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MORGAN STANLEY

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+

BEACH BOOKS

SUMMER
SANDWICHES

THE CHILLEST
CHAIR

IN DEFENSE OF
RIESLING

Creative Charleston

Where to Go, Shop,
Eat, Stay, and Play

POOLS WITH A SPLASH
FRAMED!: A CULTURE CALENDAR
ROW WITH THE FLOW

CHARLESTON *by* DESIGN

BY KELSEY OGLETREE

A MECCA FOR ARTS AND CULTURE, CHARLESTON IS
A DESTINATION THAT FANS VISIT AGAIN AND AGAIN.
THERE'S PLENTY TO DISCOVER.

PETER FRANK EDWARDS / CHARLESTON PLACE

DRINKS DATE
The Charleston Grill
at the Charleston
Place hotel

“Come quickly, have found heaven.”

P

ainter Alfred
Hutty, a
Midwesterner
who would
become one

of the leaders of an art movement called the Charleston Renaissance, supposedly telegraphed those five words to his wife when he first visited the city in 1919. Whether you’ve visited Charleston before or are thinking about going for the first time, you may well find yourself thinking the same once you’re in town.

More than a century later, Charleston is still among the country’s top meccas for design. Indeed, beauty and creativity date to its early days. Established in 1670 in an area where more than a dozen Native American tribes lived, “this was the wealthiest city in Colonial America,” says Tyler Friedman, a historian and the founder of **Walk & Talk Charleston**, which leads history-themed walking tours. She adds, “That wealth meant the opportunity [for residents] to support artists and artisans, and some of the most impressive pieces of art and furniture were coming out of Charleston”—and that only attracted more artists to come to this port city.

This creative spirit lives on throughout modern Charleston, with architecture, shopping, museums, galleries, hotels, and restaurants to delight design lovers. Here’s what to see, do, and experience in the “Holy City.”



←
LOCAL LANDSCAPE
Alfred Hutty's
Magnolia Gardens
at the Gibbes
Museum of Art

→
GORGEOUS GEORGIAN
The Miles
Brewton House

↓
HORSE DRAWN
A carriage tour is
one of many ways
to see the city.

COURTESY GIBBES MUSEUM; JONATHAN BECKER / GETTY IMAGES; RIVER NORTH PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES



ARCHITECTURE

HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE TOURS are a frequent sight in downtown Charleston, and they’re a good way to see the city if you can’t walk or stand for several hours (and you can tolerate the smell). However, walking tours such as Friedman’s, or those led by guides with **Tours by Locals** (select Eric Lavender if you’re into ghost stories), feel more immersive—and they can be customized to your interests.

People tend to gravitate toward popular tourist spots like the Battery and Rainbow Row, but walking-tour guides will help you discover hidden gems around the city that not every other group is hearing about. For instance, **Lower King Street** has a unique mix of modern homes and vernacular single houses (a hallmark

of Charleston design in which the narrow side of the house is on the street and the long part of the house extends back into the lot). The Georgian-style **Miles Brewton House**, completed in 1769 and a good example of the Charleston double house style (which faces the street at full length), is also on this street.

Also off the beaten path is the residential **Ansonborough** neighborhood, considered Charleston’s first suburb, with houses dating back to the 1740s. “It’s less swarming with humans on the sidewalk, so you can get a coffee, go at your own pace, and explore,” says Friedman. Ansonborough is also home to the historic **Gadsden House**, a beautifully restored home built in 1798 that’s now an event venue.



SHOPPING

GIVEN ITS LONG HISTORY, it's no surprise Charleston is a prime place to shop for antiques. You can visit its dedicated **Antiques District** on King Street, where window shopping or searching for specific pieces is equally enjoyable. Add **Tucker Payne Antiques**, **The Silver Vault**, **George C. Birlant & Co.**, **Golden & Associates**, and **Trianon Antiques** to your list. You'll find brilliant art galleries around just about every corner, too. Be sure to visit **Helena Fox Fine Art**, which specializes in work from American artists, including Lowcountry native West Fraser.

