



IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR...

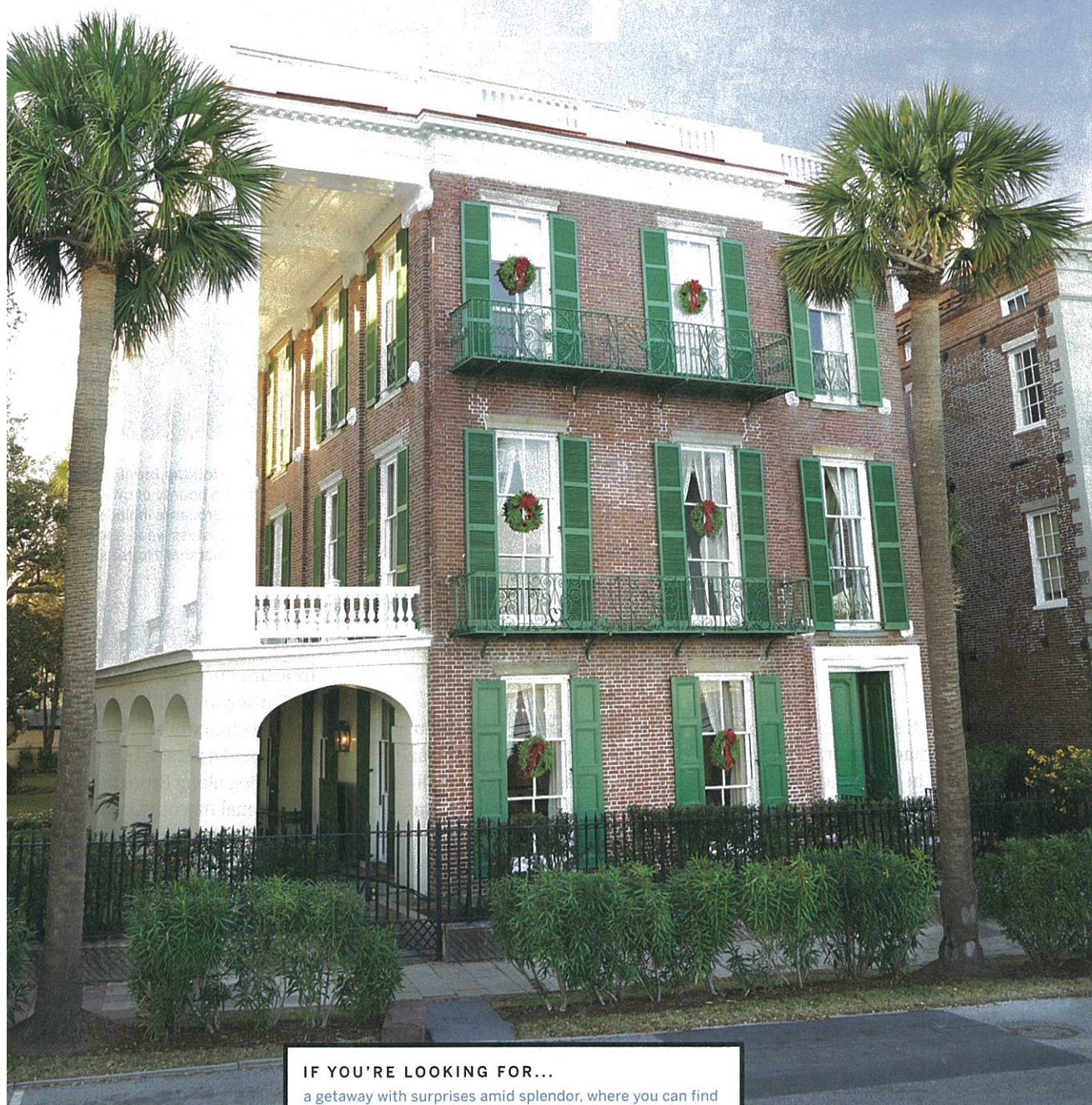
a city where the treasures—from shopping gems to culinary delights—are tucked behind corners and passed on from locals to lucky visitors, go to Savannah, Georgia (page 84).

HOLIDAY TRAVEL

Savannah or Charleston?

It's hard to make a bad decision this time of year

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS M. ROGERS



IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR...

a getaway with surprises amid splendor, where you can find heirloom ornaments and enjoy everything from tiki drinks to barbecue, follow us to Charleston, South Carolina (page 86).



