Charleston is mostly a town of highs—we're talking, of course, about its healthy rooftop bar scene. And it makes sense: where better to soak in that balmy Charleston weather and those unparalleled church spire views than atop one of the city's many swanky hotels? You don't have to be downtown to catch that sweet Southern breeze, either: the watery outskirts of the city yield plenty of options, like a crow's nest over a fish shack that's just right for a beer and a basket of freshly fried oysters. So get climbing—this is a city whose charms are best experienced from on high.
BAR

Aqua Terrace Rooftop Bar

While only three floors up, this slight vantage point is all you need to take in the views of the Ashley River and its attendant marina, something few bars in the city can match. It’s an amenity of the Marriott Hotel, so the decor isn’t anything outrageous, but the comfort levels are high, thanks to a recent renovation, with good quality wicker chairs, heaters, and even a few fire pits peppered about the wrap-around terrace.

ACTIVITY

Revelry Brewing Co.

Navigating the city’s relatively industrial area ensures a reward for beer enthusiasts. This rooftop bar is tantalizingly in view as you pull up to the corrugated iron facade of the venue. Steel and glass make for a sparse interruption to the views that the rooftop offers, and if you’re there at the right time, live music provides the siren song to lure you past the workings of the brewery and up to its heights.
Stars Rooftop & Grill Room

The 'rooftop' aspect is—unusually—right there in the name, so you'd expect something special and you'd be right. Echoing the wood-forward décor of the dining room below is a hardwood-enclosed rooftop bar that boasts the only 360-degree views in the city. High quality timber and simple wicker furniture create a classy but casual space.
BAR

The Rooftop Bar at Vendue

No ordinary rooftop bar, this. The Vendue Hotel lures in its cocktail-drinking prey with a two-tiered rooftop experience, both levels encompassing different covered and uncovered levels, with the entire environs enlivened by playful Pop-Art installations that will keep the Instagram generation snap-happy. Wooden decking and sun-shaded wicker furniture mixes with chic lighting and gleaming bar tops for a high-end rooftop adventure. The harbor views don’t hurt.

BAR

Pavilion Bar

Coming up to the rooftop Pavilion Bar, you’ve already had time to be charmed by the period looks of the Market Pavilion Hotel, its impressive reproductions dating all the way back to 2002. The monochrome-tiled bar area shares its vantage point with a bijoux swimming pool and attendant sun loungers, which makes for a pleasing resort-like atmosphere on sunny days.

RESTAURANT

Élevé

If you like your city experience with a heavy dash of artistic whimsy, then the Grand Bohemian hotel delivers this in spades. The rooftop garden attached to dining room Élevé carries the aesthetic into a playful outdoor space, replete with colorful easy chairs, satiny-lined day loungers, oversized plant pots and bright green, turf-like carpeting that makes for a playful, tea-party-like ambience.

RESTAURANT

Harborview Restaurant & Lounge

You may not immediately think of the restaurant and lounge in a Holiday Inn as a place to make a beeline for; however, the views alone are worth the detour, and when those humid Southern summers hit their peak, an indoor rooftop bar with air conditioning is nothing short of a godsend. The décor may be conservative, but the wraparound windows show off panoramic stretches of the Ashley River to memorable effect.
RESTAURANT

The Watch: Rooftop Kitchen & Spirits →

The entrance to one of the city's best hotels (The Restoration), is unassuming, but those in the know slink through the lobby area to the elevators, which whisk you up to a rooftop restaurant and bar with an industrial-romantic style. Dark hardwoods, steel, and fabrics frame the indoor dining rooms, but two stylishly minimal outdoor patios open up to views of the surrounding historic architecture—and in the distance, the Arthur Ravenel Jr. bridge to Mount Pleasant.

RESTAURANT

Red's Ice House →

There's a wealth of upscale options in Charleston, but sometimes you just want to head out in shorts and a t-shirt for a cold beer, and this elevated wooden shack overlooking Shem Creek is as casual as it comes. Cheap and cheery may be the watchwords, but casual can still come with killer views, and their Crow's Nest bar overlooks the beautiful surrounding creeks from its Mount Pleasant locale.

BAR

The Cocktail Club →

Most cities have them these days: that upscale lounge that's marinated in the history of mixed drinks, and brags an ever-changing menu of inventive craft cocktails and their highly-skilled makers. In Charleston, that place is The Cocktail Club. Note the red leather sofas and whisky crate side tables before stepping on onto the roof garden, where high wooden walls and comfy benches make a perfect, secret garden-esque setting for that muddled fruit sundowner. It's first come, first served, and it gets a little
crazy at peak hours, but if you buy into VIP membership, expect to jump all the way to the front of that line.