Men's shops that celebrate high design abound in Charleston, too. Locally owned favorites include **Grady Ervin & Co.**, **Ben Silver**, and **M. Dumas & Sons**. If you're looking for jewelry, don't miss

Croghan's Jewel Box. This family-owned store has been around for more than a century and has a wide selection of both fine and estate jewelry and home accessories. The sisters who run it now are always in the store and fun to talk with.

Skip the souvenir shops and bring home a few gems from local makers, such as **Old Whaling Co.** on King Street. The company makes delicious-smelling, sea-inspired soaps, body butters, bath bombs, and candles. (Insider tip: Ask how soaps are mixed, poured, and cut by hand and you'll be sent home with an imperfect sample.) **Candlefish**, famous for its candles in 100 different scents, is another must-see, and you can also take a candle-making workshop at the King Street store.

← **PREPPED FOR SUCCESS**
The Ben Silver men's clothing shop

↑ **THE FINER THINGS**
Croghan's Jewel Box has more than jewelry.

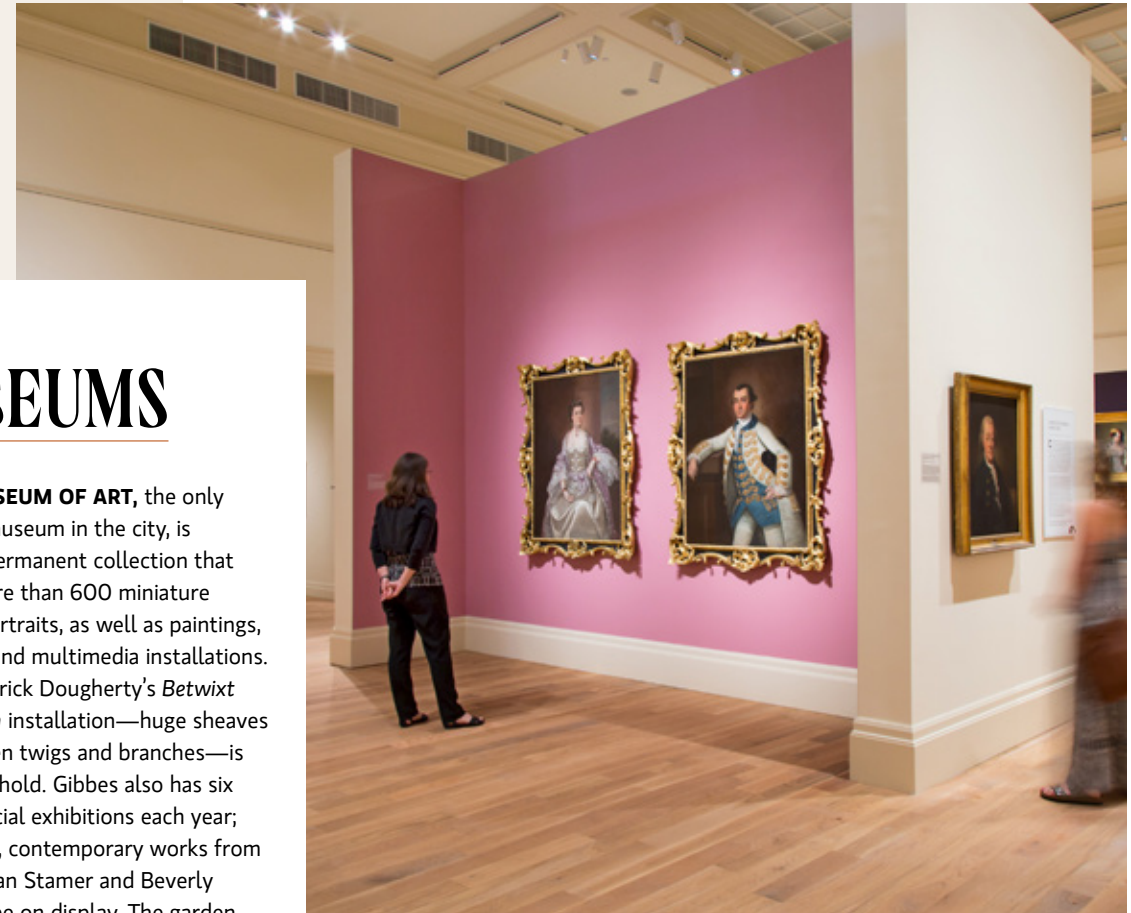
PETER FRANK EDWARDS / REDUX (2)