Holiday Indulgences

From left: The bounty of offerings at The Paris Market and Brocante includes inspiring place settings, hostess wear, and pretty dishes. Above: The Marshall House's "pineapple tree"

Savannah: A Winter's Tale

Make it a joyous shopping weekend in this rich Lowcountry city

BY ELLEN MCGAULEY

CAN'T TAKE MY EYES off him—this older man standing in front of a bench in Chippewa Square. He's got a Santa hat and a flute, and there's a string of colored lights draped around his neck. It's not clear whether he's setting up or closing down, so I figure I'll wait. He's got no Christmas hustle, but that's what I like about him.

The last time I was here during the holidays was 1988, when I rode up on an Amtrak from Jacksonville, Florida, with my dad and two of my sisters. I remember stepping into the lobby of

the Hyatt Regency, a mid-century giant straddling River Street, and gazing up at a Christmas tree so bright it could have been on fire. Outside, a street fair lit the riverfront. The old city sparkled.

The irony of that memory is that showmanship isn't really Savannah's style. Behind the evergreen-decked manses and swinging shop doors is an old soul who carries no airs, a grande dame who mixes decades of finery with new-school funk. It's perfect for retail drifters like me, who see holiday shopping as less of a sport and more of a ramble around corners, like a

treasure hunt without a map.

I'm staying at The Marshall House, a 19th-century hotel with an aged brick facade and a parade of emerald shutters stretching along Broughton Street, the city's retail thoroughfare. Though the neighborhood has seen an invasion of familiar chains among its storefronts, a sharp mix of local shops remains. The jewel of the group is The Paris Market and Brocante, a cafe and boutique designed in the spirit of a French flea market. There's a variety store feel to the well-curated space, an air of discovery that follows me off Broughton and through a network of historic city squares. New and old



Winter Wonders

Left and top: Little Duck Diner features a bright, buzzy vibe and hearty breakfasts. Above: Score seasonal swag at One Fish Two Fish.

woven together, thanks in part to Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD); its artistic fingerprints are everywhere—in alum-owned shops like leather boutique Satchel and in mini design labs like Gryphon, an early 20th-century pharmacy on Madison Square that students have turned into a popular tea room. Farther south is Broughton Street's design district, a collection of home stores and niche boutiques that has emerged as a hip neighborhood (think Italian tery, vintage maps, and handmade jewelry). It's the kind of place where you find yourself leaning on counters and chatting with owners, many of whom are behind registers. At night, I cozy up in warm, affordableeries such as Atlantic, an updated 1950s filling station south of the historic district. Out on the patio, folks huddle around fire pits, and inside, the scene

reminds me of those shop counters. It's less Southern folksiness and more of a genuine, approachable nature that drifts through the city. The sparkle that I remember from 30 years ago is still there, but it's different. It's like she's lit from within.

My final morning, I grab breakfast at Little Duck Diner—a dapper, vintage-inspired spot—and head south toward Jones Street, where oaks form a mossy canopy over cobblestones. Christmas trees peek out from behind tall double-hung windows, and a parade of iron banisters curves down half a story from colorful front doors, their long, elegant symmetry like a Southern version of the Rockettes.

It's quite a Christmas show, but I'll be back for the street musician wearing the lights, too—the locals assure me he's around. I want to see his version.

Shop & Stay

TOP 5 STOPS

THE PARIS MARKET AND BROCANTE

With its jade columns and cornices, this swank former grocery store is filled with everything from cleverly curated kids' toys to antique dishes, dapper barware, and vintage lighting.

WRIGHT SQUARE VINTAGE AND RETRO MALL

This mid-century emporium (just a block behind Broughton) is packed with fabulous collectibles, from throw-back LPs and groovy cocktail glasses to orange slag vases and bygone chapter book series.

ONE FISH TWO FISH

An anchor of the design district, this shop is a go-to for gifts. Find colorful tabletop pieces and beauty goodies like bespoke hairbrushes and sleep masks.

MAMIE RUTH

This forward-thinking clothing boutique doubles as the owners' design studio, turning out women's apparel like striped tunics and party dresses. Check out their line of baby clothes, which arose out of a desire to eliminate waste and find a use for fabric remnants.

THE BOOK LADY BOOKSTORE

Though you will stumble upon some new titles, this iconic shop specializes in classic tomes. Find Steinbeck and Shakespeare, old copies of *Doctor Zhivago*, and thick volumes of Poe that are filled with notes and highlighted passages.

