

# Southern Style: A Beginner's Charleston Guide

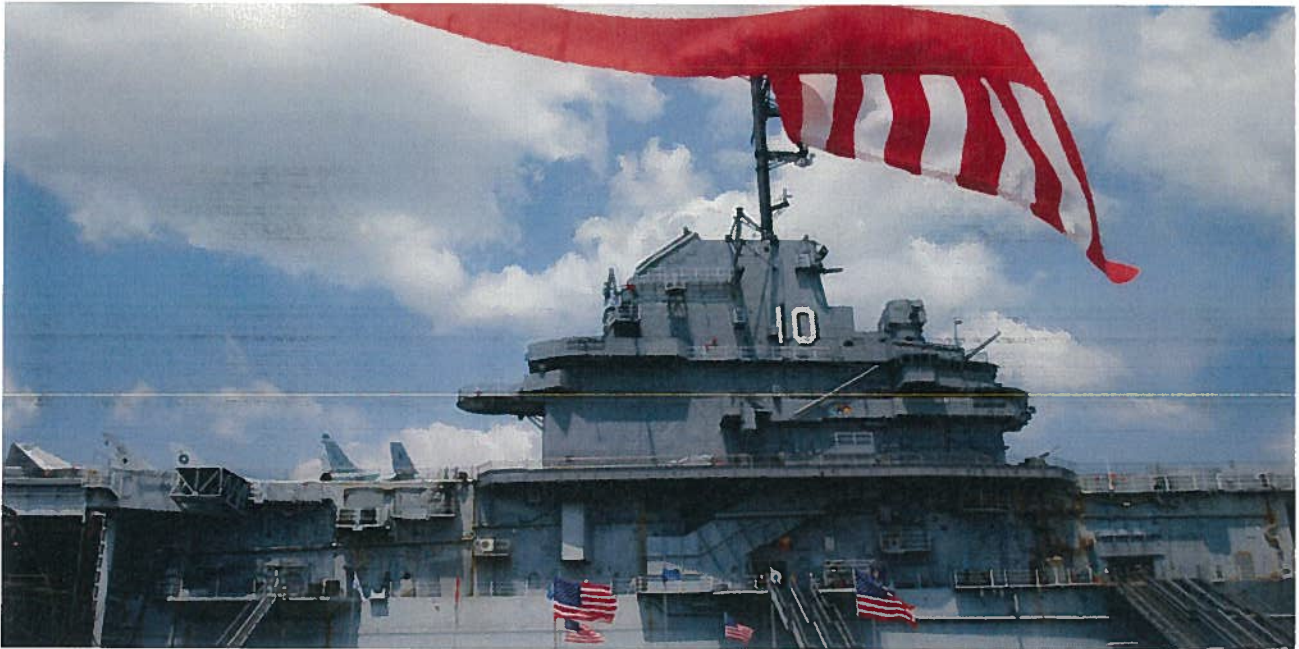
by [Lynn](#) yesterday - last edited yesterday

Situated in South Carolina's bucolic Lowcountry, the Charleston area is a veritable living museum, thanks to pretty, preserved antebellum public buildings, mansions and plantations, lamp-lit cobblestone streets, the restored Historic Charleston City Market, and renowned restaurants serving farm- and sea-to-table southern cuisine the way it was prepared in the Lowcountry centuries earlier.



Carriage tour through the charming residential streets of Charleston, South Carolina © [ExploreCharleston.com](http://ExploreCharleston.com)

Originally settled by British colonists as "Charles Town" in the 1670s, the area that is now Charleston quickly grew into a busy seaport, with many wharves along East Bay Street – which is now lined with award-winning restaurants. Ships bearing deer skins, rice, indigo, and cotton sailed for England and they returned with European staples and luxury items to give the growing town a cosmopolitan air it still retains today. Many places of worship were also built, earning Charleston the nickname "The Holy City." Today, Charleston's rich 300-year history is still very much in evidence as one of America's most beautifully preserved architectural and historical treasures.



USS Yorktown at Patriot's Point, Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina © [ExploreCharleston.com](http://ExploreCharleston.com)

Museums, historic houses, plantations, and restaurants take centre stage in Charleston today. Depending on your interests, museum possibilities have to include: the [Charleston Museum](#); the [Gibbes Museum](#) (specialising in southern art and the Charleston Renaissance period); historic [Patriot's Point](#) and the *USS Yorktown* (a decommissioned aircraft carrier that's now a floating museum with vintage aircraft lining the flight deck); the world-class [South Carolina Aquarium](#) right on the Cooper River; and the Civil War's [Fort Sumter National Monument](#)—reached by tour boat.



Aerial view of the Fort Sumter National Monument © [ExploreCharleston.com](http://ExploreCharleston.com)

Though there are many possibilities open to the public, two of Charleston's best historic houses (Aiken Rhett and Nathaniel Russell houses) can be visited through the [Historic Charleston Foundation](#). And don't miss the Foundation's two great shops at 108 Meeting Street and in the [Historic Charleston City Market](#), which is also *the* place to buy famed sweetgrass baskets.





Classic shrimp & grits dish from Slightly North of Broad, Charleston, South Carolina © Maverick Southern Kitchens

Finally, the many plantations surrounding Charleston are truly living museums and many locals will tell those new to Charleston that **Middleton Place** provides the perfect introduction to Lowcountry plantation life. This is thanks to working gardens, fields, and stables, the House Museum, a restaurant serving typical plantation fare (think she crab soup and shrimp and grits), and even modern accommodations at **The Inn at Middleton Place** for those who want to live like a plantation owner for the night.



Charleston's colourful, pretty streets give it a look all of its own © **Gary Mikel/iStock/Thinkstock**

Charleston has also made modern history by becoming one of America's premier dining destinations. For chef-driven restaurants that feature the bounty of nearby farms and waters make sure to stop by: **Slightly North of Broad** (SNOB to locals); **Charleston Grill**; **Peninsula Grill**; **McCrary's**; **Husk**; **FIG** (Food is Good); **Circa 1886**; **The Macintosh**; and **Magnolias**. Yep, Charleston first-timers should plan on staying several nights and making many lunch and dinner

reservations in advance!

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*Have you visited charming Charleston? What did you make of its unique southern style? Share your experiences with us in the comments below.*

Written by **Lynn Seldon**