



...in the real world...

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The Lure of the Lowcountry — Charleston, South Carolina

By Gail A. Paparian

Stepping onto any street in peninsula Charleston presents a unique opportunity to be part of a living, breathing, vibrant interactive museum. Where too much of the past has been destroyed or paved over, Charleston reigns supreme with a critical eye for detail and rigid guidelines for historic preservation. A visitor is immediately drawn through a window to the past where architecture and magnificent gardens set heady standards. Forget your passports and the trip to Europe, history lives in Charleston, South Carolina.



The fabled Battery

The gentle and genteel people of Charleston have survived natural disasters and the ravages of war. The city has not only survived, Charleston has flourished. A history lover's dream and a walker's delight, the city's restaurants offer an eclectic blend of culinary choices, guaranteed to put a strain on the resolve of even the most dedicated dieter. Did I mention the plantations, the houses, the gardens, the shopping, the ocean and the barrier islands, the fishing and championship golf courses?

A Bit of History

In 1670, English settlers arrived at Albemarle Point establishing Charles Towne, named for King Charles II. The city moved to its current peninsula location ten years later. The booming 1730s saw construction of public and private structures, many which still exist and function today.

Drawn reluctantly into the American Revolution, Charleston succeeded in scoring a decisive victory when the British Fleet was repelled from taking control of Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. The British were expelled and Charles Towne incorporated and shortened its name to Charleston in 1783.

When the Union put into law that slave trading was to cease immediately, even though slave owners in the south could keep their existing slaves, battle lines were drawn. South Carolina was the first state to secede from the Union, with other states following.

When cadets from the Citadel marched to Fort Johnson on James Island and fired upon Union troops occupying Fort Sumter, the Civil War began in earnest. For three years, battles were fought and won on both sides. The Union prevailed, but hundreds of thousands of lives were lost during the Civil War.

Union troops were marching from Savannah, GA to Charleston. General Sherman spared Charleston, as he sought to and succeeded in destroying Columbia, the capitol of the state. Charleston still lives and history has been preserved.

Touring the Peninsula



Joseph P. Riley, Jr. has been the mayor of Charleston since 1975 and has been responsible for historic preservation as well as redevelopment in Charleston.

Serving as the city's chief administrator, Riley is always ready to talk about the Lowcountry. Commenting on his favorite month, Riley recently said, "Charleston's beauty in April is sensuous--- the colors of the flowers, the pastels of the buildings, the smell of the shrubs, the breezes off the harbor--- it's extraordinary."

Historic preservation of Charleston was more of a necessity than desire, as

after the Civil War no money was available for remodeling. In 1886 an earthquake hit Charleston, affecting over 2,000 structures. As rebuilding began, iron rods were run through the inside and fastened on the outside of buildings to protect them from further quakes. The round and star shaped bolts are still visible in many of Charleston's buildings.

Allow enough time to take advantage of touring historic Charleston. There are buildings that predate the Revolutionary War, with hundreds more being built in the 1800's. A good starting point is the Charleston Visitor Center (375 Meeting Street).

Self-guided tour maps are available, as are other touring options by boat, bus, van, hoof or foot. If you are able, walking is the best way to see the peninsula. DASH buses are another way to travel with special pricing passes available on a daily or multiple-day basis. Seniors ride for less. Schedules are readily available and shelters, benches and trolley stops are located throughout the city. Combination admission to houses, plantations and museums are available too.

Charleston is known for its architecture, be it colonial or Georgian Palladian. It is interesting to note that the street (front) door did not enter the house, it opened onto the piazza. The



owners, was located in the middle of the expansive verandah.

The "single house" was just that, a single room across. Most of the houses were built several stories high with the carriage houses, 'dependencies' and slave quarters located behind. The taxing was done on the frontage, so the narrower the front, the less taxes paid.

Renowned for the ironworks throughout the city, much of it was lost as it was melted down and used for cannonballs during the Civil War.



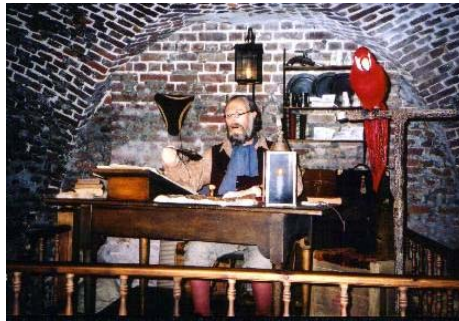
Charleston's narrow streets are shared with pedestrians, modern vehicles and horse-drawn carriages. Ships would leave Charleston's bustling port loaded

with rice, cotton and indigo. On the return trips, cobblestones were loaded to balance the ships. Cobblestone and brick streets exist in Charleston today.

