




T+L DECODER

Our Definitive Guide to

Charlest



Char-grilled oysters with lemon, parsley, and Parmesan at Leon's Oyster Shop, in downtown Charleston.



STAY

SHOP

SEE+DO

EAT

LOCAL TAKE

on

Oak-lined streets, historic row houses, and creative Lowcountry cooking—South Carolina's oldest city has charm to spare. **Stirling Kelso** reports. **Photographed by Peter Frank Edwards**



Lay of the Land

Folly Beach The 12-mile island south of downtown is known for its surf-worthy waves, seafood purveyors, and live-music bars.

Historic District These cobblestoned streets are lined with row houses, and you're likely to spot more horse-drawn carriages and cruiser bikes than cars.

Mount Pleasant While this area is mostly residential, the Old Village is worth exploring for classic Americana—U.S. flags; white picket fences—and stylish shops and restaurants.

Sullivan's Island On this barrier isle, grand residences contrast with remote stretches of beach.

Upper Peninsula One-off boutiques and gallery spaces opened by young entrepreneurs have given the district newfound creative energy.

Getting Around Charleston is pedestrian- and bike-friendly. To reach the outer islands, consider renting a car (avis.com).



Left: The drawing room at Zero George Street. Below: Outside Two Meeting Street.



Stay

Charleston has no shortage of sophisticated hotels. Here, five we love.

ZERO GEORGE STREET

With its sprawling verandas and manicured pocket gardens, this newcomer in the Ansonborough district pays homage to the city's history, but interiors are refreshingly modern. The 18 rooms are spread out among five residences, some with mahogany bed frames, blue-and-white porcelain lamps, and beds with Kravet linens. A highlight: breakfast in the 1804 carriage house. zero-george.com. \$\$

TWO MEETING STREET

Welcome to the city's oldest inn, with just nine airy bedrooms full of antiques—

Tiffany stained-glass windows; Audubon prints; Venetian glass fixtures. Settle into one of the rocking chairs on the wraparound porch and take in the sunset over Battery Park. twomeetingstreet.com. \$\$

THE WENTWORTH

Built by a cotton baron in 1886, the red Philadelphia-brick Wentworth blends old and new: oversize soaking tubs and flat-screen TV's mix with Italian crystal chandeliers and 19th-century marble mantels. The hotel's cupola has knockout views of the city. wentworthmansion.com. \$\$\$

FRENCH QUARTER INN

The 50-room French Quarter Inn is known for its first-rate service and welcoming staff: there's champagne at check-in, wine and local bites (smoked salmon; boiled peanuts) served in the evening, and port or milk and cookies during turndown. fqcharleston.com. \$\$

PLANTERS INN

In the heart of the historic district, the landmark Planters Inn channels Old Charleston with sweetgrass baskets, flickering carriage lanterns, and etchings by the late local painter Elizabeth O'Neill Verner. plantersinn.com. \$\$

ON THE HORIZON Opening in 2015, the 41-room **Spectator**, in the historic district, will have a hip, Prohibition-era vibe with a 1920's-inspired bar and lounge. thespectatorhotel.com. \$\$



See+Do

Where to get your culture fix.

HALSEY INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The small museum on the College of Charleston's campus is a welcome addition to the city's art scene. Past exhibits have included American artists Jasper Johns and Shepard Fairey, as well as up-and-coming international talent like the Jerusalem-based Yaakov Israel. halsey.cofc.edu.

MARION SQUARE FARMERS' MARKET

Every Saturday, hundreds of regional producers gather at Marion Square to sell fresh fruit, vegetables, and artisanal

goods. Pick up the Wild Boar black-truffle cheese from Charleston Artisan Cheesehouse. charlestonfarmersmarket.com.

DOCK STREET THEATRE

Reopened in 2010 after a \$19 million renovation, the Dock Street Theatre maintains its original 1800's charm but has been updated with state-of-the-art soundproofing and lighting. Don't miss a show by the Charleston Stage theater company (charlestonstage.com), or one of several performances during the spring Spoleto festival (spoletousa.org).

NATHANIEL RUSSELL HOUSE

This 19th-century former residence is arguably the grande dame of house museums. Its Neoclassical details (a turquoise oval dining room; hand-carved fireplace mantels; a floating spiral staircase) have been restored to their 1808 grandeur. historiccharleston.org.

CHARLESTON COOKS

Take a Taste of the Lowcountry cooking class at this culinary shop and institute. Among the dishes you'll perfect: shrimp and grits and pimiento mac and cheese. mavericksouthernkitchens.com.



Clockwise from top left: An exhibition by artist Yaakov Israel at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art; the entrance to the Dock Street Theatre; a Shepard Fairey mural next door to the Halsey Institute.



Shop

Our favorite boutiques for clothing, home décor, and more.

Hand-painted champagne flutes and letterpress stationery are just a sampling of what you'll find at **Lily** (lilycharleston.com), a one-stop shop for exclusive Charleston souvenirs. • On King Street, **Hampden Clothing** (hampdenclimbing.com) carries more than 40 labels ranging from edgy international brands (Mother of Pearl; Simone Rocha) to local designers, including Candy Shop Vintage. • Giulio and Donatella della Porta make regular trips to their native Italy to select artisan-made wares (silk scarves; ceramic tulip pots) for the **Hidden Countship** (thehiddencountship.com). • You'll have to ring a bell to gain access to the fourth-generation, family-owned jewelry shop **Croghan's Jewel Box** (croghansjewelbox.com). Inside, antique brooches and lockets are displayed alongside bow ties made from South Carolina turkey feathers. • Head to **Shirtini** (shirtini.com) for classic American fashions such as white corduroy shirts by CP Shades and Claridge & King's striped button-downs.

