

Three Days in the City

BY LAURA JENKINS

ENJOY A LONG WEEKEND IN ONE OF THE MOST
HOSPITABLE AND DYNAMIC CITIES IN THE WORLD.

Most people who visit Charleston vow to return. Not only is the Holy City brimming with culture, entertainment, history and beauty, it's perhaps one of the most welcoming destinations you could visit. Regardless of where you start your journey, the reception is sure to be warm and engaging. Here's a fun three-day itinerary that offers some good suggestions on how to explore the city.

DAY ONE: Start your morning in true Southern fashion by having breakfast at any of the charming restaurants in the heart of the city. Make it a point to seek out places that offer classic Southern fare, as the experience will be unlike any you've ever tasted. Fried green tomatoes are a must-try, with recipes and presentations varying greatly from chef to chef. Sweet and savory, chicken and waffles are a favorite, as are grits and the city's ubiquitous bottomless mimosas.

Next, take a leisurely stroll through some of Charleston's most iconic landmarks with an expert guide at Bulldog Tours. Their two-hour Charleston Stroll will take you to places like Rainbow Row, and



SUPPORTING RECOVERY

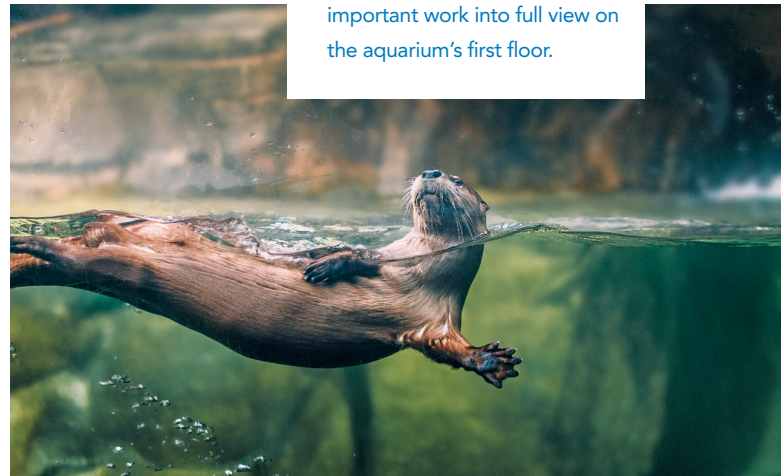
Seventeen years ago, a dying loggerhead was rushed to the South Carolina Aquarium. Thin, weak and suffering from a heavy load of barnacles, it was affectionately named Stinky and became the first of more than 245 sea turtles rehabilitated by the Sea Turtle Care Center. Every stage of their journeys — from arrival to release — is spotlighted in the center's new hospital facility and guest experience, the Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery, which brings the day-to-day operations of the center and its important work into full view on the aquarium's first floor.

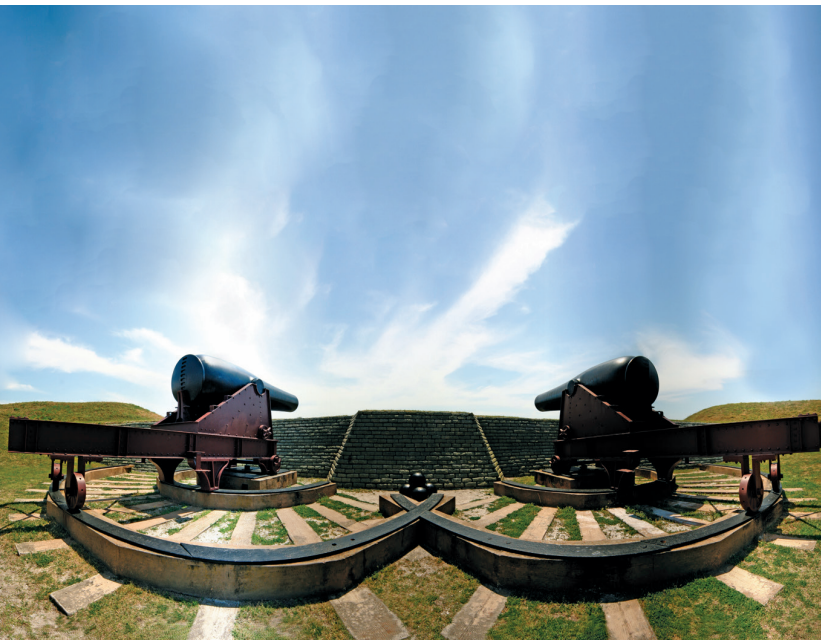
the historic Waterfront Battery. Bulldog's tour guides are some of the most knowledgeable in the city, offering insider tips and guiding participants to less-frequented places, where cars and carriages aren't allowed.

