens and statues, or across the harbor toward Fort Sumter, Castle Pinckney, Patriots Point, Sullivan’s Island Lighthouse and likely a flotilla of sailboats or dolphins.

For an outdoor activity that combines several worthy aspects, paddle a sea kayak for great fresh-air exercise. Routes explore scenic barrier islands, current-carved inlets and estuaries alive with swaying marsh grass, towering palmetto trees, wading shorebirds, skittering fiddler crabs and other wildlife. Kayaking tip: Count on Coastal

Expeditions, based at Shem Creek across the harbor from downtown, for paddling gear, route suggestions and guides.

For beachcombing and swimming, head to nearby Folly Beach. A stretch called The Washout offers some of the best surfing on the East Coast. Parking tip: Feed parking-area pay stations to avoid getting a ticket in Charleston, especially at The Washout.

A short drive from Charleston, along the twisting

DAWN-AND-DUSK
TIP: Due to the way The Battery wraps around Charleston’s peninsula—where tongue-in-cheek locals proudly claim the Cooper and Ashley rivers join to form the Atlantic—it’s great for viewing both colorful sunrises and sunsets.

Ashley River, wear walking shoes and bring a sense of curiosity to visit several carefully preserved former plantations. Middleton Place, a National Historic Landmark and former rice plantation from before Revolutionary times, features lush gardens, symmetrical lakes shaped like butterfly wings and sophisticated sculptures around a 1755 house museum and restored stable yards where artisan interpreters demonstrate old-time blacksmithing, pottery, weaving, carpentry and



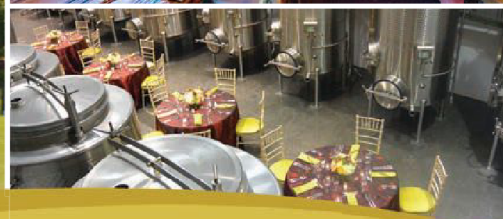
Middleton Place features lush gardens and symmetrical lakes.

other skills. Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, founded in 1676, features manicured paths over footbridges and boardwalks, past ponds and riverbanks, and through elaborate gardens where something is blooming just about year-round. At Drayton Hall, tour an iconic 18th-century estate highlighting early American art, architecture, archaeology, furnishings and decor.

Taking part in any of these outdoor activities, or returning to the downtown Historic District for more wandering on narrow streets as old as America, will justify another round of tucking into Charleston’s remarkable cuisine. Enjoy your Southern getaway, y’all. **S**

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