SWEET DIGS

THE MARSHALL HOUSE

Named for the savvy 19th-century businesswoman who developed it, the 68-room hotel includes 7 rooms that step out onto the iron balcony overlooking Broughton Street. Check out the famed "pineapple tree" in the lobby, the hotel's trademark holiday welcome. Rates from \$129.



Charleston: A Jolly Discovery

Come for the tradition, but fall in love with the Holy City's never-ending surprises

BY TRACEY MINKIN

CHRISTMAS IN Charleston, South Carolina, is like one big Advent calendar.

This holiday epiphany first arrives while I watch Brianna Berry craft a drink called Smoke & Mirrors, a cocktail of cold-brew coffee, tequila, hile and spiced pear liqueurs, black walnut bitters, and an Earl Grey simple syrup made from tea grown on a South Carolina barrier island. She sets a thick tick of cinnamon burning and caps a nifter over it, setting loose that classic holiday scent into the empty vessel and then filling it with the dark, spicy blend of spirits.

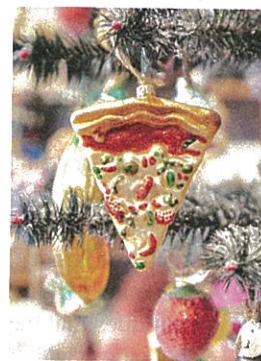
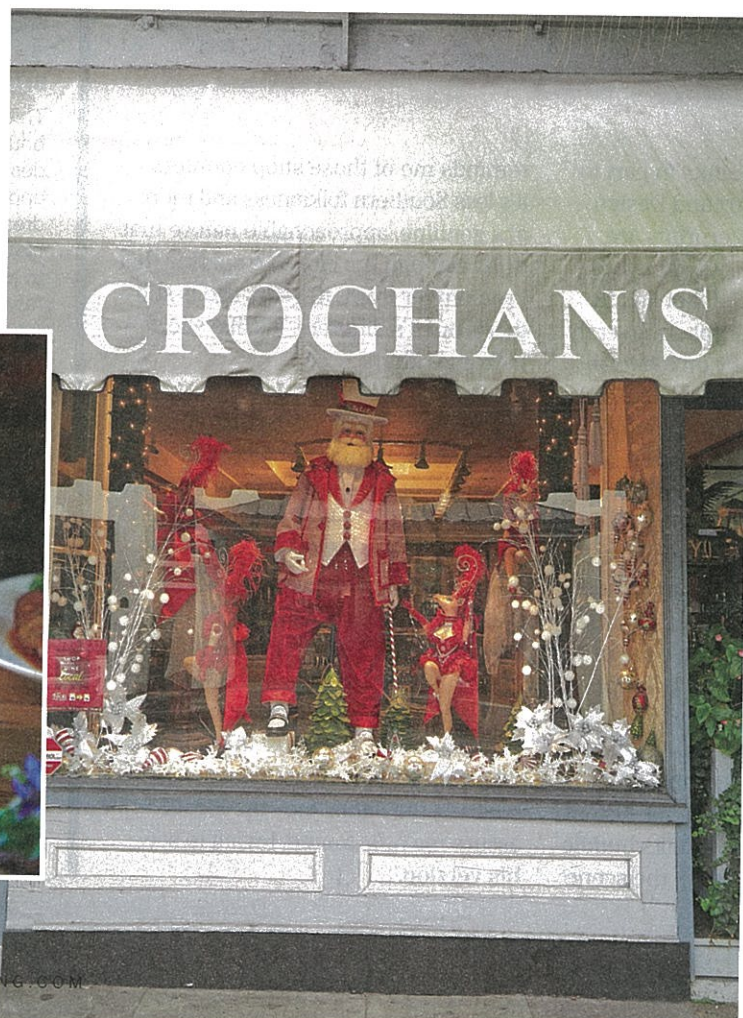
I'm having lunch in the city's quiet Westside neighborhood at a cozy restaurant called Harold's Cabin, tucking into a plate of wild boar meatloaf and a groaning board of

roasted mushrooms, beets, and winter squash, not to mention this cocktail. The winter sun beaming through broad plate glass windows lights up the art-dotted plank walls. It's as cheery in here as the interiors of miniature log cabins that glow along the hillsides of train sets. It's nothing like I imagined Christmas in Charleston to be, but it's exactly what Christmas in Charleston turns out to be.