MUSEUMS

GIBBES MUSEUM OF ART, the only visual-arts museum in the city, is home to a permanent collection that includes more than 600 miniature American portraits, as well as paintings, sculptures, and multimedia installations. Sculptor Patrick Dougherty's *Betwixt and Between* installation—huge sheaves of interwoven twigs and branches—is a sight to behold. Gibbes also has six to eight special exhibitions each year; this summer, contemporary works from artists Damian Stamer and Beverly McIver will be on display. The garden behind the museum is another beautiful spot where you can meditate on the pieces you've viewed inside.

The long-anticipated **International African American Museum** is expected to be open after 15 months of delays. Addressing Charleston's painful history as a center of the slave trade in America, the museum will share the stories of the millions of Africans forcibly brought to the New World, including the tens of thousands who first set foot on American soil at Gadsden's Wharf, the very spot upon which it's built. Designed by Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, the sobering and educational experience will include a remembrance pool, memorial garden, and family history center.

The **McLeod Plantation Historic Site**, now a carefully preserved Gullah-Geechee heritage site, includes homes built for enslaved families. You can tour it with guides who share details of the daily lives of those who lived on the plantation before and after slavery.



← **ART SMART**
The Gibbes Museum

↓ **HEART OF HISTORY**
The courtyard of the International African American Museum



COURTESY GIBBES MUSEUM; TONY CENICOLA / NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX



HOTELS

WITH SO MANY BEAUTIFUL accommodations around downtown Charleston, it's hard to go wrong choosing a hotel. **The Dewberry**, with midcentury modern décor, is whimsical and fun (rooms from \$351). It also claims the highest rooftop in town (home to the **Citrus Club** bar and restaurant) and the new **John Derian Flat**, a one-of-a-kind designer suite filled with decoupage pieces and goods and textiles evoking a well-traveled collector's escape.

The Loutrel, which opened in 2021, is another great option, with calming rooms in shades of light blue, gray, and gold and an incredible painting by a local artist in the lobby (rooms from \$329). **Zero George** is among the only hotels in town that let you stay in a Charleston single house (rooms from \$499), and it also has an amazing restaurant and the intimate, eight-seat **Caviar Bar**.

For an experience that's traditional Charleston, **The Charleston Place** fits the bill, with elegantly appointed rooms, several restaurants (including the classic **Charleston Grill**, with live jazz nightly), and a luxurious spa (rooms from \$405). If your style is more contemporary, check into **The Vendue**, an art-focused boutique hotel that's decorated with bold reds and filled with surprises (rooms from \$289).



↖ **STILL WATERS**
A bathroom at the Loutrel hotel

← **THE LIVED-IN LOOK**
The John Derian Flat at the Dewberry

COURTESY THE LOUTREL; ANDREW CEBULKA / THE DEWBERRY



FOOD

CHARLESTON HAS EARNED its reputation as a culinary powerhouse, filled with incredible restaurants and talented chefs. Not sure where to start? Book a half-day food tour with **Undiscovered Charleston**, where you'll walk and feast with local chef Forrest Parker. **FIG**, with a recently reimagined dining room, has long been one of the best restaurants in town, specializing in Lowcountry seafood and other Southern dishes, while newcomer **Sorelle**, which opened in February inside three historic townhouses, inspires with both its design and its flavor-packed menu of southern Italian cuisine. 🍷

COURTESY CHARLESTON GRILL; PETER FRANK EDWARDS / SORELLE



↑ **DINNER TABLE**
A meal at the Charleston Grill at the Charleston Place hotel

← **GOOD STUFF TO GO**
Coffee from the Mercato at the Sorelle