

TRAVEL

A Locals-Only Guide to Charleston

Seven Charlestonians share their favorite ways to spend time in the Holy City

by **CAROLINE SANDERS, CJ LOTZ, AND DACEY ORR SIVEWRIGHT**

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Discover hidden gems and support old favorites by visiting these locally recommended Charleston hot spots.

Darius Rucker

Singer-songwriter and lead vocalist and guitarist of Hootie & the Blowfish

My favorite place for a bite is...

FIG is my go-to for dinner. You have to get their gnocchi. I also love the **Obstinate Daughter** on Sullivan's Island.

My favorite place for a drink is...

The Windjammer on Isle of Palms is a great beach bar and place to hang out. It really has that

Charleston feel. We've actually played there before. It's a fun place to listen to great live music over a drink on the beach.



Darius Rucker

Some other favorite places for live music are...

The Commodore has a great cover band that turns that place into such a fun dance party on Saturday nights. In Mount Pleasant, it's gotta be **Art's**.

The best view is...

Especially at high tide, there's nothing better than looking out at Sullivan's Island from Mount Pleasant. That's my favorite thing about living where we do: seeing that view in the morning.

My favorite way to spend a day outside is...

Playing golf. **Kiawah Island Golf Resort** has several beautiful courses that are always a good challenge—the Ocean, Cassique, and River courses are all great. I also love the **Bulls Bay Golf Club** in Awendaw and the **Country Club of Charleston**.

What I wish more people knew about Charleston...

Its rich American history. We have great tours that showcase how special this town really is.

Ann Marshall

*Co-owner, with her husband Scott Blackwell, of **High Wire Distilling**, which will open an expanded distillery, tasting room, and event space on Huger Street in early 2020*



Ann Marshall

My favorite bite is...

A perfectly prepared soft-shell crab. Before my husband and I moved to Charleston, we visited one spring for our anniversary and caught the middle of softie season. We borrowed bikes from our hotel and cruised from restaurant to restaurant tasting each preparation. In hindsight, I think we decided to move here permanently because of

that perfectly cool spring day and the unparalleled food experience Charleston offers.

Describe your perfect day in Charleston...

I travel frequently for work, so a weekend at home in mid-summer is a luxury for me. In the mornings, I can generally be found reading a book on the edge of our pool. Lunch is a BLT made with a perfectly ripe Johns Island tomato, **Benton's bacon**, and Duke's mayo, garnished with a couple leaves of fresh basil. After a catnap on our covered porch, I usually charge up for a brisk walk to the Battery and back. If we're lucky, there's a pick-up that day for **Abundant Seafood's CSF** [Community Supported Fishery], so dinner will be freshly caught grouper or mahi grilled with farmer's market veggies and accompanied by great friends to enjoy it with us. If it's a perfect day, I'm in bed by 10:30.

One of my best-kept Charleston secrets is...

Where to find the best shark's teeth! I could tell all, but my fellow fossil fanatics would not approve.

My favorite place to shop is...

King Street's fabulous antique stores. There are always so many treasures to discover if you have a few hours to explore.

My favorite drink is...

A perfectly crafted negroni made with our **Hat Trick Gin**. In summer, we seek out white negronis which tend to be a bit lighter in body and perfect for our steamy summers.

The best views in Charleston are...

The winter sunset view over the creek from the Bowens Island dock is impossible to beat. If you can't make that drive, the sunset is *almost* as beautiful from **White Point Gardens/the Battery** looking back towards the Ashley River.

My favorite way to spend a day outside in Charleston is...

Packing up the beach chairs, umbrella, cooler, and a good book for a long afternoon on the beach. The ocean tends to erase the stress of a busy week, so we try to get out there as many times as possible in the summer. Bonus points if we can recruit a few friends to join us for a rousing game of bocce ball at low tide.

Quiana Parler

Vocalist of the Grammy-nominated band Ranky Tanky

What I wish more people knew about Charleston...
We are deeply rooted in history. We honor, value, and appreciate those who came before us and left such a big indentation in our culture and history, which plays a major role in our everyday life. Our love for the arts, local food, clothing, hand-crafted items, and so much more. We are truly the definition of “home grown.”



Quiana Parler

My favorite way to spend a day outside in Charleston is...
Taking a walk on the Ravenel Bridge with my son and taking time to reflect on how blessed we are to live in such a beautiful city. You can walk (some people like to run) and take in the beautiful views overlooking Mount Pleasant and downtown Charleston. I've even seen some people having romantic dinners there. After our walk, my son and I head over to **Playa Bowls** on King Street where we indulge in açai bowls with fresh fruit.