After the walking tour, pack up a few picnic items — locally made jams and jellies, benne wafers and Charleston-inspired prepackaged meals would be ideal — and head to one of Charleston's lovely parks. James Island County Park is just a 20-minute drive from downtown Charleston and features a number of amenities. The \$2 admission fee covers park entrances, as well as use of the picnic areas, a sand volleyball court and a Spray Play fountain (open seasonally). For an additional fee, visitors can take advantage of the Climbing Wall, the Splash Zone Water Park or equipment rental — bicycles, kayaks and pedal boats. Close out a day of activity by stimulating your artistic side at PURE Theatre, which has built its reputation since 2003 with thought-provoking contemporary theater.

DAY TWO: Grab a light breakfast and head to the South Carolina Aquarium. Housing more than 10,000 species of plants and animals, the facility offers numerous exhibits. The 385,000-gallon Great Ocean Tank houses sharks and a 220-pound loggerhead sea turtle. Many exhibits are hands-on; others focus on local marine life, like the Carolina Seas, which features creatures found in nearby habitats.

Once you've worked up an appetite, consider one of the many seafood restaurants in the city. Sample iconic dishes like shrimp





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and grits, she-crab soup and Lowcountry boil, or favorites like crab cakes, lobster bisque and fresh fish made in countless ways. If you're up for it, a Firefly Moonshine Margarita is just the ticket to jump-start the second half of the day's festivities.

Spend the rest of the afternoon doing a little leisurely shopping in some of Charleston's unique retail establishments. No visit to Charleston is complete without a trip to the Charleston City Market, located in the heart of the city. You'll see a number of sweetgrass artisans weaving their exquisite baskets and find a wide variety of local vendors, too. While there, don't miss Gold Creations Fine Jewelry, where you can find rice beads and jewelry fashioned after Charleston's iconic gates. End the day aboard a SpiritLine Cruise, where you can enjoy dinner and take in views of the city from a different perspective. Harbor tours guide you through more than 75 points of interest — including Fort Sumter, the Battery mansions and Ravenel Bridge. Dinner cruises feature full bar service, live music and amazing sunset views.



DAY THREE: Spend the first half of the day taking in one of Bulldog's exceptional culinary tours. Ranked among the top five tours to take in Charleston by *Southern Living* magazine, you can visit the home of a celebrity chef, go behind the scenes at a number of acclaimed restaurants or sample the flavors of upper King Street. Not only will you come away with a new understanding of local cuisine; your taste buds will be singing.

After a morning of culinary pleasure, spend the afternoon feasting your eyes on the exquisite architecture all around. From St. Michael's Episcopal Church — the oldest surviving religious building in Charleston — and historic Dock Street Theatre to the homes on Rainbow Row and those run by the Historic Charleston Foundation, the city is a treasure trove for culture, art and history buffs.

Over the Bridge

BY LAURA JENKINS

WITH ACTIVE PURSUITS AND
LOVELY SIGHTS, MOUNT PLEASANT
IS A DYNAMIC STOP.



If the cities in South Carolina were a close-knit family, Mount Pleasant would be Charleston's captivating cousin, one that has abundant stores of personality and charm. Fittingly, the gateway between Charleston and Mount Pleasant is the breathtaking Arthur Ravenel Bridge, an eight-lane, cable-stayed wonder. A trip to see the bridge at night is an absolute must, but why stop there? Head over to this delightful town to take in an entirely different taste of the Lowcountry.

SEEING THE SIGHTS

There are numerous attractions and locations that make Mount Pleasant a worthwhile destination. The Charles Pinckney National

Historic Site, which is run by the United States Park Service, encompasses 28 preserved acres of Pinckney's original 715-acre Snee Farm. It offers a different perspective on plantation life, as the site focuses more on its namesake's role as a framer of the United States Constitution.

For those interested in military history, the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum gets you closer to spectacular historic aircrafts and the individuals who expertly flew them. The great majority of the museum is based within the USS *Yorktown*, an aircraft carrier that served in both World War II and Vietnam. Be sure to look over at Charleston's skyline of steeples, which can be seen beautifully from the deck of the ship.

Mount Pleasant

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mount Pleasant Farmers Market

Every Tuesday
from April – Sept.

Stroll through the weekly market to enjoy the best local produce, seafood, baked goods, and more that Mount Pleasant has to offer!

JAN

28

Lowcountry Oyster Festival

Get Shuckin' at the world's largest oyster roast! Held at Boone Hall Plantation.

MARCH

10

ArtFest

This annual festival brings families and cultural enthusiasts together with budding and professional artists for an event that showcases a diverse array of local and regional artistic talent.

