



Charleston – A Historical and Cultural Treasure

Charleston is America's most beautifully preserved architectural and historic treasure, with a rich, 300-year heritage. Since its founding in 1670, Charleston has played an important and often pivotal role in the course of American history. The city's past is a testament to the spirit and tenacity of its citizens.

Through occupation, economic hardship, fires, earthquakes and hurricanes, Charleston has exhibited a remarkable resilience. Throughout this turmoil, Charleston has been the scene of numerous and varied historic "firsts." The first decisive American victory during the Revolution occurred at the Battle of Fort Sullivan. The first regularly scheduled passenger train service in America was established here in 1830. The initial shots of the Civil War were fired on Union troops stationed at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. And the first golf course (Harleston Green) and golf club (The South Carolina Golf Club) in America were established in 1786. History is literally found around every corner, providing a focal point for a visit to this intriguing city.

Charleston is equally acclaimed for its contributions to the arts and humanities, and is often viewed as a "living museum." Its singular appeal has been recognized by readers of *Conde Nast Traveler*, who have named the city the third top domestic destination, and by Marjabelle Young Stewart, who named Charleston the "most mannerly" city in America.

Charleston lends itself to walking, and many visitors find this to be a convenient way to see everything the city has to offer. Beautiful homes, churches and public buildings line the city's tree-lined streets. Magnificent formal gardens grace much of the Historic District, adding to the beauty of the colonial, antebellum and Victorian architecture. Some of the more popular attractions are White Point Gardens (commonly called "The Battery") and Waterfront Park. Other "must see" attractions include the new South Carolina Aquarium, the Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon, the Gibbes Museum, the Charleston Museum and Museum Houses – the Aiken-Rhett House, the Edmonston-Alston House and Nathaniel Russell House.

Charleston is a city of celebration and there's sure to be a festival or special event occurring during your visit. Some of the most widely known include the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, the Annual Festival of Houses and Gardens, Spoleto Festival USA, the Fall Candlelight Tour of Homes, the MOJA Festival and Christmas in Charleston. Numerous other events highlighting the arts and Charleston's diverse cultural heritage are held throughout the year.