And that's where the idea of an Advent calendar comes in. Charleston is so famous, so historic, so classic, that the promise of the holidays here is like

an idealized scene on the facade of a cardboard Advent calendar. I discover that scene while wandering the streets of the lower peninsula: wreaths dotting grand doors, garlands of magnolia and pine draping wrought iron fences, trees winking from between plantation shutters. The palmettos that line King Street—the city's grand parade of stores, restaurants, and bars—are wrapped in twinkling lights, while the shop windows sing with festive holiday displays. In the poinsettia- and Christmas tree-bedecked lobby of the Belmond Charleston Place hotel, a model train makes the slow trek through its own dreamy winter landscape, performing its careful loops for the throngs of children and

their parents who visit the display every year as a special holiday ritual.



Seasonal Specialties

Left to right: Craft cocktails at Harold's Cabin; the holiday window display at Croghan's Jewel Box; updated ornaments at Worthwhile



Winter Wonders

From top: The Dewberry hotel's lobby, low with vintage mid-century modern furniture as well as reproduction pieces; the hotel's irresistible eggnog

But it's during lunch at Harold's that I pry open the first little perforated door on my calendar and delight at the surprise within. I keep prying and peering. Lured by the opulence of the window displays at Croghan's Jewel Box (where many Charleston families select a keepsake ornament every year), I realize that the near-life-size Santa Claus figure in the window is done up in a white top hat and a red velvet suit—more dance hall than North Pole—and he's flanked by two reindeer in bustiers and short, flouncy skirts—more *Moulin Rouge* than *The Night Before Christmas*. It's saucy and

fun. I stand transfixed on the busy sidewalk, watching the reindeer twirl with their knees hoisted high in a perpetual cancan.

I wander next into a boutique called Worthwhile, where I discover tabletop trees decked with ornaments crafted in the high-gloss style of German glass figural designs of the 1950s—pinecones, acorns, clusters of grapes—but these are irreverent and contemporary in their subject matter: slices of pizza, grapefruit halves, martini glasses. In other shops they might be predictable and even kitschy, but these are elevated and gorgeous. Below, a forest of bottle brush trees, just a few inches tall and in the colors of PEZ candies, creates a crazy blanket of bristly delight. I love classic Charleston, but I love this side of the city even more.

More Advents, more finds. I become a habitu  of the lobby of my own hotel, The Dewberry, a converted mid-century Federal office building with a design so contrary to the Georgian architectural glories that dominate locally—I feel like I'm having an aesthetic affair of sorts. I sip a glass of the hotel chef's mother's recipe for boozy eggnog while I ogle the vintage Scandinavian furniture all around me. I venture out again to eat, drink, and be merry: I sip a Hawaii-worthy mai tai at South Seas Oasis, a tiny tiki lounge that's hidden down a cobblestone alley. I polish off a plate of pulled pork, spare ribs, and mac and cheese at Rodney Scott's BBQ's outdoor picnic tables—an act with no holiday ties but one that should be on everyone's wish list. I pick up bottles of small-batch sorghum whiskey and botanical gin (Merry Christmas to me!) from High Wire Distilling Co., a boutique distillery and tasting room on the upper reaches of King Street. And one sweetly quiet night, I spend hours in the cozy corner

**Sweet Discoveries**

Clockwise from left: The rustic refinement of Chez Nous restaurant; chef Jill Mathias of Chez Nous; opulent confections at Christophe Artisan Chocolatier-Pâtissier

of chef Jill Mathias' Chez Nous, a European consort to the rustic Harold's, taking my time with veal crudo, handmade pastas, and a fig-and-butterscotch budino, all the while admiring the care with which the nightly menu has been handwritten on card stock.

As a long weekend winds to a close, I wish I could stay here for the entire month of December—I'd catch the Holiday Parade of Boats in Charleston Harbor and drive through the 3-mile incandescent riot that is the Holiday Festival of Lights in James Island. I'd join the high-spirited progressive dinners at the storied Circa 1886 and

Wentworth Mansion and tour every historic home. I'd groove with the locals who fill the Charleston Music Hall for the annual Holiday Swing jazz concert and marvel at Ann Caldwell & the Magnolia Singers at the Spirituals at Drayton Hall performances.

