

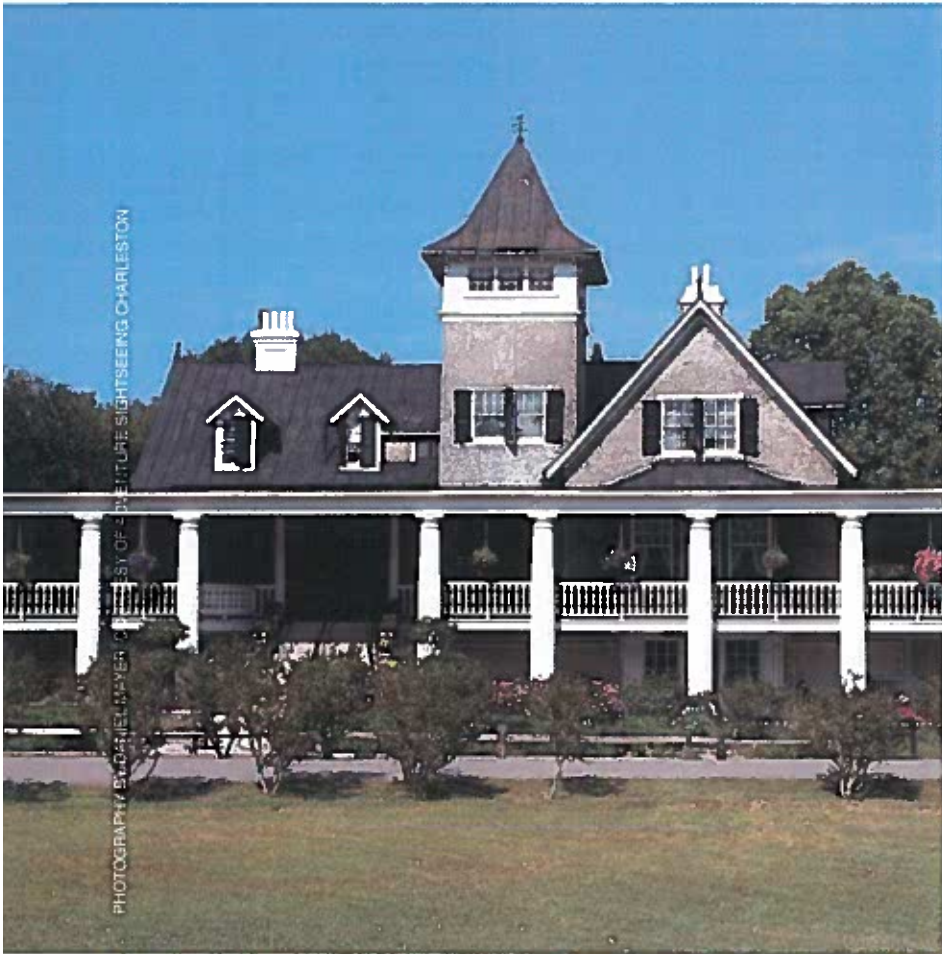
Lowcountry Luxury

How to spend a weekend
away in Charleston.

BY MARGUERITE HAPPE

In Charleston, Southern charm is a real concept: Locals are welcoming and open, eager to recommend their favorite haunts and inquire about yours. Leisure travelers will no doubt be delighted by the culture on offer, from King Street, one of the most luxurious shopping districts in America, to the myriad Civil War-era attractions, such as Fort Sumter. There's no doubt that the city is a burgeoning tourist destination, and increasingly so. In many ways, however, it still feels like a hidden gem, yours to discover.

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SATURDAY
7 PM.

Far From Ordinary

Indulge in a martini and oysters at the Ordinary, a high-energy, bustling seafood hall and oyster bar situated on Upper King Street. In Charleston, farm-to-table fare means sourcing from the sea, and the fresh menu celebrates local and regional fishermen, oystermen and crabbers. Don't leave without trying the salt baked celery root with black truffle, a luxe companion for your shellfish.