My favorite places to eat are...
Swig & Swine for lunch; the smoked turkey is my go-to. **Basil Thai** on King Street for dinner; you must try the chicken and shrimp pad Thai. For late night cravings, my go-to is **Dave's Carry-Out seafood** on Morris Street.

My favorite special occasion place is...
I love both **Halls Chophouse** and **Charleston Grill**. At Halls, their 434 pineapple-infused cocktail gets me every time.

My favorite place to shop is...

Grit & Grace Studio on King Street. It's not your average boutique. It has a warm vibe that is as unique as the local gifts you find inside.

The best views in Charleston are...

The **rooftop bar at the Dewberry hotel**.

My favorite place for music is...

The **Charleston Music Hall** on John Street holds a dear place in my heart. At **the Blue Note Bistro** in North Charleston, I still make occasional appearances. **Forte Jazz Lounge** on King Street is new, the staff is wonderful, and the music is amazing.

Thai Phi

Owner of Pink Bellies, a former food truck and pop-up Vietnamese restaurant that will open its first permanent location on King Street this spring



Thai Phi

Describe your perfect day in Charleston...

My perfect day in Charleston starts with working on and finishing new dish ideas. Ideally, the afternoon would be spent playing pickup basketball at the **College of Charleston**.

One of my best-kept Charleston secrets is...

Buying shrimp at the **Miss Paula/Tarvin Seafood** dock in

Mount Pleasant. Being there almost transports you to a timeless place, surrounded by shrimp scales, fishing nets, seagulls, and Shem Creek. And to boot, their shrimp is the absolute best.

Favorite grocery stores for hard-to-find ingredients...

For Vietnamese herbs and ingredients, **Saigon Supermarket** is my favorite grocery store. For Japanese candy, snacks, sauces, and noodles, **H&L Asian Market** is the best. In West Ashley, I like to go to **Euro Foods** for pierogies and pelmenis. I love India Spice because they always carry the freshest curry leaves and spices. And Veggie Bin is my go-to place for **Lowcountry Creamery** milk and other local products.

My favorite place for a bite is...

Malagon. Their tapas are so delicious. And my absolute favorite bite in Charleston is the snow crab with miso uni butter from **Sushi-Wa Izakaya**.

My favorite place to shop is...

The farmer's market at **Marion Square**. All those local veggies make me happy.

My favorite drink is...

The apricot sour beer from **Edmund's Oast Brewing Company**. It tastes like the most lovely apricot fruit roll-up. It has a really impressive flavor, mouthfeel, and body. I've learned my lesson to stock up next time it's in season.

The best views in Charleston are...

The intersection of St. Philip and Calhoun streets at the College of Charleston during class changes. It's like our miniature version of the Shibuya Crossing. It only lasts for about five minutes a few times a day during fall and spring semesters. The chaos of so many students hurrying to their next class is followed by complete serenity and calmness.

What I wish more people knew about Charleston...

How culturally rich this city is. The Gullah/Geechee culture is the heartbeat of the city, and is always felt.

Lauren Northup

Director of Museums, Historic Charleston Foundation

*Describe your perfect day
in Charleston...*

My perfect day in Charleston is having nothing to do besides dig through rat nests pulled from the walls at the **Nathaniel Russell House** kitchen house. I like to work in the upstairs rooms when nobody else is there; listen to music and spread out the contents all over a big table. This sounds insane, I realize, but there is no greater thrill than finding something interesting buried in all that rubble. Add strong coffee from **One Broad** and lunch at **Santi's** and there is no better day.



Lauren Northup

Less grisly, my perfect day in Charleston (with my children) is spending the morning climbing trees and feeding the ducks at **Hampton Park**, lunch at **Leon's** (with soft serve!), playing in the fountain at **Waterfront Park**, combing Battery beach for pottery sherds, and playing with the dogs at White Point Gardens.

One of the best-kept Charleston secrets is...

The Gateway Walk. Designed in the 1930s and maintained by the Garden Club of Charleston, it takes you through the heart of the city by way of graveyards and gardens; a shaded, lovely respite from the crowded sidewalks.

My favorite place for a bite is...

The Daily at the Gibbes Museum of Art. Delicious food combined with a museum gift shop—can't improve on that.

My favorite special occasion place is...

