

Charleston's Charm Is Undeniable at These Design Hot Spots

Plan your itinerary with our handy guide to the Holy City

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Perched at the confluence of two rivers and the Atlantic Ocean, Charleston has been a vital port city since its founding in 1670. For years, traders from the West Indies and England alike landed on its marshy shores, capitalizing on the booming cotton, rice, and indigo industries that made Charleston one of the most prosperous cities in the South. The city is also an architecture aficionado's paradise. After it was ravaged by the Civil War, Charleston went through an economic downturn and was forced to repair its traditional neo-Gothic buildings instead of rebuilding in a more à la mode architectural style. The historic downtown still features examples of the Charlestown single house, an architectural style featuring a side entrance on the street with a garden piazza and formal entrance running along the alleyway between homes. But it's not all sweet tea and pecan pie here anymore—Charleston also has a vital, burgeoning art and design scene. Here's where to stay and play for those in search of design stimulation.

Where to Drink

- **The Bar at Husk** The sister bar to Charleston dining institution Husk, this after-dinner hot spot is housed in a once-derelict brick building. Original brick lines the downstairs bar while a punch of red accentuates the wood-beamed upstairs lounge. *74 Queen Street; huskrestaurant.com*
- **Mira** (pictured) Housed in an antebellum house just a stone's throw away from Husk on historic Queen Street, this wine bar takes guests on an experiential tour of the Napa Valley winery's finest. Perhaps the coolest design feature here is the ceiling, made of staves from French oak wine barrels. *68 1/2 Queen Street; miranapa.com*
- **The Cocktail Club** Linked to Charleston dining hot spot the Mackintosh, this bar capitalizes on the charm of the 1881 building it calls home. Exposed brick, salvaged wood, and original beams and doors garnish the cozy space, which is filled with leather lounges. A rooftop garden provides the garnishes for the craft libations. *479 King Street, #200; thecocktailclubcharleston.com*

Photo: Courtesy of the Spectator

Where to Stay

- **The Restoration** Comprising a series of adjoining period buildings in historic downtown Charleston, this newly relaunched hotel distills the essence of the Holy City with nods to its indigo, equestrian, and Gothic Revival roots. Aptly the hotel's restaurant, the Watch, is downtown Charleston's highest rooftop, and a street-level coffee bar is a favorite haunt for locals and hotel guests alike. *From \$299/night; therestorationhotel.com*

- **The Vendue** Built out of a series of 18th-century wharf-side warehouses, this hotel seamlessly melds traditional Charleston architecture with modern flair. It has a collection of 300 original art pieces, hosts regular international exhibits, and even has an artist in residence (who paints out of an on-site studio) and a full-time docent. *From \$359/night; thevendue.com*
- **The Spectator Hotel** A departure from the more traditional hotels of the city, this French Quarter gem pays homage to the city's 1920s arts renaissance. The hotel owes its name to the iconic Spectator shoe, wildly popular during the period. It comes as no surprise, then, that black and white and curvaceous stitching play a prominent role in the fresh interior design. *From \$309/night; thespectatorhotel.com*



Photo: Courtesy of 5Church

Where to Eat

- **5Church** (pictured) Given Charleston's nickname, the Holy City, it's only fitting that one of the city's hottest dining venues be housed in a converted church. This 5,500-square-foot space serves up New American fare in a space decorated with stunning chandeliers, vibrant stained-glass windows, an industrial-chic concrete bar, and a hand-painted ceiling inscribed with Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. *32B North Market Street; 5churchcharleston.com*
- **Edmund's Oast** Pulling off a stylish farmhouse aesthetic, this brewery and eatery features picnic-style communal tables outside and an indoor space dominated by high ceilings, a focal bar with dozens of beer taps, and a charcuterie with cured meat displayed overhead. Guests can also learn about the brewing process while sampling local drafts. *1081 Morrison Drive; edmundsoast.com*
- **Darling Oyster Bar** Housed in a 115-year-old storefront on bustling King Street, this oyster bar lives up to its endearing name. It's dominated by decor details nodding to Charleston's seafaring heritage. Lofty seafood towers and a raw bar serve up some of the freshest, most delectable catches to be had in this seaside town. *513 King Street; thedarling.com*

Where to Shop

- **Alexandra Designs** The aroma of Diptyque candles and the melodic notes of Edith Piaf greet guests as they enter this treasure trove of Gustavian, Baroque, and rococo design pieces; mason jars filled with coral; and other charming curiosities. *156 King Street; alexandrafrenchantiques.com*
- **Landrum Tables** The hand-hewn tables of carpenter Capers Cauthen are a permanent fixture in Charleston homes and restaurants, including Fig and Two Boroughs Larder. He scavenges the marshes and plantations of the Low Country looking for salvageable wood, which he fashions into his one-of-a-kind creations. *575 1/2 Meeting Street; landrumtables.com*
- **Robert Lange Studio (Pictured)** This downtown studio gives its patrons a glimpse into the burgeoning art scene of Charleston. Run by artists Megan and Robert Lange, the gallery not only showcases and sells the work of the region's talents, it also offers budding artists a space to reside while creating their works. *2 Queen Street; robertlangestudios.com*
- **Worthwhile** True to its name, this clothing store is a well-curated hub, showing items by designers from Japan to Europe. It also features gifts such as locally made jewelry, French candles, London fragrances, and crafty stationery. *268 King Street; shopworthwhile.com*

What to See

- **Plantation Homes** A quick departure from the peninsula into the country reveals opulent plantation homes, covered head to toe in fine architectural detailing and filled with antiques from America and abroad. (Charleston's perch on a vital trading route meant wealthy landowners had their pick of the finest from the West Indies and Europe.) Perhaps the best depiction of Georgian-Palladian architecture in all of North America is Drayton Hall, pictured, but for some serious eye candy, the 18th-century terraced gardens of Middleton Place have to be seen to be believed.
- **Gibbes Museum of Art** Reopening late next month after an extensive \$13.5 million renovation, this museum is Charleston's pride and joy, founded in 1905 to showcase the finest in artworks from the Colonial era to the modern day. Even Solomon Guggenheim himself displayed his growing art collection here in 1936—and later this year, that very collection, featuring pieces by Chagall, Picasso, Klee, and Kandinsky, will be re-created for the museum.