APRIL

07

Cooper River Bridge Run

Run, walk, or cheer 'em on in this scenic and celebrated 10K race!

19-22

Lowcountry Strawberry Festival

Celebrate the start of strawberry season with a berry good time at Boone Hall Farms!

29

Blessing of the Fleet

Send off the shrimp fleet and sample fare from area restaurants!

MAY

02

Spring Carnival

Welcome the beautiful spring season with a celebration at historic Alhambra Hall Park.

JUNE

02

Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival

Learn about this unique art form and the rich culture behind it.

JULY

04

Patriots Point 4th of July Blast

Great food, family fun and fabulous fireworks over Charleston Harbor.

OCT.

21

Children's Day Festival

Show your kid the best day ever during this celebration of fun! Admission & all activities are free.

NOV.

03

Scottish Games

Join in this celebration of "all things Scottish" (yes, bagpipes too) at Boone Hall Plantation.

DEC

8/9

Holiday Market & Christmas Parade

Kick off the season with gifts and goodies from the Holiday Market and bask in the glow of floats adorned with thousands of lights!

For a mobile harbor experience, search no further than SpiritLine Cruises, which hosts a wide variety of excursions. The dinner tours offer the best of both worlds: sightseeing with a knowledgeable guide while sampling superb local cuisine on an elegant ocean liner or yacht. SpiritLine Cruises also offers shorter harbor tours where snacks can be purchased, and the expert guides are top-notch.

Jutting out 1,250 feet under the Arthur Ravenel Bridge, the Mount Pleasant Pier is a visitor favorite. It's part of the Memorial Waterfront Park Complex and is a great place to grab a bite, cast a fishing line or take a leisurely walk with a fantastic view.

If you can't get enough of the great outdoors, Mount Pleasant is the perfect place to soak up the sun and spend a relaxing afternoon enjoying South Carolina's spectacular climate. Palmetto Islands County Park features 943 acres of natural parkland. Playgrounds, a volleyball court, bike and nature trails, and a 50-foot observation tower are just a few of the amenities.

One of the most frequently visited landmarks in Mount Pleasant is Boone Hall Plantation and Gardens. Widely recognized for its "Avenue of Oaks" — an entry drive lined on either side by 275-year-old live oaks elegantly draped with Spanish moss — the setting feels like something out of the movies. And it is! The property has played a starring role on the silver screen a few times in its history and has also been the location of a number of celebrity weddings.

For a unique taste of Carolina culture, visit the Old Village District, located between Shem Creek and Sullivan's Island. While it's definitely charming in a nostalgic way, it can also have a distinctly modern, even trendy feel to it. Deep-rooted live oak trees pepper the landscape between residential homes, shopping boutiques and a variety of businesses, including food and wine shops and spas.

After visiting the district, head down the road to the Carolina Lanterns showroom. Owner Jan Clouse has established herself as the go-to expert of gas and electric lanterns, as well as other stunning light fixtures. This is a requisite stop for those who want to add a bit of Lowcountry to their personal style. Browse through the showroom and pick up a piece of Charleston to give your home more stately curb appeal or light up your living space. The dazzling showroom houses an astounding array of options — from custom-made copper and brass lanterns to lamps that use propane, natural gas or electricity. Of course, chandeliers, sconces and a host of other exceptional lighting pieces are also on display.

For more information on these and other events visit experiencemountpleasant.com

If you want a taste of Carolina culture, visit the Old Village District, which is located between Shem Creek and Sullivan's Island in Mount Pleasant.



DELICIOUS EATS

South Carolina is famous for its timeless culinary offerings, and Mount Pleasant is home to its own share of great dining spots. What could be more picturesque than having a delicious seafood dinner while watching local fish and shrimp boats haul in the day's bounty? Water's Edge Restaurant sits right on beautiful Shem Creek and offers both an impressive menu and an award-winning wine list. Executive chef and owner Jimmy Purcell is a Charleston native who strives to present flavorful dishes that reflect the region's rich culinary heritage.

The Charleston Harbor Fish House, which is located on Patriots Point, has been recognized as having the Best Water View Dining by *Charleston Living* magazine. The specials change daily depending on what the fishing captains haul in, reflecting the restaurant's commitment to sustainability. There's not a bad seat in the house — in terms of lovely views — and the food is reliably delicious.

If you're looking for a place to wash down the savory food with a few brews, watch some sports or enjoy a meal on the waterfront, visit The Liberty Tap Room and Grill. Their signature ales, draft beers and craft brews are accompanied by a satisfying menu of American standards — with a twist.

From the leisurely activities that line the waterfront to the delightful shopping and thirst-quenching brews, Mount Pleasant is the kind of place that feels like both a refreshing out-of-town visit and a return to a long-lost home.