Long before he agreed to take over as host of the Late Show, Stephen Colbert was just another Charleston boy—swimming, fishing, and skateboarding down the quiet streets of what he recalls as a "sleepy Southern town." Today, the South Carolina city is still one of his favorite vacation spots. Turn the page for Colbert's down-home haunts.

Photographed by Squire Fox
Return of the Native: Stephen Colbert’s Charleston

STAY Growing up, Colbert helped his mother run a now-defunct B&B in their house in the South of Broad neighborhood. “Back then, if I booked a guest, I got ten percent. A kid could have a whole weekend of fun for fifteen bucks.” Hotels he remembers from boyhood: the Francis Marion Hotel (francismarionhotel.com; $) — with views of the harbor — and 1853’s Mills House Wyndham Grand Hotel (millsouse.com; $). EAT “I want shrimp and hominy when I’m in Charleston, at whatever place doesn’t call hominy grits,” Colbert declares with the emphatic authority of his Colbert Report persona. He gets that or the catch of the day at Hominy Grill (hominygrill.com; $$. Another pick? “Husk (huskrestaurant.com; $$$)

Three More Hot Spots
Charleston Distilling Co.
The place for only-in-South Carolina tastings (local corn and rye, vodka, and barrel-aged gin. charleston distilling.com; $)

Chez Nous Frangophone dishes — saffron-and-fennel mussel salad; pan-roasted chicken — in a revamped 1835 house on Payne Court. 843/770-3060. $$

Edmund’s Oast The brewery is laser-focused on its farm-to-fork menu, with tobacco-end peach-tree-smoked charcuterie and pickled shrimp on grilled rye bread. edmundsoast.com. $$$

DO Colbert spent most of his salad days outside. “We’d go swimming off Sullivan’s Island (charlestoncvb.com).” Afterward, we’d walk in to local bars with any kind of fake ID — a piece of paper that just about announced you were 18 — and they’d serve you a beer.” —TOM AUSTIN

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Join the sun-kissed crowd at Area 31, on the 16th-floor terrace of Miami’s Epic Hotel, for a Green with Envoy—gin blended with kale, kohlrabi, spinach, and apples. area31 restaurant.com.

At the Roof, on top of the Viceroy New York hotel, midtown briefcase warriors hang with margaritas made with beet and pear juices and spiked with Cholula. therooftop.com.

Edmund’s Oast is a hangout for Denver’s organic-obsessed locals, thanks to such libations as the carrot, ginger, and rum Boracho Bunny. tabletoatavern.com.

— NATE STORBY