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LOW COUNTRY STAR

Thanks to expanding art and design communities, urbane shops, and an exploding restaurant scene, there's new vibrancy in old Charleston



Clockwise from left: Palladian-style Drayton Hall, one of the finest pre-Revolutionary homes in the country. Furnishings and decorative items at John Pope Antiques. The 1893 building that houses the restaurant Husk, which serves up innovative Southern cuisine. A selection of classic menswear at Ben Silver.

Coursed by palmetto-lined promenades and graced with some of America's best-preserved historic architecture, Charleston, South Carolina, still bows to traditions—from Sunday suppers to sweet tea and pralines—while keeping up with the 21st century. The city is bursting with a cosmopolitan energy that is attracting once-strayed Southerners and a growing number of transplants who are shaking things up—in food, fashion, and design. “Charleston is filled with people doing creative things,” says Brett Carron, a former New Yorker who owns the men’s shop Indigo & Cotton. “This is a receptive, supportive community. You can take risks.”

Newcomers and old guard alike turn out for the **Charleston Antiques Show**, March 22–24, which is marking its tenth year with an opening-night benefit for Historic Charleston (historiccharleston.org), the fair’s organizer. An even bigger draw is the **Spoletto** performing-arts festival (spoletousa.org), running May 24 to June 9 this year and presenting everything from Shakespeare to flamenco to Rosanne Cash. Of course, with



its cultural sites, beaches, smart shops, and one of the country’s liveliest food scenes, Charleston is bustling all year long.

WHERE TO STAY

Most of the city’s best hotels can be found downtown, close to the center of the action. The newest, just opened in February, is the 18-room **Zero George** (zerogeorge.com), occupying a series of converted 19th-



century homes connected by lovely courtyards. Book the gracious garden suite that is set in an old carriage house and features a parlor, bedroom, and study with pine floors and handcrafted furniture. Another recently opened boutique property is the **Restoration on King** (restorationonking.com), 16 suites in three adjacent historic buildings, with exposed-brick walls and dark-wood floors; a breakfast of fresh fruit and just-baked muffins is delivered to guests each morning in a picnic basket.

Perhaps the grandest of the city’s grande dame hotels is the five-star **Charleston Place** (charlestonplace.com), boasting a large spa and 435 spacious rooms, decorated with 18th-century-style furnishings and silk brocades. The hotel is also home to

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RICHARD ELLIS; JANICE J. ROSSMAN; COURTESY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD DINING GROUP; PETER FRANK EDWARDS/CONDÉ NAST ARCHIVE

TRAVELS

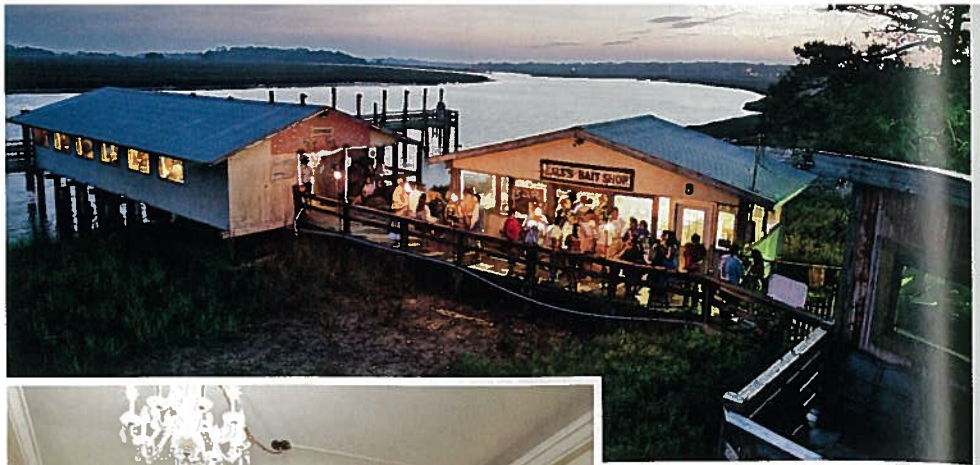
the beloved **Charleston Grill**, a fine-dining standard-bearer, and the **Thoroughbred Club**, where mixologist Malachi Topping serves up old-school cocktails made with whiskeys barrel-aged right behind the bar.

WHERE TO EAT

Charleston restaurants are drawing more attention than ever as the city's Low Country culinary revival continues. Leading the way is chef Sean Brock, whose acclaimed farm-to-table restaurant **Husk** (huskrestaurant.com) resides in a richly detailed 1893 Queen Anne Revival house. Here, as at his other lauded spot, **McCrary's** (mccrarysrestaurant.com), Brock gives star status to regionally sourced ingredients in re-interpreted Carolina classics like pit-cooked heritage pork with smoky butter beans and heirloom kale. "I love how Sean puts so much passion and curiosity into everything he does, from the farming to the ranching to the curing," says fashion designer **Billy Reid**, who has an eponymous clothing boutique nearby (billyreid.com).

