





FAIRHOPE, ALABAMA

POPULATION: 17,386 AVERAGE JULY HIGH: 91 AVERAGE JANUARY LOW: 39 AVERAGE NUMBER OF SUNNY DAYS: 227

Located on what's known as the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay, this gracious Gulf town has long been a destination for artists, writers (including Fannie Flag and Rick Bragg), and vacationers. The historic downtown blooms – not just with independent cafés, bars, and shopping—but also literally: Colorful blossoms line the sidewalks, decorate street crossings, hang in baskets suspended from light posts, overflow from planters in front of shops, and even adorn the tops of trash receptacles.

LOCAL HANGOUT Fairhope's **Municipal Pier and Beachfront Park** serves as the city's town square, drawing the community to the water with its marina, walking trails, duck pond, and benches.

COOL EVENT **Mardi Gras.** On a coastline with the oldest Mardi Gras celebrations in the country, Fairhope keeps pace with four colorful parades of its own, including the Mystic Mutts of Revelry (Yes, that's for pooches.)

BEST SOUVENIR Because Fairhope was founded as an art colony, take home a piece of **local art or pottery.**

STAY A WEEKEND Most rooms at the 550-acre **Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa** have sweeping views of the bay from their balcony rocking chairs, an idyllic place to watch the lights of Mobile across the water. Rates start at \$209. 251/928-9201 or marriottgrand.com



READY TO RELOCATE?
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE IS \$275,000



SULLIVAN'S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

POPULATION: 17,386 AVERAGE JULY HIGH: 91 AVERAGE JANUARY LOW: 37 AVERAGE NUMBER OF SUNNY DAYS: 212

READY TO RELOCATE?
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE IS \$1,502,000

Along just 3.3 miles of Atlantic shoreline at the mouth of Charleston Harbor, what this tiny community lacks in size it more than makes up for in beauty and historic charm. What may be most stunning about Sullivan's Island is its commitment to preserving its natural gifts—the town owns the land bordering its beaches, and has protected it under easements. The perpetual gift of public access to pristine shoreline, paired with easy access to the cultural wealth of nearby Charleston, makes this residential enclave with stunning mansions a prized Lowcountry address.

LOCAL HANGOUT Writer Edgar Allan Poe was stationed briefly at Fort

Moultrie on Sullivan's, and the restaurant that bears his name, **Poe's Tavern**, is the absolute hangout for regulars (and makes a great burger, to boot)

COOL EVENT The **New Year's Day Polar Bear Plunge** spearheaded by Dunleavy's Pub is not only a huge, fun-loving party, but also raises funds for South Carolina Special Olympics. Look for folks wearing white tuxedos with green ties and vests heading straight into the Atlantic

BEST SOUVENIR A **sand dollar**—as beachy, beautiful, and pristine as Sullivan's Island itself.

STAY A WEEKEND With Sullivan's being primarily residential, the place to stay is just one island over, at **Wild Dunes Resort** on **Isle of Palms**: great beaches, great golf, and proximity to both Sullivan's and Charleston. Rates start at \$199; 866/359-5593 or wilddunes.com.

FROM TOP: CHARLESTON AREA CVB (ISLE OF PALMS); CHARLESTON CVB (SULLIVAN'S ISLAND); THOMAS THORP (OPPOSITE); IMAYER ALLYSON BOWDY