Rometti tableware on display at the Hidden Countship.



Eat

The city's hottest tables.

TWO BOROUGHS LARDER

At chef Josh Keeler's unpretentious bistro, wines by the glass are served in tumblers and dishes such as whipped ricotta with *ancholade* and hazelnuts or veal sweetbreads with brussels-sprout leaves are simple and down-to-earth. The shelves are stocked with souvenirs available for purchase: take home a clay plate or locally made Bittermilk cocktail mixer. twoboroughslarder.com. \$\$

HUSK

After a whiskey cocktail at Husk Bar, head to dinner in the neighboring historic house, with a romantic two-story porch and a floor-to-ceiling chalkboard highlighting regional farmers

and purveyors. We love the glazed pig's ears wrapped in crunchy Bibb lettuce. huskrestaurant.com. \$\$\$

BLACK TAP COFFEE

Charlestonians flock to this two-year-old shop and café for its distinctive coffee creations, from lattes made with organic Counter Culture beans to decadent java cocktails. blacktapcoffee.com. \$

SALT

This wood-beamed restaurant has a laid-back, beachy atmosphere—there's a spacious terrace with a raw bar where chefs serve oysters from Virginia and the Carolinas, as well as a seasonal, Lowcountry-inspired

menu. The flaky wreckfish with herb spaetzle is a crowd-pleaser. saltstation22.com. \$\$

BUTCHER & BEE

The plates at Butcher & Bee change daily depending on what comes in from area farms. Try the grilled cheese with fontina and ribbons of zucchini or the Cuban sandwich loaded with pork, Gruyère, and pickles. The Daily, its new market, sells cold-pressed juices and chef Stuart Tray's house-made ketchup. butcherandbee.com. \$

CHEZ NOUS

Patrick and Fanny Panella, the husband-and-wife team behind popular wine bar Bin 152 on King Street, opened this

southern French restaurant in an 1835 house, with a cozy bar and 16 candlelit tables. The menus may include dishes such as farro with cucumbers and tomatoes and grouper with caramelized lemon. cheznouschs.com. \$\$\$

LEON'S OYSTER SHOP

Chef Ari Kolender, who trained under James Beard Award winner Mike Lata (of F.I.G. and the Ordinary fame), launched Leon's in a former auto body shop. Here, it's all about the fried chicken: after bathing in buttermilk and hot sauce overnight, wings and drumsticks are spiced up with Old Bay, cayenne, and paprika. leonsoystershop.com. \$\$



Clockwise from far left: The dining room at Two Boroughs Larder; a server at Leon's Oyster Shop; clams with chanterelle mushrooms at Two Boroughs Larder.



From left: A view of St. Michael's Church, on Broad Street; shellfish at Bowens Island Restaurant; a silk shirtdress at Worthwhile.



Read about Stephen Colbert's Charleston picks at tandl.me/stecolb.

Local Take

Three insiders share their top places in Charleston.



BRANDY CULP
Curator,
the Historic
Charleston
Foundation

"Book a walking tour with **Martine Dulles** (charlestonpromenades.com), a former docent at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. She'll teach you all about the city's history, architecture, and art. On King Street, swing by the **Silver Vault of Charleston** (silvervaultcharleston.com) to view owner Charlotte Crabtree's French, British, and American silver collections. Built in the 1750's, **St. Michael's Church** (stmichaelschurch.net) is Charleston's oldest religious structure and a must-see."



SEAN BROCK
Chef, Husk
and McCrady's

"For lunch, I'm a fan of the **Glass Onion** (ilovetheglassonion.com; \$\$), in the West Ashley district; I usually get the shrimp and grits with fries and béarnaise. **Bowens Island Restaurant** (bowensislandrestaurant.com; \$\$), on the water near Folly Beach, is another favorite—order the Frogmore stew. When friends come to visit, I recommend they hit the **Heirloom Bookshop** (heirloomcollection.com) and the **Charleston Preservation Society** (preservationsociety.org) to pick up one-of-a-kind souvenirs."



LINDSEY CARTER
Designer,
Troubadour

"Anyone seeking to outfit their home with quirky, beach-chic décor should stop by **Eclectic** (eclecticcharleston.com), in Mount Pleasant. Owner Sidney Wagner is a great resource for interior-design advice. At King Street's **Worthwhile** (shopworthwhile.com), look out for Moroccan slippers by textile company Proud Mary—founder Harper Poe collaborates with international artisans to create beautiful, sustainably made clothing. For drinks, you'll find me sipping a fresh-lime margarita at **Básico** (basico mbrc.com), in North Charleston."

Worth a Detour

Beaufort

The architectural heritage of the town of Beaufort was spared during the Civil War. Head to **Plums Restaurant** (plumsrestaurant.com; \$\$) for clams. beaufort.com.

Kiawah Island

This windswept barrier island has endless diversions. Go for a hike, play tennis, tee off at the Ocean Course, or simply relax on the beach. kiawahresort.com.

Middleton Place

Day tours of this National Historic Landmark have long been popular, but few travelers know about the grounds' kayak swamp tours. middletonplace.org.

