

TRAVEL

CHARLESTON:

A Modern City With So Much History

BY MARCI MILLER

LAND AND SEA ATTACKS, pirates, two wars, an earthquake, a hurricane and numerous fires could not dampen the spirits of this world class city...and we are not talking about a city located in the Middle East, Asia or Europe, it's Charleston, SC. Only a five hour drive from Atlanta, this fabulous getway is steeped with so much history dating back to the late 1600s when English settlers came to its shores.

The city continued to flourish as a great port city and became known as a place of religious tolerance, called the Holy City for its numerous churches. By the mid-18th century Charleston had become a bustling trade center, the hub of the Atlantic trade for the southern colonies. The first shots of the Civil War came from Charleston's Fort Sumter, but the Union forces repeatedly bombarded the city, causing vast damage. And just as the city was rebounding from war, On August 31, 1886, Charleston was nearly destroyed by an earthquake measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale. However, through it all, the people of Charleston have managed to persevere and have gone on to restore their fine city, making it a top tourist destination and the 2nd most sought after wedding destination in the United States.

When you first enter Charleston's historic downtown, you can't help but notice the beautiful architecture, the historic sites, museums and the plethora of fantastic restaurants and pubs! It's also a busy city, a million visitors a year visit Charleston. They come to see, experience, and learn about the history of this town. If you happen to be there on a Friday afternoon, the area is extremely hectic as that is when the Carnival Cruise Ship "Fantasy" leaves port for a 5-Night Bahamas & Bermuda cruise or 6 or 7-Night Eastern Caribbean cruise.

CHARLESTON'S MUSEUM MILE (www.charlestonmuseummile.org) features the richest concentration of cultural sites open to visitors in downtown Charleston. Stroll the one-mile section of Meeting Street and you will discover six museums, five nationally important historic houses, four scenic parks and a Revolutionary War powder magazine, as well as numerous historic houses of worship and public buildings including the Market and City Hall. Museums on the mile include **THE CHARLESTON MUSEUM**, which has a great mix of southern history along with a fantastic natural history collection.

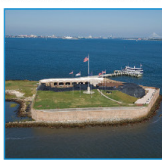
CONFEDERATE MUSEUM GIBBES MUSEUM OF ART, OLD SLAVE MART MUSEUM and the OLD EXCHANGE MUSEUM and PROVOST DUNGEON. The Provost Dungeon is definitely worth a look. It played an important role in the history of Charleston during the Revolutionary War. Barrel vaulted ceiling and columns provide a structurally sound foundation for the upper floors of the Old Exchange, but also created an oppressive space in which the British detained prominent Charlestonians who were accused of giving intelligence to Americans during the Revolutionary war.

Away from the museum mile, make sure to visit the **SOUTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM** (www.scaquarium.org). Located on the Charleston Harbor, the aquarium features 5,000-6,000 amazing aquatic animals from river otters and sharks to loggerhead turtles

including 47 exhibits with animals. The exhibit path leads visitors through the five major regions of the Southeast Appalachian Waterbed as found in South Carolina: the Mountains, the Piedmont, the Coastal Plain, the Coast, and the Ocean. Interactive exhibits at the Aquarium include the new Feed the Rays experience and renovated Salt Marsh Aviary, Toddler Cove, the Albino Alligator and several education stations.



A great way to see and experience Charleston is as a carriage rider. The **OLD SOUTH CARRIAGE COMPANY** (www.oldsouthcarriage.com) is a perfect choice. All of Old South's surrey-style carriages feature ample seating and use Percheron & Belgian draft horses, which can easily drag 3 times their own weight on kids. A one hour Charleston carriage tour covers more than 2.5 miles and 50 blocks of the historic downtown. The tour stops by numerous churches, hotels (including the Mills Hotel which Robert E. Lee is credited for saving from fire), historical houses, the Battery waterfront and much more! There are also numerous walking tours of the city available, visit Charleston Strolls (www.charlestonstrolls.com) for more information.



