

Tennis Life / Travel

BY REBECCA WALLWORK

## Lowcountry Love

# Charleston has been topping travel and foodie lists, and it's easy to see why



With winter behind us, it's time to venture out and enjoy exploring a new destination. Which makes the first week of April the perfect opportunity for a spring getaway to Charleston. There, you can take in the Volvo Car Open—the largest women's-only tennis tournament in North America—and savor all the charm and flavor this southern city has to offer.



Leon's Oyster Shop

### > Food First

If meals are a key part of your travel itineraries, you're going to love spending time eating your way through Charleston's piping hot food scene. In fact, you may need to eat more than three meals a day to cover it all.

For a night to remember, plan ahead and get a dinner reservation at Husk ([huskrestaurant.com](http://huskrestaurant.com)), located in a 19th-century mansion downtown. Chef Sean Brock has earned ardent fans for his devotion to Southern cuisines and ingredients, and earned accolades for honoring Lowcountry traditions in such a deliciously fresh manner.

Seafood tops most visitors' culinary to-do lists in Charleston, where you can find everything from down-home crab shacks to chic oyster bars. Two of the more modern options include Leon's Oyster Shop ([leonsoystershop.com](http://leonsoystershop.com)), which does a mean fried chicken as well as fried fish and freshly shucked oysters—best enjoyed with a crisp beverage on the patio—and The Ordinary ([eattheordinary.com](http://eattheordinary.com)), which has turned a 1920s bank into a lively seafood hall and oyster bar worthy of its far-reaching raves.

For dinner on Daniel Island, where the Volvo Car Open takes place, check out Bermet's Courtyard

PETER FRANK (PAGE 68); CALLIE'S HOT LITTLE BISCUIT; CHARLESTON TOURISM BOARD (PAGE 69)



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1. Historic mansions line The Battery, the city's historic seawall. During the Civil War, residents had a bird's-eye view of battles in the harbor. Today, the homes themselves are the main attraction of local architecture tours and carriage rides.

2. The Battery runs along the peninsula where the Ashley River and Cooper River meet. The Cooper side of the promenade is known as High Battery—a good vantage point for views of Fort Sumter, and a popular place for a late afternoon stroll.

3. The 14 merchant houses that make up Charleston's Rainbow Row date back to the 18th century. You can find this popular and vibrant stretch of the city between 83 and 107 East Bay Street. Like much of Charleston's best attractions, it's free to see.

4. The city's historic Dock Street Theatre (left) was built as a hotel in 1809 and converted into a theater in 1935. Charleston is also home to an abundance of churches, including St. Philip's (center) and the French Huguenot Church (white building, right).

(sarmets.com) which serves Mediterranean dishes from well-known local chef Sarmet Aslan, in the dining room or in the courtyard beneath magnificent oak trees.

Brunch is a great way to taste the best of Charleston, with plenty of options on tap, from healthy eats (and a bloody mary) at downtown's Basic Kitchen ([basickitchen.com](http://basickitchen.com)) to soul food staples across town. For live entertainment, head to the Mills House Hotel, home of the Lowcountry Blues Brunch with Shrimp City Slim ([shrimpcityslim.com](http://shrimpcityslim.com)).

If you prefer to grab and go but not skimp on flavor, hit up Calle's Hot Little Biscuit ([callesbiscuits.com/hot-little-biscuit](http://callesbiscuits.com/hot-little-biscuit)) for a mouth-watering breakfast or snack. The shop is open late night (10 p.m.–2 a.m.) on Friday and Saturday, and they ship boxes of those can't-have-just-one biscuits nationwide.



### > Walk it Off

History buffs, shoppers and casual urban explorers will all find lots to love about a stroll or carriage tour around downtown Charleston. Cobblestoned streets, iron gates and blooming gardens serve as the perfect accents to the city's well-preserved architecture, with classic examples of Georgian, Victorian, Federalist and other historic mansions and homes at every turn. As one of its nicknames, the "Holy City," suggests, Charleston is also home to an incredible collection of churches, many with striking spires and steeples.

The Battery—the seawall promenade—is lined with antebellum homes, and a stroll along the harborside gives you great views of Fort Sumter and the Sullivan's Island Lighthouse. It's also a prime perch for catching the sunset. For more house-spotting, visit Rainbow Row on East Bay Street. Its group of colorful Georgian row homes are some of the city's most photographed sights.

+ FOLLOW ALL OF THE CLAY-COURT ACTION AT THE VOLVO CAR OPEN ON [TENNIS.COM](http://TENNIS.COM)

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1. Hampden Clothing (314 King Street) is where Charleston's most stylish residents find designers such as Marni, Tibi and Stella McCartney. The carefully edited selection is housed in a beautiful space with its own lounge and fully stocked bar.

2. Charleston City Market (168 Meeting Street) spans four city center blocks. Its Greek Revival Market Hall and surrounding sheds are home to vendors selling everything from biscuits and baskets to art and fine jewelry.

3. Five historic downtown buildings were revamped in a thoroughly modern way to create The Restoration Hotel (75 Wentworth Street), where the sleek accommodations include a Residential Three Bedroom Rooftop Terrace Suite.

> Browse & Buy

For retail therapy with a distinct Charleston feel, wander downtown, where you can shop at independent bookstores, stationery shops and stylish boutiques specializing in everything from vintage jewelry to the latest designer fashion. King Street is the hub of all things style, with Hampden Clothing ([hampdenclothing.com](http://hampdenclothing.com)) leading the way. Charleston City Market ([thecharlestoncitymarket.com](http://thecharlestoncitymarket.com)) has more than 300 vendors, showcasing art, crafts, edible gifts, home décor, jewelry and Charleston's signature sweetgrass baskets.



> Rest & Repeat

Most hotels in flavor-rich Charleston are more than just a place to lay your head. At the luxurious Belmond Charleston Place ([belmond.com](http://belmond.com)), The Spa, featuring a saunas, steam room, brand new beauty salon and a 50-foot salt-water pool with a retractable roof, is fresh from a refurbishment, while the hotel's acclaimed and elegant restaurant, The Charleston Grill, hosts live jazz ensembles seven nights a week.

Experience Southern hospitality with a "New South" spin at The Restoration Hotel ([therestorationhotel.com](http://therestorationhotel.com)), a stylish hideaway in the heart of downtown. The hotel has historic bones but a thoroughly modern vibe, with stylish coffee-table books in its library and Rise Coffee Bar. The boutique vibe is also evident in the rooftop bar and restaurant, curated gift shop and sleek Martone bikes available for guests.

THE RESTORATION HOTEL; STACY SMALLWOOD; CHARLESTON TOURISM BOARD