Chez Nous, hands down.

My favorite place to shop is...

Sea Island Habitat for Humanity, Shop Historic Charleston, and the Preservation Society of Charleston shop.

My favorite drink is...

I'm from Asheville originally, so craft beer runs in my veins. Right now I'm loving Circuit Breaker IPA from Tradesman Brewing Company.

My favorite way to spend a day outside is...

We love to spend the day puttering around Cape Romain in our vintage Boston Whaler followed by late lunch at T.W. Graham & Co. in McClellanville.

What I wish more people knew about Charleston...

The historic district of Charleston wasn't preserved by accident or because of benign neglect. It looks the way it does thanks to generations of forwarding-thinking people who fought long and hard to preserve our beautiful city.

Jason Stanhope

James Beard Award-winning chef at FIG



Jason Stanhope

A favorite place to eat is...

My favorite non-committal drop-in is Babas on Cannon.

The food is always simply delicious and craveable.

There is a coffee magician there named Matthew Haigler who is making the most incredible espresso drinks in town. He is a true technician and student of his craft.

My favorite drink in

Charleston is...

Whatever wines Miles White and Femi Oyediran of Graft are pouring. They have created a salon of wine and music, both of which celebrate the imitable classics and funky, fresh esoteric offerings.

The best view in Charleston is...

My favorite views are at the **lounge on top of the circular Holiday Inn**. It's been a while, but I love to sneak up there for a gin and tonic nightcap. You will never see anyone you know, and it feels like you are watching the city grow right in front of your eyes.

One of the best-kept Charleston secrets is...

Everyone always asks me where to buy fish, and the best-kept secret in Charleston is the CSF [Community Supported Fishery] with Mark Marhefka of Abundant Seafood. It is a true gem on the Geechie Dock and a soon-to-be brick-and-mortar in Park Circle. Where else can you buy fish directly from the best fisherman on the Eastern Seaboard?

My favorite place to shop is...

My favorite special occasion gift is anything made by **Ann Ladson**. She is a one-of-a-kind craftsman of bespoke jewelry and so much more. Everything she makes is timeless and made to pass on to generations to come.

Jonathan Sanchez

Owner of Blue Bicycle Books, which celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2020

What I wish more people knew about Charleston...

This isn't a place where everyone's stuck in an office building and you're not sure what anyone does.

Everyone's job here is a real thing—you sell books or teach tennis or make beer or work on a ship. Walk down the street and you'll see a

chef walking to work, maybe carrying her knife roll. You can spot a waiter heading to his shift, his work shirt over his back on a hanger. We're almost like the Richard Scarry book, *What Do People Do All Day?*



Jonathan Sanchez

My favorite places to read in Charleston are...

We have beautiful hotels downtown. I like to pop into the lobby of **the Dewberry** and read. It's very noir; there are wonderful places to sit and hang out.

I like to go for a walk...

On King Street, just observing how this city moves and changes. My family also likes to walk through **Magnolia Cemetery**. It's a cool hike within the city. We'll go to **Harbinger** and get coffee and baked goods, and then walk through and look at all the history at Magnolia. We spot tons of birds—osprey, hawks.

My favorite place to get a bite...

Home Team BBQ is definitely our barbecue place. It's a ton of locals and so good, all the sauces and everything they do. You know they're good when they can do smoked turkey right—it's tender, which is hard to do because it's not too fatty. It's the one protein my son can eat a pound of.

Other favorite bites...

We go to **Harold's Cabin** in our neighborhood; tons of locals there. My kids get the fried okra. I go to **Basic Kitchen** for a healthy meal—simple stuff like chickpeas, rice, salmon. Nothing against biscuits and grits, but it's not good for my tennis game to eat a bunch of hot links.

My favorite views of Charleston are...

Anywhere you get the chance to look back at the peninsula is cool. Head to the top of the Ravenel Bridge to look back at Charleston. Also, way out on James Island, at the very end of Fort Johnson Road where the DNR [Department of Natural Resources] is, you can look back at the peninsula. I also like looking at the port from the **Aquarium**. You can see this view of the port where they're loading cars. Water is super important in Charleston, and I think about the fishermen, the shrimpers, and all the people who work on the port—and it's the same port where people worked three hundred years ago.

Any tips for getting out on the water?

It's so easy to rent a boat—you don't have to own one to get out on the water. I also enjoy **Coastal Expeditions**. You can kayak with them and they do special trips when there's a full moon.