And I'd sit rapt in the hard pews of The Citadel's Summerall Chapel—having been escorted to my seat by a fresh-shaved cadet in uniform—feeling the brass and reeds of The Citadel Regimental Band and Pipes wash over me in hymns and traditional songs of the season. And I'd wonder, after the concert, what little door I'd pry open next. **SL**

Shop & Stay

TOP 5 STOPS**CHARLESTON FARMERS MARKET'S HOLIDAY MARKET**

This special pop-up in Marion Square spans three weekends in December and has serious riches, which change each year. Be on the lookout for Grit & Grace oyster-shell ornaments, Barbara's Sweetgrass Baskets, and Carolina Millinery Company's hand-made hats.

CROGHAN'S JEWEL BOX

Classic and resplendent, this landmark shop is the spot for an annual Charleston ornament as well as a treasure trove of new and estate jewelry.

WORTHWHILE

The cheeky Christmas ornaments are irresistible, and the urban-chic fashions are one of a kind.

RO SHAM BEAUX

A wonderful spot for housewares and art, this commodious shop is also an inspiration stop for lighting, furniture, and design.

CHRISTOPHE ARTISAN CHOCOLATIER-PÂTISSIER

The retro-fabulous chocolate holiday figures are nearly too beautiful to give away (much less devour), but they're worth suffering over. So are the assortments of truffles and hand-painted chocolates.

SWEET DIGS**THE DEWBERRY**

You won't look at an office building the same way after staying at this boutique hotel that occupies the circa-1964 L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building and overlooks Marion Square. The Dewberry's interiors are sumptuous, the Living Room lobby is one of the buzziest spots to hang out in the city, and the guest rooms (featuring custom Stickley armoires and seasonally rotating in-room cocktail bars) are urbane nests. Rates from \$265.



CURB APPEAL

Merry & Bright

Draw decorating inspiration from the storybook streets of Charleston, South Carolina, where historic doors are donning their holiday best

PRODUCED BY **RACHAEL BURROW**
TEXT BY **ELLEN MCGAULEY**

CANDY CANE RED

Treat formal entries to the loose, free-form nature of eucalyptus. Both the silver dollar and feather types add a touch of wild beauty, while potted fan palms keep the look firmly rooted in the local landscape.

1. Door color similar to Tomato Red (2010-10); benjaminmoore.com
2. 3.75" Sage Double Face French Satin Ribbon; moodfabrics.com
3. Champagne Satin Ribbon; papersource.com
4. Planter similar to Simplicity Square Pot Large in Taupe; houzz.com





TEAL APPEAL

To help deepen the connection between front door and shore, hang a wreath made of oyster shells in place of traditional greenery. The bright, bleached shells pair well with soft native garlands, like this one crafted of tree fern and Leyland cypress branches.

1. Door color similar to Jargon Jade (SW 6753); *sherwin-williams.com*
2. Oyster Shell Wreath; *sweetbay cotton.etsy.com*
3. Italian Urn Planter by Christopher Knight Home; *overstock.com*
4. Stripe Satin Ribbon; *paper source.com*



LIME LIGHT

Tuck mini pink pineapples into a ring of pittosporum, like the one that hangs on the piazza entrance of this Charleston Single House. Crowning it is a huckleberry-and-bear grass garland trimmed with orange and yellow pincushion flowers that pop like winter citrus.

1. Door color similar to Be Spontaneous (PPG1221-6); pittsburghpaints.com
2. Lyford Cay Lanterns; amandalindroth.com
3. Tortola Lanterns; serenaandlily.com
4. White Satin Ribbon; moodfabrics.com **SL**



BLUSH AND BASHFUL

Play up the power of pink with a spiral arrangement of layered palm leaves. (Fresh blades are woven over a base of darker, preserved ones.) A lemon leaf garland with long ribbon streamers brings a soft contrast to the wreath's form.

1. Door color similar to Pink Mimosa (P180-3); behr.com
2. Dried Palm Leaf Wreath; drieddecor.com
3. Coral Single Face Velvet Ribbon; moodfabrics.com
4. Rose Gold Satin Ribbon; papersource.com



WINTER BLUE

Deck petite entryways with a trio of small preserved boxwood wreaths strung together with grosgrain ribbon. A loose garland of bay laurel, Italian ruscus, and lemon leaf highlights this Lowcountry home's arched entry.

1. Door color similar to Billow (4008-9C); valsparpaint.com
2. 14" Preserved Boxwood Wreaths; jamaligarden.com
3. Campania International Beldon Urns; leafnpetal.com for stores
4. Faux Moss Planter Fillers; ballarddesigns.com
5. Petersham Grosgrain Ribbon; moodfabrics.com