Edmonston-Alston House

Built by wealthy merchant Charles Edmonston in 1828, the house was later purchased by Col. William Alston. Located on East Battery, there is a commanding view of the Cooper River out to Fort Sumter. The house is furnished with family possessions including folio tables where artwork collected from trips abroad was exhibited.

The Alston house was one of the first to be piped for gas after it was introduced to the city in 1846. "Gasoliers" became a prime source of lighting. Charleston benches and joggling boards became garden mainstays. The "joggling board", said to have originated in the Lowcountry in the 1800s was a long board suspended between two sturdy supports allowing one to bounce up and down and rock side to side. Legend has it that couples courting would bounce from one end to the other and meet in the middle, assuring a successful courtship. Other accountings indicate the board was created to aid a wealthy, arthritis sufferer.



Old Exchange Building & Provost Dungeon

Considered to be one of the three most historically significant Colonial buildings in the United States, it was built by the British in 1771 as the Customs House and incarcerated American Patriots in the dungeon. Visitors see the Half-Moon Battery portion of the Charles Towne Sea Wall built to defend the colony from pirates in the late 1600's. Lifelike figures serve as narrators for some dungeon tales and history.

SOB

In this case, "SOB" denotes an area and social standing! It means "South of Broad," and takes the visitor to the high rent district of the city of Charleston. Reaching the intersection of Meeting and Broad brings one to what is known as "The Four Corners of the Law." City Hall (local law); the recently refurbished courthouse (state law); U.S. Post Office (federal law) and St. Michael's (church law).



Arts and Entertainment

Built in 1736, the Dock Street Theater was the first building constructed intentionally for theatrical productions in America.

The Planter's Hotel was constructed

around the ruins of the original theater in the early 1800's. It is said that the drink, Planter's Punch originated here. Rebuilt in the mid-1930's, live performances continue at the Dock Street today.

The 26th Spoleto Festival USA will run from May 24, 2002 - June 9, 2002. Venues throughout historic Charleston host artistic performances from opera to jazz to live theater. More musical choices include orchestral, chamber and contemporary.

Enamored with Dubose Heyward's novel "Porgy"- the summer of 1934 brought George Gershwin from New York to Folly Beach (located across the Ashley River, through James Island). There, with inspiration from locals inhabiting the nearby islands, Gershwin composed the legendary, "Porgy and Bess."

Plantations

Plantations accounted for most of the industry of the south. For many years, cotton was king, "Carolina Gold" (rice) was widely exported as was indigo. The harvesting of the crops was labor intensive and the success of a plantation was measured not by acreage, but by the headcount of slaves.

Many of the better-known plantations and gardens were located along the Ashley River, as water was the major avenue of travel. To that end, the front of the grand houses faced the water.

Drayton Hall

Located over 630 acres, Drayton Hall was finished in 1742 and is the only plantation to survive both the American Revolution and the Civil War. Electricity was never introduced and the house is empty of furniture. Instead, it is a testimony to 18th century craftsmanship.

Middleton Place

Henry Middleton, President of the First Continental Congress began construction of the gardens in 1741. Burned to the ground in 1865, Middleton Place is now a National Historic Landmark. The house details the history of generations of Middletons, while the grounds include the oldest

landscaped gardens in the country. The terraced gardens are magnificent and Middleton provides interactive examples of a working plantation. One can see how rice was grown and processed. Craftsmen of the day included “coopers” – the makers of the round barrels.

Magnolia Plantation and Gardens



Allow several hours here because it’s worth it. Originally 1500 acres, John Drayton was forced to sell off 1000 acres after the Civil War in order to rebuild. Drayton descendants still own the property. Magnolia Gardens, oldest in the U. S. has bloomed year-round since 1680. Tours include: the plantation house, the grounds and the incomparable swamp gardens. Like the others, Magnolia was a working plantation and the family did their formal entertaining in town.

Boone Hall Plantation

Located in Mt. Pleasant, Boone Hall



was originally a 17,000 acre cotton plantation, although bricks and tiles were also produced and pecans grown.

At its peak, Boone Hall plantation had 120 slaves, a sign of its prosperity. Nine of the original 27 slave cabins remain on the property. The inhabitants of these brick structures were the house servants and craftsman; the elite in the slave pecking order. A quarter mile of moss draped



live oaks make an incomparable entry way to the main house, rebuilt in 1934 and has served as the backdrop for movies and television programs.

More to See



A 1,400-year-old tree? That’s what they guess is the age of Charleston’s **Angel Oak**. You must see it to believe it. Over 65 feet tall, with a circumference of 25.5 feet, it shades an area of 17,000 square feet.

