

Christmas

in

CHARLESTON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS

Around the holidays, the quaint port city of Charleston, SC, transforms into a Christmas wonderland. Wreaths hang on doors all over town, twinkling lights wrap the iconic palmetto trees and horse-drawn carriages make their way down cobblestone streets. A trip to Charleston is the ideal December escape—and here's our gift to you: a guide to the city's best restaurants, hotels and events this season.

What to do



King Street

SHOP TILL YOU DROP

King Street

This famous stretch of shops is a mix of boutiques and mall standbys like Williams-Sonoma and J.Crew. On the second Sunday in December, the street closes to traffic, restaurants set up tables outside and almost all the stores offer holiday specials.

Le Creuset Charleston Boutique

The Charleston area is home to the US headquarters for Le Creuset, and you'll find a great collection of the French cast-iron cookware at this shop.

If a full-size Dutch oven isn't in your budget, the store also sells ornaments. 112 North Market St.; lecreuset.com

Charleston City Market

The vendors at this bustling 212-year-old market used to hawk meat, fish and vegetables. Now, local artists in the renovated Great Hall and open-air sheds sell traditional souvenirs such as sweetgrass baskets or pottery painted with palmetto trees.

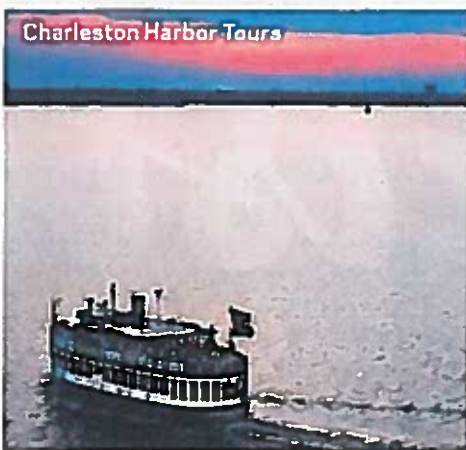
188 Meeting St.; thecharlestoncitymarket.com



Le Creuset
Charleston
Boutique



Charleston City Hall



Charleston Harbor Tours



High Wire Distilling Co.



Edmondston-Alston House

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS

Edmondston-Alston House

This 191-year-old home decks its halls for the entire month of December, and on the first two Friday evenings, you'll be greeted by carolers and can watch history buffs reenact scenes from a 19th-century Christmas.

December 2 and 9, from \$20, 21 East Battery St.; edmondstonalston.com

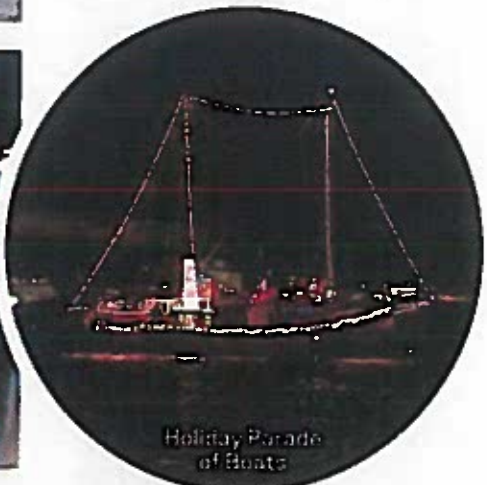
High Wire Distilling Co.

Charleston's first distillery to open since Prohibition holds tastings and tours three days a week. During the holidays, you can buy bottles of limited-edition watermelon brandy or sugarcane rum.

