

CHARLESTON

10 Best Rooftop Bars in Charleston

10 PHOTOS

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When you want a view that's as inspired as your drink.

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Charleston is mostly a town of highs, figuratively and, in the case of its rooftop bar scene, literally. And it makes sense: where better to soak in that balmy Charleston weather and those unparalleled church spire views than atop one of the city's many swanky hotels? You don't have to be downtown to catch that sweet Southern breeze, either: the watery outskirts of the city yield plenty of options. So get climbing—this is a city whose charms are best experienced from on high. These are the best rooftop bars in Charleston.

RESTAURANT

Élevé →

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If you like your city experience with a heavy dash of artistic whimsy, then the **Grand Bohemian hotel** delivers this in spades. The rooftop garden attached to dining room Élevé carries the aesthetic into a playful outdoor space, replete with colorful easy chairs, satin-lined day loungers, oversized plant pots and bright green, turf-like carpeting that makes for a playful, tea-party-like ambience. The Alice in Wonderland feel carries over on to the cocktail list where you'll find gin infusions and other creative spirit uses.

Citrus Club →

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Located as it is on the highest rooftop in downtown Charleston (eight floors up inside the **Dewberry Hotel**), the bar can confidently boast the best views in the area. There's lots of natural daylight—a real boon at sunset—polished marble and classily understated decor with fresh flowers to boot. Craft cocktails are the main attraction here, and there's a tiki edge to the list. Well over half of the menu is rum-forward, and includes the bar's signature Daiquiri and Mai Tai variations. The original cocktails have names such as Polynesian Pearl Diver and Tropical Itch, though obviously the bar staff are good enough to make whatever your heart desires.

RESTAURANT

Stars Rooftop & Grill Room →

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Echoing the wood-forward décor of the dining room below is a hardwood-enclosed rooftop bar that boasts the only 360-degree views in the city. High quality timber and simple wicker furniture create a classy but casual space. There's a pleasing selection of craft cocktails to be had, and the specialty menu has a lightness to it that recognizes that customers are probably eating a square meal somewhere else. Light spirits such as gins, flavored vodkas, and even wine cocktails feature prominently.

BAR

Pavilion Bar →

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Coming up to the rooftop Pavilion Bar, you've already had time to be charmed by the period looks of the **Market Pavilion Hotel**, its impressive reproductions dating all the way back to 2002. The monochrome-tiled bar area shares its vantage point with a bijoux swimming pool and attendant sun loungers, which makes for a pleasing resort-like atmosphere on sunny days. The drink menu focuses on two cocktails in particular: mojitos and martinis. The former offers typically tropical variations, with strawberry and mango among them, while the latter has even more choices, with rum and tequila interpretations of the classic at the more experimental reaches of the list.

BAR

The Rooftop Bar at Vendue →

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No ordinary rooftop bar, this. The **Vendue Hotel** lures in its cocktail-drinking prey with a two-tiered rooftop experience, both levels encompassing different covered and uncovered levels, with the entire place enlivened by playful Pop-Art installations that will keep the Instagram generation snap-happy. Wooden decking and sun-shaded wicker furniture mixes with chic lighting and gleaming bar tops for a high-end rooftop adventure. As to the actual drinks at the bar, the cocktail list is at once recognizable, but then it has you looking again at the twists the staff have spun on the classics. For example, their margarita comes 'picante' and their mule is peach-flavored.

The Cocktail Club →

Most cities have them these days: that upscale lounge that's marinated in the history of mixed drinks, and brags an ever-changing menu of inventive craft cocktails and their highly-skilled makers. In Charleston, that place is The Cocktail Club above the **Macintosh**. Note the red leather sofas and whisky crate side tables before stepping on onto the roof garden, where high wooden walls and comfy benches make a perfect, secret garden-esque setting for that muddled fruit sundowner. It's first come, first served, and it gets a little crazy at peak hours, but you can buy into VIP membership, expect to jump all the way to the front of that line.

RESTAURANT

The Watch: Rooftop Kitchen & Spirits →

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The entrance to one of the city's best hotels (**The Restoration**), is unassuming, but those in the know slink through the lobby area to the elevators, which whisk you up to a rooftop restaurant and bar with an industrial-romantic style. Dark hardwoods, steel, and fabrics frame the indoor dining rooms, but two stylishly minimalist outdoor patios open up to views of the surrounding historic architecture—and in the distance, the Arthur Ravenel Jr. bridge to Mount Pleasant. There's a reassured maturity to the cocktail list, and not just via the aged rums or the reposado tequila. The simplicity of three or four ingredient mixtures belies a sophisticated underlying palate.

BAR

Uptown Social →

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The energy in the main bar here can get pretty intense on game days, but luckily their rooftop spot offers a little respite. There's TVs up there, but it seems less raucous. True, there isn't too much of a view, but that's because the deck is surrounded by beautiful foliage and you can't beat a little bucolic escape in the heart of upper King's entertainment district. There's also a striking and colorful mural wall. The bar has a healthy list of classic craft cocktails, each given a little Uptown twist. Some local beers make the suds list, and there's wine on draft in four flavors.

BAR

Henry's on the Market →

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Instead of whimsically-named inventions, Henry's concentrates on doing the classics well and at a very friendly price point. Moscow Mules, Old Fashioneds, Manhattans, and Margaritas all come out with generous pours and for just \$10 each. There's also a serviceable wine list and the beer selection includes some Charleston breweries. This being Charleston, it's very seafood-forward, with crab clearly stealing the show. The Jumbo Lump Crab Cake is a perennial favorite, as is the She-Crab Soup, a local speciality. Tacos, salads, sandwiches, and seafood platters make up most the menu's remainder, which is as casual and accessible as the bar itself. It's the perfect spot to **take a break from shopping or to kill time before or after a carriage ride**, both of those things within immediate proximity to the bar.

ACTIVITY

Revelry Brewing Co. →

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Navigating the more industrial part of Charleston ensures a reward for beer enthusiasts. This rooftop bar is tantalizingly in view as you pull up to the corrugated iron façade of the venue. Steel and glass make for a sparse interruption to the views that the rooftop offers, and if you're there at the right time, live music provides the siren song to lure you past the workings of the brewery and up to its heights. The beers themselves are diverse: American pale ales feature along with Belgian blondes and Bavarian wheats. There's even a sake-tinged beer that tastes of ginger (but importantly isn't ginger ale). If you aren't sure what to order, go for the cockily-named God's Favorite (a Belgian pale).