Museums, art galleries, public and private buildings abound. The **South Carolina Aquarium** has more than 65 exhibits and is home to 10,000 animals and 5,000 plants indigenous to South Carolina. You are only limited by your energy level and the length of your stay.

Shopping

From antiques up and down King Street to a variety of goods sold at the City Market, Charleston offers something for everyone. The “sweet grass” baskets have become world famous. The material, grown only in South Carolina’s Low-country is an outgrowth of a craft practiced by generations of African-Americans. Gullah, a



Dining

Diet before you come to Charleston as you do not want to deny yourself Low-country cuisine. Award winning chefs masterfully ply their craft to tempt your palate. A shell fish lover’s paradise, delight in fresh, seasonal fare including shrimp, clams, crabs, mussels and oysters.

Local favorites like she-crab soup, Frogmore stew, shrimp grits and any kind of okra will have you begging for more. Restaurants range from simple to gourmet; modestly priced to seriously expensive.

Outdoors

Being outside is a way of life in and around Charleston be it for fishing, cycling, boating, golf, tennis or walking. Barrier islands offer miles of expansive beaches. Charleston can satisfy your cravings for history, gourmet dining and incomparable natural beauty.

Most of all, the people of Charleston are special. Gentility and civility are ways of life practiced daily by the people of Charleston. We could all borrow a page from that book.

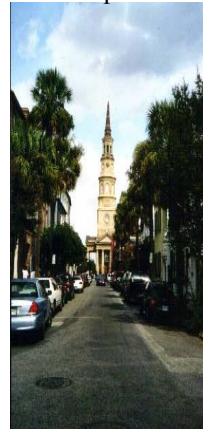
(For more detailed information, www.charlestoncvb.com, or call 800/868.8118.)

Known as the ‘Holy City’ - Charleston is known for its many churches.

St. Michael’s



St. Philips



Swing in Charleston

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“Firsts” are nothing new for Charleston. Along with its other distinctions, the first golf course in the United States, (Harleston Green) and first golf club (the South Carolina Golf Club) was established in 1786. It is thought that the term “green fees” came from the money collected from members to maintain the course.

Known for historic preservation, Charleston is also home to golf courses of awe-inspiring beauty and offers challenges for golfers of any skill level. There are seaside, links layouts and others allowing one to hit over and around lowcountry marshes. When you pack your clubs, make certain to bring a camera and lots of film.

Kiawah Island



If you are seeking a destination resort where golf and nature abound, consider Kiawah Island, about 21 miles from Charleston. Ten miles of pristine beaches offer incomparable

views of the Atlantic Ocean and South Carolina marshes. The Island has AAA Four Diamond ratings for its Inn and Villa accommodations, as well as for two of its restaurants. There are tennis clubs, children’s recreation programs, and bicycle paths.

Five courses are available and each has its own distinctive signature. The famed Pete Dye designed **Ocean Course** was the site of the 1991 Ryder Cup and the 1997 World Cup of Golf. The Course has achieved the designation as a “Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.” It has been reported that the World Cup is returning here in 2003.

There are views of the Atlantic from every hole; with 10 holes on the ocean. Punishing from the gold tees (7269, 152 slope), there are three (more realistic) sets of tees. While the yardage shortens, the scope of beauty does not diminish. From ocean breezes, to ever-changing colors of sea oats, experiencing the Ocean Course can be the thrill of a lifetime. (Rates for the Ocean Course are about \$245 per person for outside play. Considerations are made for resort guests; golf packages are available.)



(Note: Easily one of the best known holes in the world, the 17th has claimed many a ball. Drained one year after the Ryder Cup matches, 34,000 balls were retrieved!)

Charleston National



Ranked the #1 non-resort course in the Charleston area by Golf Magazine, **Charleston National** is located in Mt. Pleasant. Designer Rees Jones used the natural contour of the lowcountry for this spectacular championship course that accents its natural beauty as well as offers its own set of golf challenges. Meandering through marshlands and lagoons further adds to the charm and beauty of this 18-hole championship course. Three sets of tees (6975 back; 6100 middle and 5100 forward are fairly placed).

The strategically placed wooden bridges carry golfers over natural areas and provide spectacular views. When the tide is low, one can see evidence of misjudged shots! This is another course where a camera is your friend. (Fees range from \$34 to \$79, including cart).

For more information on any golf course in the Charleston area- www.charlestongolfinc.com or call toll free 800/774-4444).

(Gail Paparian is a freelance writer/consultant. She can be reached by email: gail@writingsolutions.com. Visit her website. www.writingsolutions.com)