FORT SUMTER is a historical landmark that has withstood the test of time. The fort stands in the Charleston harbor, and is accessible by boat only. Confederate garrisons opened on the fort on April 12, 1861 which initiated the first battle of the Civil War. **FORT SUMTER TOURS** provides the only commercial boat transportation to Fort Sumter. There are two locations from which you can depart: Liberty Square in downtown Charleston, or in Mt. Pleasant at the Patriots Point Maritime Museum. After boarding, visitors will experience a 30 minute cruise through Charleston's historic harbor out to Fort Sumter. The tour is fully narrated and explains many points of interest and historic significance. At Fort Sumter National Park, historians will provide detailed information about Fort Sumter and its pivotal role in the war between the states.



After one hour at the Fort, visitors will cruise back to port.



Another popular attraction is **THE USS YORKTOWN** housed at the Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum. This naval ship participated significantly in the Pacific Offensive that began in late 1943 and ended with the defeat of Japan in 1945. Yorktown received the Presidential Unit Citation and earned 11 battle stars for service in World War II. **PATRIOTS POINT NAVAL & MARITIME MUSEUM** is also home to the USS Laffey, priceless war planes used during wars and conflicts spanning from WWII to Desert Storm and the Congressional Medal of Honor Museum with tons of interactive exhibits.



When in a coastal town like Charleston, one can't help but crave seafood and there are plenty of restaurants in the city ready to fit the bill. **A.W. SHUCK'S** (325 S. Market Street, Charleston, SC 29401, 843.721.1151, www.a-w-shucks.com) is known for its award-winning stuffed shrimp entree, shrimp stuffed with Carolina deviled crab, wrapped in bacon and deep fried and its she-crab soup, a creamy blend of blue crab meat and rice and seasoned with sherry. There's the popular raw bar which serves pulls of steamed oysters year-round and Shuck's also

offers delicious shrimp, scallop, crab, and oyster dishes, prepared any way you like. If you are looking for a non-fish option, the smoke pulled chicken sandwich is a great choice and comes with seasoned French fries. The big sizes is sweet and tangy and the fries are crispy and delicious. It's a great place to hang out, grab a beer and watch a game on one of their many big screen TVs. The average menu price ranges from \$5.99 to \$19.99 making A.W. Shuck's an affordable option for lunch and dinner.



Another great choice is **GILLIGAN'S SEAFOOD RESTAURANTS** (www.gilligans.com) which serves fresh seafood in a family friendly, casual atmosphere. With 9 locations in Charleston, Gilligan's is committed to supporting local shrimpers by serving 100% domestic wild-caught shrimp in all of their locations. Their menu has also received a Platinum Partner certification based on the sustainability of their seafood. Start your meal with Oysters-on-the-Half-Shell raw or steamed...other fresh fish served daily include shrimp, scallops, crab, tuna and more. Specials at Gilligan's include their famous Lowcountry Stee-Fry with grilled shrimp, sausage, and shredded cabbage seasoned with mild Cajun spices, served over a bed of red rice with fried okra. And don't forget Gilligan's famous hushpuppies, red rice, and roasted baby bakery potatoes. Gilligan's is now offering a "create your own" 3 course meal for only \$20 at all of their locations and All-You-Can-Eat Domestic Fried Shrimp (all locations) for \$18.95 per person, including two sides. Offering Charleston's largest selection of wines by the glass, **SOCIAL RESTAURANT & WINE BAR** (188 East Bay Street, 843.723.1151, www.socialeatbar.com) has become the preeminent wine bar of Charleston. Social features a stunning four-thousand bottle display cellar, where numerous exclusive wines are stored. Complementing its extensive wine selection,