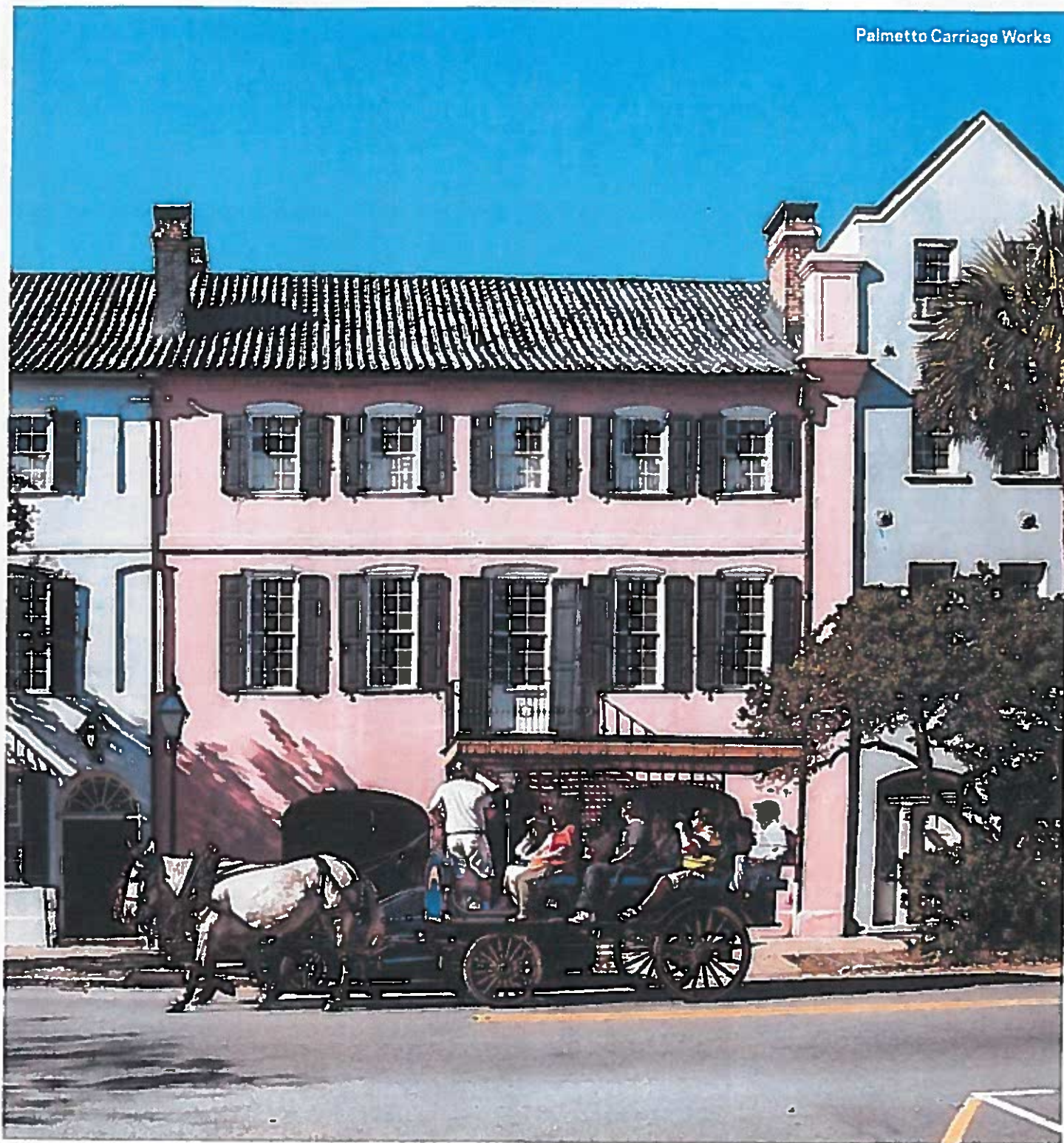
Thursdays through Saturdays; \$5 for tour and tasting, 652 King St.; highwiredistilling.com

Holiday Parade of Boats

At this annual event, Charleston boat owners decorate their vessels with lights and take to the harbor. The Charleston Maritime Center (10 Wharfside St.) hosts a viewing party where you can listen to live music. December 10, \$25 (adults only); charlestonparadeofboats.com



Holiday Parade
of Boats



TOUR THE CITY

By Foot: Charleston Strolls' guided walk covers the 346-year-old city's most historic areas, including the Battery and the Four Corners of Law. Throughout December, you'll earn a reward after the one-and-a-half-mile loop: eggnog and cookies at The Mills House Wyndham Grand Hotel. \$25 for ages 13 and up, \$10 for 7 to 12, under 7 free; charlestonstrolls.com