9 PM.

Lowcountry Lager

Sip on a beer in the outdoor courtyard at Palmetto Brewery, the first microbrewery to open in Charleston since Prohibition. It features live music and hosts everyone from families to the after-work crowd, all drawn to the relaxed alfresco ambiance. Savor the touches of pink peppercorn, coriander and persimmon in Colonel Rathbun's Farmhouse Ale, a Palmetto specialty.

SUNDAY
10 A.M.

Plantation Splendor

One of the most spectacular examples of Southern garden culture is Magnolia Plantation, located just outside Charleston. The former rice fields house a maze of extravagant gardens and reflecting ponds populated with leisurely crocodiles. You won't find a more lush display of azaleas, camellias, oak trees or Spanish moss. Sans vehicle? Catch an air-conditioned ride with Adventure Sightseeing Tours, one of the city's most celebrated tour companies.

3 PM.

Boiled Peanuts and Grits

Fried green tomatoes and shrimp and grits await you at Hominy Grill, owned by James Beard Award-winning chef Robert Stehling. The neighborhood joint is not one for white tablecloths or fine china, but if you're looking for impeccable slow-smoked ribs or catfish creole, you're in the right place. Munch on a salty Southern specialty, boiled peanuts, while you wait.



8 P.M.

Haunted History

Tour Charleston, LLC's Ghosts of Charleston tour is for lovers of the night and listeners of spellbinding histories of haunting. Even if you're not interested in hearing tales of pirates and treason, the tour is worth the price of admission to wander through the Unitarian Church cemetery by moonlight. Lush walkways are framed by ancient gravestones and statues. It's beautiful yet haunting — a side of the city only seen after sunset.

MONDAY
11 A.M.

Kitchen Confidential

A class at Zero George Cooking School will send you home with some new recipes and culinary tricks, no matter your skill level. The expert chefs guide students through preparation of traditional Southern fare inspired by local ingredients — think cantaloupe gazpacho, pan-roasted snapper and strawberries with basil balsamic syrup. Afterward, class participants enjoy the fruits of their labor during a multicourse meal complete with wine pairings.


3:30 P.M.

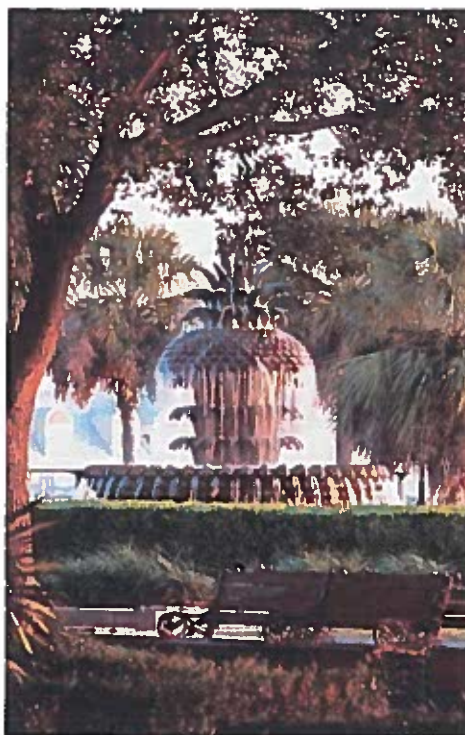
Setting Sail

If there's a must-do here, it's seeing the city from the sea courtesy of Charleston Sailing Charters. Relax on the deck of Fate, a luxurious 50-foot sailing yacht, while watching dolphins dance in the boat's wake. You'll be utterly charmed by the wide-open harbor, ocean breeze and extraordinary scenery. Captain Dustin and his first mate, Evan, have mastered the art of sailing while simultaneously keeping the wine flowing and the conversation going.

7 P.M.

Go Fish

Finish your adventures with innovative cuisine at Fish, situated in the heart of downtown. Chef Nico Romo prepares classic French cuisine with delicate Asian touches in a gorgeously restored 1837 house replete with a piazza. The sweet chili calamari with sesame tempura and the octopus with artichoke *barigoule*, olives, tomato and bacon set the standard for fresh and seasonal. After dinner, stroll down King Street to take in the historic architecture of the neighborhood. 



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