On the Battery

With a rich history written into its well-preserved architecture, moss-covered gardens, and quaint cobblestone streets, this charming South Carolina port town also boasts a cutting-edge food scene, fine-art galleries, and chic shopping districts.

BY Lauren Helmer
PHOTOGRAPHY BY John O'Hagan & Stepanie Welbourne
Nathaniel Russell House Museum is the impeccably restored estate of a wealthy sea merchant. The grandiose home offers a peek into the intricate culture of the busy seaport town during the early days of the American Republic. Enjoy more history at the romantic Two Meeting Street Inn, an iconic Charleston bed-and-breakfast; or stay at the intimate and elegant 126-year-old Wentworth Mansion.
In 1670, eight loyal friends of King Charles II of England founded Charles Town in his honor. Colonial Charleston Towne was home to a diverse mix of ethnic and religious groups—including English, French, traditional Southern, and West African societies—which are still woven into the unique cultural fabric of the city. Charleston's West African descendants, the Gullah community, have had tremendous influence not only on early jazz music, but on Charleston's renowned Lowcountry cuisine as well.

The city is touted as America's most polite and hospitable city, yet its charms extend far beyond its well-mannered people. Shop along the stylish upper King Street, or meander through the landmark...
City Market and purchase a beautiful sweetgrass basket, handmade in the Gullah tradition. The fine arts also flourish in this romantic city, where you can enjoy an entire day simply strolling through its many galleries. But the crowning jewel is surely in its historic landmarks, such as Fort Sumter, where the first shots of the Civil War rang out; and Middleton Place Plantation, a National Historic Landmark, which features an architectural-award-winning inn, decorative gardens, marshland kayak tours, and blacksmith and cooper workshops. And no visit to Charleston is complete without a promenade along the famous Battery and a look at the iconic, colorful mid-18th-century homes of Rainbow Row.
See the city from an artistic point of view with Charleston Art Tours by retracing local art history and discovering emerging artists in dynamic galleries. It’s also easy to be a solo explorer here, so meander through the neighborhoods, and you’ll soon stumble upon architectural gems and other treasures like European-style fromagerie goat.sheep.cow. Peruse the cheeses, wines, and thoughtfully curated charcuterie, or order one of their sandwiches and head to a local park for a gourmet picnic.
Dine at the renowned Peninsula Grill, where the gorgeously plated cuisine resembles a work of fine art, or head to the classic Charleston fish house, Hank’s Seafood, for traditional fried seafood and Lowcountry favorites. Epicurean delights abound in this town where restaurants like Fig, the Hominy Grill, and The Ordinary garner accolades daily. Award-winning shopping can also be found peppered throughout the city. Be sure to browse the elegant attire at clothiers Ben Silver, Billy Reid, and Anne’s, all on King Street.