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a woman's day in...

Charleston, SC



"After one visit people are ready to move here," says dance professor Eliza Ingle, 42, who's lived in Charleston 18 years. Little wonder: This gracious city blends charm and history, offering the best of the Old South—antebellum mansions, gorgeous gardens, historic churches. And the people are as genteel as the city itself. "Everyone is incredibly polite," says Eliza, a mom of three. For a true sense of this Southern gem, check out Eliza's can't-miss list.

1. TO GET AN UP-CLOSE VIEW OF HISTORIC HOUSES: Take the Fall Tours of Homes and Gardens (preservationsociety.org)

From September 23 through October 24 the Preservation Society of Charleston holds its annual three-hour self-guided walking tour, which gives you a glimpse inside beautiful historic homes. "It's a very popular tour, so buy tickets early," says Eliza. For \$45 per person you'll see at least eight properties, many dating back to the 18th century.

2. FOR A TRUE CHARLESTON EXPERIENCE: Ride in a horse-drawn carriage

Talk about Southern charm! "Carriages take you on a tour of the historic district, and the drivers pass along tidbits about Charleston, like the fact

that the country's first museum was founded here." Classic Carriage Works (classiccarriage.com), Olde Towne Carriage Company (oldetownecarriage.com) and Carolina Polo and Carriage Company (cpcc.com) all charge \$20 for a one-hour ride.

3. BEST WAY TO SPEND A SATURDAY: The Farmers' Market at Marion Square Park

This local favorite runs Saturdays (8 A.M. to 2 P.M.) from April through mid-December. "I go in the morning," says Eliza. "It's especially lively then, with musicians playing, pony rides for kids and artisans



selling their work." Whatever time you go, you'll likely find Charleston's traditional sweetgrass baskets for sale—a perfect souvenir. "We consider these highly sought-after baskets art." To see how they're made, head over to the City Market (Meeting and East Bay Streets), where local craftswomen demonstrate the technique daily.

4. ONE THING YOU MUST DO: Go to the Battery

Located at the southernmost tip of the city, this park offers spectacular water views. "On a sunny day you can see Fort Sumter, where the first shots of the Civil War were fired, in the middle of Charleston Harbor," says Eliza. "It's still warm enough to enjoy; temperatures here stay in the 70s through October." Old cannons and cannonballs line the park—a popular climbing spot for kids.

5. FOR A TASTE OF LOWCOUNTRY

CUISINE: Hominy Grill (hominygrill.com)

"It's *the* place for regional soul food done in a contemporary way," says Eliza. Chef-owner Robert Stehling serves up traditional South Carolina staples like she-crab soup and purloo, but also brings modern flair to classics like catfish (he coats his with sesame seeds). "My favorite is the shrimp and grits," says Eliza. "I order them every time I come here with my husband, David."

6. COOL PLACE FOR LUNCH: Caviar & Bananas (caviarandbananas.com)

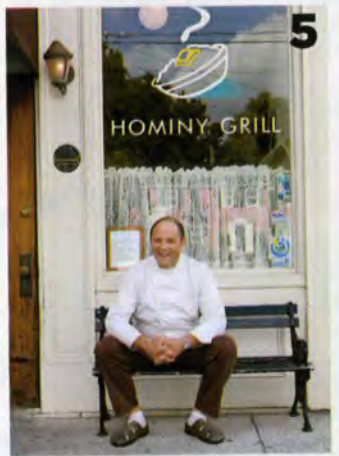
Locals consider it a must-stop for delicious prepared food to go. "Since it's down the street from the College of Charleston, where I teach, I can pop in and pick up sandwiches for a picnic with my kids at the Cistern Yard, on campus," says Eliza. "The cafe is terrific too. Sit inside or grab a table outdoors."

7. FOR YOUR SPRING VACATION ITINERARY:

The Spoleto Festival USA (spoletousa.org) For 17 days each year, Charleston hosts more than 100 daily shows at venues and outdoor spaces in the historic district—everything from ballet to opera to jazz. "Theater, dance and music fill the city 24/7 for those two weeks." Ticket prices average \$10 to \$130, with the best deals on midweek shows. (2011 dates: May 27 through June 12.) **wd**

Interview by Angela Ebron

Where to stay? Go to womansday.com/charleston.



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