6 Reasons You Must Visit This Southern Hotspot

BY PERRI O. BLUMBERG ON FEBRUARY 20, 2016

Maybe you’ve heard mumblings of Charleston for its good old fashioned southern hospitality. Or maybe you had a friend who visited on a bachelorette party and came back raving about that good time at the rooftop bar Stars. Or — no shame here — perhaps you just want to check out the city where Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively tied the knot. Heck, maybe you just wanna book a springtime getaway that doesn’t break your wallet. So whether you want to grab that cool winter Airbnb with your gals or split a hotel with your boo, we’re sharing our favorite Chucktown highlights.

1. The Charleston Wine + Food Festival will electrify your taste buds. This March 2-6 event will have you drooling left and right in the culinary vortex of “The Holy City.” Lick your lips for Lowcountry favorites from the Southern grand dame Magnolias to the charcuterie lover’s dream Artisan Meat Share, a beloved local butcher and sandwich shop.

Hailed by Forbes Traveler as one of the top five food and wine festivals in the country, this three-day edible paradise brings together more than 160 chefs and authors from Charleston and across the country, with more than 50 food and wine themed events. Be prepared to sip on an heirloom tomato Bloody Mary with blue cheese stuffed olives that you’ll dream about at every booze-soaked brunch in the years to come.
2. Palmetto Brewing Co. will provide you with endless flights of happiness. Okay maybe not endless. But this local brewery has tantalizing beer flights to please any beer drinker. Play cornhole or people watch on the patio over low-key happy hour brewskis, or grab a comfy bar stool indoors while sipping on some of their new spring releases, like the Huger Street IPA (7.2% ABV and a clean, crisp, citrusy wheat India Pale Ale) or Colonel Rathbun’s Farmhouse Ale (7.8% ABV and brewed with local Brickyard Point Farms Hachiya persimmons and pink peppercorn).

Palmetto has also become one of Charleston’s most charming and unconventional music venues where all the events are free. Enjoy a Friday Night Loading Dock Concert, which is consistently packed in no small part to Awendaw Green, a local talent booker. He brings in bands from across the Southeast to play sets from 6-10pm while Charleston food truck favorites park curbside. For something more laid back, try Open Mic Night on Tuesdays in the tasting room from 4-7pm with top-notch local talent, or Unplugged at Palmetto on Saturday from 4-6pm (also in the tasting room), which features acoustic sets from diverse regional acts.
3. **Charleston Fashion Week** spotlights unique and up-and-coming talent. March 15-19, Charleston will become home to an incredible week of style-driven events. Showcasing emerging designer talent across the East Coast, Charleston Fashion Week is quickly becoming one of the premier fashion weeks in North America, without the fuss and drama you might get from trying to check out more exclusive events like New York Fashion Week.

Designers to be on the lookout for: Jamie Morrison, JD Noble and Ricky Lindsay. What makes this week even cooler? Held under the tents in the city's central Marion Square, the five-night celebration offers more than 30 runway shows. Presented by *Charleston* magazine, the events will also be rounded out with snazzy post-show parties and interactive entertainment.

4. **Historic Charleston Foundation’s 69th Annual Spring Festival of Houses & Gardens** will bring your Pinterest board dreams to life. This March 16-April 24, get ready for some seriously gorgeous floral delights with a dose of fascinating history. Set amid the cultural and historical vibe of the city’s neighborhoods, this series of award-winning tours will give you an inside look into Charleston’s distinctive architecture, history, gardens and culture.

Going on during the peak of the area’s blooming season, tours feature seven to 10 properties each day in one of 11 neighborhoods, dating from the American colonial period through the antebellum and Victoria eras, to the early 20th century. You’ll get a rare glimpse inside the private houses and gardens of some of America’s most beautiful and historic residences. Trust us, you'll leave so inspired that you’ll be ready to tackle that garden of your own, even if it’s just an *indoor garden for your apartment.*
5. *Garden + Gun JUBILEE* is the kind of thing "Hart of Dixie" dreams are made of. Step aside, Bluebell. Made in the South Weekend (December 1-4, 2016) is well worth making Charleston a stop on your winter bucket list. 2016 will be the fourth year of *Garden + Gun*’s annual JUBILEE: Made in the South Weekend, a celebration for the magazine's readers that offers a slew of exciting experiences (the glossy is based in Charleston). What’s in store for you? Matchless experiences with the best of G&G’s sporting, food, music, literature, lifestyle and art coverage brought to life with special dinners, entertainment and a variety of live events.

6. Animal lovers will adore the *Southeastern Wildlife Exposition*. You don’t get much cuter than this. Dock dogs, artists and exhibitors from around the globe come together for this classic Charleston gathering that’s been around for over 30 years. Next February 17-19, 2017 enjoy this large exhibition of wildlife, which also promotes conservation, preservation and education.

**Got a favorite Charleston gem? Tweet us @BritandCo!**

*(Photos via Artisan Meat Share, Palmetto Brewing Co. ExploreCharleston.com, Getty)*

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Perri is a graduate of Columbia University and former food editor at Reader’s Digest. After graduating a health-supportive culinary school, she’s gone on to work with Mark Bittman and pursue writing full-time. She’s probably seen Dave Matthews Band in your hometown and will never turn down a Bloody Mary. Find Perri O. Blumberg at http://Veganwhensober.com.