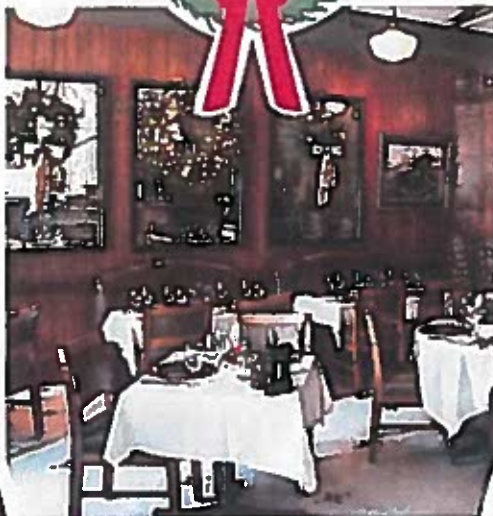
By Carriage: Palmetto Carriage Works has been leading carriage tours since 1972. If you're traveling with kids, take the 35-minute evening ride (daytime rides are a full hour) for a quick glimpse of the Old Walled City, Waterfront Park and other notable spots. From \$16 for adults, \$12 for kids, palmettocarriage.com

By Boat: Some of the city's most storied landmarks are along the coastline. Aboard Charleston Harbor Tours' 90-minute cruise, you'll get a fun, breezy history lesson on more than 75 key spots, including Fort Sumter and the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge. \$24 for adults, \$18 for ages 4 to 11, under 4 free, charlestonharbortours.com

Where to eat

**LEON'S FINE
POULTRY & OYSTERS ▼**

Leon's Fine Poultry & Oysters is as unfussy as you'd expect of a restaurant housed in a former auto body shop: Diners can sit at a communal table, food comes on trays lined with checkerboard paper and the menu has a section for "cheap beer." Don't miss the char-grilled oysters. 698 King St.; leonsoystershop.com



HALLS CHOPHOUSE ▲

Sunday brunch at Halls Chophouse is accompanied by Charleston's renowned gospel group The Plantation Singers, who sing Christmas carols during the holidays. Carnivores will appreciate the meaty morning dishes like prime rib Benedict and bacon-wrapped filet with eggs, and 16 steak options at dinner. 434 King St.; hallschophouse.com

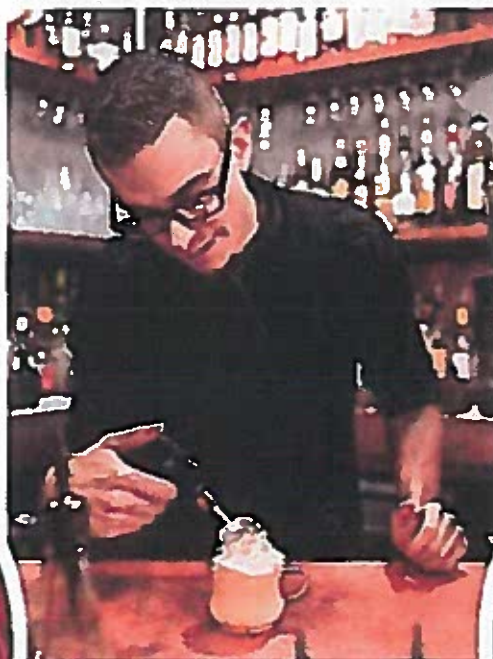


**CALLIE'S
HOT LITTLE BISCUIT ▼**

Eating at Callie's Hot Little Biscuit is like being invited into the home of a beloved local: Owner Carrie Morey's famous buttermilk biscuits are based on her mother Callie's recipe, and they're served, along with other specialties, on mismatched vintage china. Get one slathered with jam, or try the grits in a biscuit bowl. 476½ King St.; calliesbiscuits.com

HUSK ▼

If not for the tattooed waitstaff and patrons Instagramming their meals, you'd think Husk was a relic of 1900s Charleston. The restaurant, run by James Beard Award-winning chef Sean Brock, is set in an 1893 townhouse, and the menu is all about Southern-grown heirloom grains and veggies. At the cozy bar next door, you can pair a local beer with a phenomenal double cheeseburger. 76 Queen St.; huskrestaurant.com



THE GIN JOINT ▲

Bartenders here will whip up a custom cocktail based on two adjectives of your choosing (say, spicy and fizzy). They make a mean eggnog, too, with aged rum and brandy and a torched meringue swirl. 182 East Bay St.; theginjoint.com



