Lowcountry Love

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

In 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.

> Food First

If meals are a key part of your travel itineraries, you're going to love spending time setting 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 Huisk (huskerestaurant.com), located in a 19th-century mansion downtown. Chef Sean Brock has earned rapturous fans for his devotion to Southern cuisine 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 downtown crab shacks to chic oyster bars. Two of the more modern options include Leon's Oyster Shop (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 (theordinarycharleston.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 Baromet's Courtyard.
1. Historic marathons 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
   most 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 1869 and
   converted into a theater
   in 1918. Charleston is also
   home to an abundance of
   churches, including St.
   Philby’s (center) and the
   French Huguenot Church
   (white building, right).

(sermets.com) which serves
Mediterranean dishes from well-
known local chef Sermet 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 (baskitchen.com) to
soul food staples across town. For
live entertainment, head to the Mills
House Hotel, home of the Lowcoun-
try Blues Brunch with Shrimp City
Slim (shrimpcityslim.com).

If you prefer to grab and go but
not skimp on flavor, hit up Callie’s
Hot Little Biscuit (hotlittlebiscuit.
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 accompaniment
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.
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) leading the way. Charleston City Market (charlestonchamptomarket.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), The Spa, featuring a sauna, steam room, brand new beauty salon and a 60-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), 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.