



Photos courtesy of Greater Beaufort-Port Royal Convention and Visitors Bureau.



A Summer Getaway to Beaufort

[BY ANNE SHULER TOOLE]

It's summertime and the livin' is easy in Mount Pleasant, but, sometimes, you just need to get away from it all and take a break from the mundane. That feeling of leisure and adventure — the fun of trying new-to-you restaurants, appreciating the beauty of the Lowcountry and exploring a new town — can be found just an hour and a half down the road in the charming city of Beaufort. The second-oldest city in South Carolina, Beaufort boasts accolades in recent years like *Southern Living's* "Best Small Town," *Coastal Living's* "Happiest Seaside Town in America" and a spot on *Smithsonian* magazine's "Best Small Towns to Visit" list.

The historic district is situated on a peninsula on Port Royal Island abound with marsh and river views. The city and surrounding Sea Islands have served as

backdrops to major films and continue to embody all that is quintessentially Lowcountry.

EVENTS

Original Gullah Festival, May 24-26. Started in 1986, the Gullah Festival draws 35,000 people annually to celebrate the unique culture of African Americans in the Lowcountry. Enjoy storytelling, dancing, music ranging from African drums to jazz, blues and reggae, and stroll the arts-and-crafts market for handmade items like sweetgrass baskets. The "Decoration Day" play highlights the history of Beaufort, and a seminar called "Lest We Forget" showcases members of the Gullah community speaking about their personal experiences. Fill your belly with traditional Gullah favorites like shrimp 'n' grits, Lowcountry boil and



hoppin' john. All events are held along the banks of the Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park.

Beaufort Water Festival, July 12-21. There's something to be said for a festival that's been running strong for over 60 years. The 64th annual Water Festival is a must-do that has something for everyone during its 10-day span. Held in the scenic Waterfront Park, events range from an arts-and-crafts market to parades, races on water and land, air and ski shows, shrimp-boat tours and children's events, as well as local and national music acts like this year's headliner Tyler Farr.

WHERE TO STAY

In the historic district, Bay Street parallels Waterfront Park, which offers stunning views along the banks of the Beaufort River. Bed-and-breakfasts a few blocks away from the river are tucked into quaint neighborhoods, making for a charming stroll around this walkable part of the city.

The Beaufort Inn. One block from Bay Street, stay in the historic main house, guest cottages or ultra-modern Greyhound Flats. Solo travelers and groups have a range of options just steps away from the hustle and bustle.

Anchorage 1770. 1,500 square feet of porches overlooking Beaufort River. Need we say more? Okay, we will: two dog-friendly rooms, in-room massage options, and dinner on said porches on certain nights.

Cuthbert House Inn. The backdrop of the Intracoastal Waterway at this antebellum inn is a great way to start the day, but their orange pancakes with Grand Marnier sauce make it even better.

Rhett House Inn. Steps away from Bay Street, Pat Conroy was known to send guests here. Have breakfast on the veranda in this circa-1820 home or stay in the cottage or Newcastle House.

WHERE TO EAT

Dining at a restaurant along Waterfront Park is a must, but don't limit your taste buds; you'll find plenty of local favorites tucked into neighborhoods throughout the historic district.

Saltus River Grill. This dinner-only hot spot boasts great views of the Beaufort River and serves up stunning seafood dishes along with sushi and a raw bar. Don't feel like seafood? They also have an amazing filet mignon.

Plums. This is a great casual place to dine on the patio with a cold drink in hand. The impressive kids' menu and park-side locale make it perfect for families to get a good meal and let the kids get some energy out.

Q on Bay. Relax in this friendly bar atmosphere with plenty of TVs to catch the big game next to Waterfront Park. The buffalo chicken dip is smothered in cheese and a perfect kickoff to a plateful of barbecue.

Blackstone's Café. Enjoy breakfast and lunch inside or out at this casual Beaufort institution. Locals love the Cajun shrimp 'n' grits, or try the hamburger patty melt. ... Trade the rye for jalapeno bread for a kick.

Lowcountry Produce Market & Café. Have breakfast or lunch and buy some locally made goodies. Thank me later for the Ooey Goey Sandwich recommendation. That



garlic pepper jelly is the jam — pun intended, but true.

WHAT TO DO

Are you a shopper or an adventurer? Or a little bit of both?

Official Beaufort Area Visitor Center. Located inside an old fort, this is a perfect place to start if you're a Beaufort first-timer. There are countless other great places to stay, eat and explore than what we had room for on our list, and you'll find information about them here.

Bay St Treasures. You never know what treasure you'll discover at this eclectically charming spot on the ground floor of the historic Elliott House. They specialize in vintage and nearly new furniture and home décor.

Beaufort Tours. Avid readers will delight in Pat Conroy's Beaufort Tour. Afterward, visit the Pat Conroy Literacy Center to learn even more. Not a big reader? Beaufort Tours offers plenty of other van and walking tours about history, movies and more.

Hitch a Historic Carriage Ride. A nostalgic way to get a history lesson while trotting around the most beautiful areas of town.

Get on a Boat or Kayak. You'd be doing it wrong if you didn't get out on the water while you are there, so take a tour, rent a 'yak through Beaufort Kayak Tours or hire an inshore fishing charter to hit the best fishing spots.

The Chocolate Tree. This place is a wonderland of

treats made in-house, and was the creator of the famous "box of chocolates" in "Forrest Gump."

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

If you want to venture outside of the city, the surrounding Sea Islands have a lot to offer.

The Legends at Parris Island. This par-72 course sits on the site of Santa Elena — the 1500s-era capital of Spanish Florida. See some of the artifacts while you play at this public course, ranked one of the top military courses in the world.

Kazoobie Kazoo Factory and Museum. Fun for kids and kids-at-heart, it's just a 12-minute drive from historic Beaufort to take a tour, learn about this American instrument and even make one for yourself.

Explore Hunting Island State Park. Spend a day exploring this beautiful island where the Vietnam scenes of "Forrest Gump" were filmed. Climb South Carolina's only publicly accessible lighthouse and walk the beaches. Make sure to bring cash for lunch at the Shrimp Shack, rumored to have inspired Bubba's laundry list of shrimp dishes in the movie.

Dempsey Farms. Pick fresh produce on your way to or from Hunting Island. May and June yield strawberries, squash, green beans, cucumbers, sweet corn, okra, cantaloupe, peppers, tomatoes and watermelons.

Old Sheldon Church Ruins. On your way home from your getaway, make one last stop in Yemassee to see what remains of this beautiful Civil War-era church. It is a quiet and moving place and a favorite for photographers. 🌴