82 QUEEN ▼

82 Queen has been a local favorite for 34 years, and the heart of the restaurant is its brick-paved patio lined with white iron tables. Start with the famous she-crab soup; it's especially popular around the holidays. The standout entrées are all Southern classics, including barbecue shrimp and grits, and gumbo. 82 Queen St.; 82queen.com



THE ORDINARY

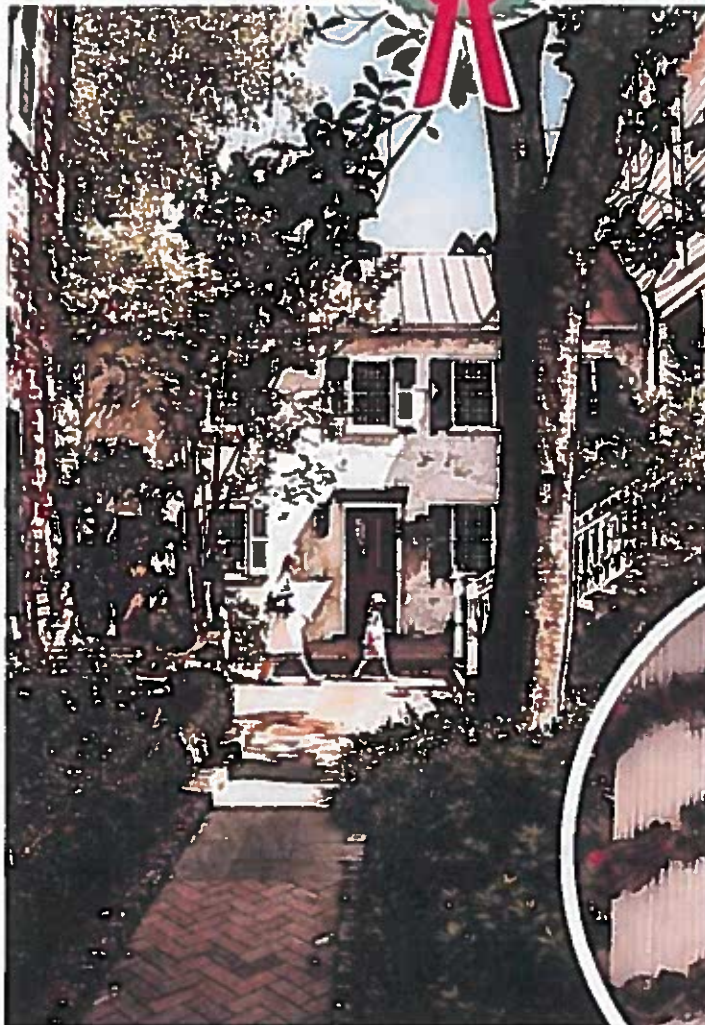
At The Ordinary, the branch led by chef Mike Lata, East Coast oysters are served every which way: raw, smoked, fried on sliders or stacked three trays high with other shellfish. The bustling restaurant is located in an old bank building with soaring ceilings, dramatic arched windows and an open vault door that offers a view into the kitchen. 544 King St., eattheordinary.com

Where to stay

SERENE ENCLAVE ▶

All 16 rooms at Zero George Street have shared piazzas that look out onto a courtyard. You can grab one of the hotel's free bikes for a quick ride along the river, or learn how to cook Southern seafood classics from the hotel's chefs.

From \$289,
0 George St.;
zerogeorge.com



HOLIDAY CENTRAL ▼

The lobby at Belmond Charleston Place is especially grand during the holidays. There's a forest of 10-foot Christmas trees and a snow-covered replica of the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express under the double staircase. Check it out, then book the hotel's recommended on-site babysitters and unwind with a cocktail—or a treatment at the luxe spa. From \$295, 205 Meeting St.; belmond.com



◀ VICTORIAN CHARM

Before it was a hotel, Planters Inn was a mid-1800s dry goods store, and the guest rooms still have plenty of old world character: high ceilings, four-poster beds and bathrooms with Italian marble. From \$279, 112 North Market St., plantersinn.com