Brock's emphasis on localism and nose-to-tail butchery is catching on. **The Grocery** (thegrocerycharleston.com) and **the Macintosh** (themacintoshcharleston.com) are lively small-plate-focused bistros with brief, approachable menus highlighting ingredients from the area. A similar spirit is found at **Two Boroughs Larder** (twoboroughslarder.com), where, in addition to lamb belly and roasted bone marrow dishes, the cheeses and house-made charcuterie are perfect to take away for an afternoon picnic.

The harbor city is known for its seafood, too. Be sure to save an evening for dinner at **the Ordinary** (eattheordinary.com), which opened in December in a 1920s bank building with 30-foot ceilings and furnishings by artisanal firms the Urban Electric Co. and Reclaimed DesignWorks. Chef and co-owner Mike Lata (who is also behind the noted restaurant **FIG** [eatatfig.com]), creates hefty shellfish towers, smoked-trout pâté, and triggerfish schnitzel. And it's worth taking a drive out to Folly Beach, a summer-rental mecca and surfer colony, and stopping at **Bowen's Island Restaurant**



(843-795-2757) for a supper of fried oysters, platters of shrimp and grits, and local craft beers, while enjoying panoramic views of Folly Creek. "Bowen's is a legend, an institution, first built as a fish camp in the '40s," says Mark Sloan, director of the College of Charleston's Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art. "Today it's an insider's place, with lawyers and politicians sharing tables with surfers and fishermen."

SIGHTS AND SHOPPING

The world-class **Gibbes Museum of Art** and **Fort Sumter**, the site of the Civil War's first battle, are essential stops for visitors. So are the city's 18th- and 19th-century house museums. Charleston decorator Amelia

Clockwise from top: Bowen's Island Restaurant, a popular dinner-only seafood shack on Folly Creek, near the beach. Chef Josh Keeler and his wife, Heather, in their restaurant and artisanal grocery, Two Boroughs Larder. A staircase in the Federal-period Joseph Manigault House. The exterior of the 16-suite Restoration on King hotel. The Charleston outpost of clothier Billy Reid.



T. Handegan recommends the **Joseph Manigault House** (charlestonmuseum.org), a Federal-period dwelling, and the pre-Revolutionary Palladian-style **Drayton Hall** (draytonhall.org), where, she explains, "the rooms have been left empty and the aged surfaces untouched."

When it comes to shopping, Handegan focuses on the Lower King Street district. She's partial to the antiques shops of **David Skinner** (davidskinnerantiques.com) and

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: PETER FRANK EDWARDS/CONDOE NAST; ARCHIVE; PETER FRANK EDWARDS/REDUX; COURTESY OF THE CHARLESTON MUSEUM; HOLGER OBERNAUS; ACACIA PALZONE

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TRAVELS



From top: Historic residences lining the Battery's waterfront promenade. A suite at the Zero George hotel, which occupies five 19th-century dwellings. The dining room of the Ordinary, a new seafood restaurant in a converted 1920s bank building.



John Pope (johnpopeantiques.com). Architectural designer William H. Bates III, who lives in Charleston part-time, concurs, noting that "Skinner has a broad selection but is the go-to shop for West Indian pieces that reflect Charleston's historic ties to the islands." He heads to Pope for "the city's best repository of accessories, offering all manner of enchantments," from antique portraits to modern pottery.

At nearby **Salon** (843-670-5245), preservationist designer John Paul Huguley stocks new and salvaged home-decor items, including works by alumni of the American College of the Building Arts, which he founded. The charming **Heirloom Book Co.** (heirloombookcompany.com) specializes in antique cookbooks and vintage kitchen accessories. **Ben Silver** (bensilver.com) is a classic family clothing shop whose shirts, suits, and eyeglasses have attracted cult followings.

In the ascendant Upper King Street area, **Indigo & Cotton** ([\[.com\]\(http://indigoandcotton.com\)\) highlights U.S.-made menswear: Gitman Vintage oxford shirts, Raleigh denim. **Moran Woodworked Furniture** \(\[moranwoodworked.com\]\(http://moranwoodworked.com\)\) sells elegant tables and case pieces in reclaimed and responsibly harvested woods.](http://indigoandcotton-</p>
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Proprietor Michael Moran is among the growing number of designers helping Charleston bridge its traditional bent and its expanding contemporary-design community. Dave Dawson, the owner of **the Urban Electric Co.** (urbanelectricco.com), points to **Landrum Tables** (landrumtables.com) and **Kistler Design Co.** (kistlerdesign.com) as other exemplars. "Charleston is now putting a forward face on its rich history of craftsmanship," he says. "The city has become a magnet for aesthetes and creative types." — DAVID KAUFMAN