

The Perfect Weekend in Charleston

By Tom Austin September 1, 2015



Andrew Celbulka

Where to Stay

On August 27, Charleston’s newest boutique hotel, the Grand Bohemian Hotel Charleston, opened with all due pomp and flash, entailing wine rooms and a rooftop lounge with a shades-of-Philippe-Starck-does-Miami tone, right down to the inevitable fire pit. The Grand Bohemian is a symbol of what’s to come in the increasingly slick Charleston, with more than five new boutique hotels coming on line in the next year or two.

On Wentworth Street, The Restoration, a stylish boutique property, is expanding from 16 to 50 rooms. On State Street, The Spectator opened in July, themed around *The Great Gatsby* (the bar serves a “Fizz-Gerald” with local Hat Trick Gin) with elegant hand-painted silk tapestries in the Jazz Age-esque lobby. In the French Quarter, The Vendue—a funky art-themed boutique hotel with high-ceilinged old Charleston rooms—features painters working at their easels in the public areas.

What to Eat

The Drawing Room is run by a cracking-good chef, Jon Cropf. His Prawn & Grits is a perfectly balanced blend of local Geechie Boy grits, tasso duck, and prawn cream. For honest southern food, locals favor The Glass Onion, named after the Beatles song and devoted to fried green tomatoes and cornmeal-fried catfish.

The adjacent Swig & Swine is ramping up barbecue to an art form, with smoked pork belly that melts in the mouth like caramels. On East Bay Street, Sean Brock—famed for McCrady’s and Husk—has opened the first-rate Mexican restaurant *Minero* (*pictured*); the *Minero* Burrito features both queso de Oaxaca and hoppin’ John.

What to See and Do

The allure of the city begins with Historic Charleston Foundation architecture tours, highlighted by the free-floating staircase at the 1808 Nathaniel Russell House Museum. Afterward, wind down at Mira Winery's brand new facility, the Napa Valley Education Center & Tasting Room (NVEC), offering lectures on wine and tasting flights of Mira Winery products from the Napa Valley—we're partial to the 2010 Syrah.

Where to Shop

On Cannon Street, breaking-trend types seek out Indigo & Cotton for a selection of curated men's wear, ranging from Gitman Brothers shirts to Raleigh Denim. Another Cannon Street mainstay is Candy Shop Vintage, with Charleston rice beads and other retro jewelry looks, featured on Mad Men and such. (For more shopping tips, check out the blog of local stylist Andrea Serrano, www.charlestonshopcurator.com.)

Tom Austin is based in Miami and covers the Florida beat for Travel + Leisure. Follow him on Twitter at @TomAustin__.