

Weekend Trip Guide: Where to Stay, Eat, and Drink in Charleston

Get ready to consume everything in sight.



Design by Monica Park



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Charleston is one of the most charming cities. There, I said it. Small but urban, with a Southern *something something* that hasn't waned, the town has really come into it's own with more and more chic eateries and bars—so much so that it's hard to keep up. While there's plenty to do and explore (especially when it comes to history), I would say the main draw is the massive amounts of food and drink to be consumed. (All in a pretty as a picture setting, of course.) Not into spending your days eating and drinking on vacation? Bless your heart. Here, where to stay, eat, and drink in one of the best cities in America.

Where to Stay

If it's your first time to Charleston, I highly recommend The Vendue. Not only is it in the heart of the French Quarter—meaning you can pretty much walk to all major attractions, bars, etc.—but it also houses an art gallery with an artist in residence (who paints every week at dinner) and

docent who gives daily tours (with wine, of course). Every room is different and full of character—but with the modern, beautiful upgrades you'd want and expect (plus some super indulgent beds). Not only that, but it features one of the best rooftop bars in the city (more on that later). You could not pick a more perfect home base. Did we mention it's beautiful? Yeah:



What to Do

There are plenty of historical tours to partake in, including carriage rides and walking tours. Be sure to check out the Nathaniel Russell House (with tours that'll give you an overview of Charleston/American history and an amazing garden) and the Gibbes Museum of Art. Take an early morning stroll along the water, and then visit City Market to check out some booths and do some shopping. Head out for a tour (and some drinks) at High Wire Distilling, then grab tickets for a sunset sail aboard The Schooner Pride. Finish the night with a show at Theatre 99.

Where to Eat (and Drink)

So. Many. Restaurants. Charleston is amazing, albeit a bit overwhelming for the same reason—there are way too many restaurants to choose from. My favorites? Get out of the French Quarter and head to Leon's Oyster Shop for lunch, leisurely snacks and day drinks, or dinner. Not only is it in a redone garage, but the food is SO. GOOD. Grab some fried chicken, oysters, cocktails or a cold one, and get ready to live your best life.

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Edmund's Oast is a MUST if heading to Charleston. Not only does it have indoor and outdoor seating, but it's perfect for when half of you wants to eat and the other half just wants some damn good beer. The food is A+ (I *highly* recommend the burger and/or the charcuterie plate—they cure their own meats!), but the brews are the big draw. Get something local (and preferably house-brewed).



I mean...

For a perfect dinner before a night out (and with some serious Instagram potential), head to 5Church Charleston. Started in Charlotte and now with locations in Charleston and Atlanta, the restaurant finds its home in a renovated church—yes, really. Not only is the setting so beautiful, but the food is absolutely amazing. Order a cocktail (I loved The Redeemer), then peruse the daily specials for something fresh and delicious. Definitely order the tuna tartare and the braided ravioli. Trust.

Husk has to be mentioned for dinner because 1) it's located in a converted Victorian-home (helloooo chicness) 2) the buzz is overwhelming (and rightfully so). Other dinner options: Fig, Xiao Bao Biscuit, and Butcher & Bee.

For brunch, head to Poogan's Porch (get the mac & cheese or pimienta cheese fritters), Hominy Grill (worth the wait), or Lowcountry Bistro (the shrimp and grits or chicken and waffles are a must, as are bottomless mimosas because I love you and want you to be happy). Eli's Table is delicious (and a go-to in the French Quarter) and a good go-to for pretty much any meal—though I recommend breakfast/brunch on the patio outside. Need a quick sandwich (or a great cheese

board and some wine)? Head to Goat. Sheep. Cow., a cheese shop that has a delish array (though get there early—many of the sandwiches sell out before early afternoon!).

Proof offers some serious drinks in a much more low-key setting than many of its street counterparts.

King Street is a mainstay where you'll find hoppin' bars (and fellow revelers). It's got some great gems: Proof (offers some serious drinks in a much more low-key setting than many of its street counterparts), The Cocktail Club (get there early), and Prohibition (for dancing to end out the night). Before making your way, stop by The Rooftop Bar at Vendue for some drinks as you watch the sun go down (or check it out on Sunday where they typically feature live jazz). The Gin Joint is also A+. But honestly, your best bet may be just to play "Food Telephone," asking the locals and servers where **they** go for the best [insert wanted menu item here]. There are so many places to check out, it's worth the extra recommendation.

Helpful Tips:

1. I can't say enough good things about the Charleston Tourism Board. Whereas many cities tourism boards are just, like, some pamphlets with out-of-date recommendations, Charleston's Tourism Board (and website!) is filled with so many tips and gems and lists that it should be your go-to source. Legit.
2. If you have time, head to Mt. Pleasant and check out the plantations (Boone Hall Plantation was used as the backdrop for *The Notebook*, you know, just FYI). Other places to check out: Gwynn's (an independent luxury department store with cool merch), Two Blokes Brewing, and Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum.
3. Another place to check out if you have the time? Firefly Distillery. (Make sure to try the sweet tea vodka!) It's about a 40 minute drive from the heart of Charleston, so make sure you have some free time.
4. Don't forget some packing essentials: bug spray, a cute scarf (to keep your hairline sweat-free, let's be real), sunglasses, and cute flats (because those cobblestones are no joke). I liked to pack it all away in a cute, bright carry-on—I love this one from Hedgren—because if you can't fit it all in here, it's not a weekend trip.