Social serves modern American cuisine with an authentic wood-burning oven as its focal point. A native Charlestonian, owner Brad Ball grew up in the restaurant industry, with his family owning six different restaurants in the area, including the well-known Pooanan's Pizzeria. Ball opened Social opened in 2007 and has received much acclaim. The menu specializes in small & large plates, pizzas, sliders, salads and more. Their outstanding appetizers include their spinach, artichoke & roasted tomato dip with toasted pita...the flavors are unique and the spinach is fresh and not wilted like most dips. Known for their pizzas, Social's unique eggplant pizza is served with mixed greens w/balsamic dressing on top of the pie. The sliders do not disappoint and the Asian braised pork shoulder was a mix of spicy pork and spicy pineapple, served on a large roll. The ale braised short rib is also a recommended dish and literally melts in the mouth. Social also features a pre-fixe menu which features a 3 course meal for \$15 or \$25 with wine pairings... this includes an appetizer, main dish and dessert. In addition, Social also features a \$3 Happy Hour Menu...\$3 for a wine, beer and premium wild liquor drinks and \$3 for appetizers.



CIRCA 1886, (149 Wentworth Street, Charleston, 843.853.7838, www.circa1886.com) a fine dining restaurant, is located on the grounds of the Wentworth Mansion in downtown historic Charleston. The restaurant serves a seasonal menu with a focus on local product, high quality ingredients and Southern flavors. Executive Chef Marc Collins puts his own forward-thinking spin on traditional Lowcountry dishes. The menu consists of an array of appetizers, main dishes and homemade desserts. Two great ways to start your meal is with the argula salad with sun-dried peaches, candied pistachios, feta and the chilled american lobster panza cotta, served with spiced pineapple relish. Main meals feature meats, fish, chicken and game. The seared red maple farmed beef tenderloin is served with parsnip potato puree & wild mushroom ragout and a great alternative to traditional meat dish is the antelope loin, which is brined in coffee and served with grapes, pine nuts and pearl onion in an orange salsa glaze. You must leave room for dessert served with vanilla ice cream flavored like cheddar cheese. The chocolate truffle soufflé is served with godiva anglaise and chocolate sorbet and don't miss the warm banana chocolate chip pecan cake served with spiced brown n' sugar orange ice cream. Ask about a special tasting menu

which features your choice of appetizer, entree and dessert served with special pairings of wine. After dinner, make sure to tour the Wentworth mansion, a 5 diamond property featuring 21 luxurious rooms and suites. A "must see" is the cupelo located at the top of the mansion. A cupelo is a dome-like structure that gives a 360 degree panoramic view of the city. The view out of the cupelo were amazing and a great way to see the city's skyline.



Tucked away in a small strip center in downtown Charleston, **DIXIE SUPPLY BAKERY & CAFE** (62 State Street, Charleston, 843.722.5650, www.dixiesupplybakery.com) is a hidden gem. They serve homemade, heartwarming goodies including stone-ground grits, omelets, stuffed french toast, and pancakes for breakfast. The lunch menu includes the classic shrimp & grits, and the Dixie burger or the daily blue plate specials. Executive Chef Patrick Woodham and his wife Miranda, met in culinary school in nearby Summerville and joined forces with the cafe owners Allen and Kris Holmes and have taken generations of Holmes' family recipes to the next level while maintaining the mission, "Fine Southern Food for a Reasonable Price". The feel of the cafe is casual...regulars bring their own mugs and you can't help but feel you are sitting amongst family. The food is incredible...the heirloom tomato pie is filled with fresh tomato, basil and cheese. The banana bread French toast is thick and sweet and topped with whipped cream and a special made corned beef hash topped with an over easy egg is just right for a Sunday Morning. But this cafe on your list of places to eat when visiting Charleston!



If you are looking for an affordable and convenient place to stay, **THE COURTYARD CHARLESTON HISTORIC DISTRICT HOTEL** is just steps away from all the action in downtown Charleston. The hotel is a fantastic location for business and leisure and boasts 7,800 square feet of flexible meeting space. The rooms are modern, bright and spacious. The Bistro located in the lobby offers healthy options, cocktails and Starbucks coffee. Finally, Chief Concierge, Kevin McQuade is one of the city's best and helps all guests make the most out of their stay in Charleston. So, pat Charleston, SC on your list of vacation destinations. It's the perfect mix of old and new. You'll feel as if you have been transported back to another time, while still enjoying all the amenities of a modern city.