

## A Blast from the Past

The low skyline was the most striking aspect of my arrival in Charleston on a clear spring afternoon earlier this year. The tallest buildings were only five stories high, a refreshing change from the skyscrapers of New York I had just left behind.

Many inns and independently run hotels are found in Charleston, but fewer large chain hotels within the city limits. My room for the weekend was in the carriage house of the 13-room Barksdale House Inn, situated at the edge of the historic district near the retail shops of King Street.

Charleston is ideal for walking, and my first stroll was to the French Quarter, a quaint district with cobblestone streets, wrought iron balconies, churches, and art galleries. My next venture was to the Battery, an area with gracious, pastel-painted mansions and a large public garden overlooking the harbor.

A boat tour to Fort Sumter, site of the first battle of the Civil War, was one of the highlights of my visit. The fort is located on a man-made island at the harbor's entrance. The tour lasted over two hours and the guides explained the incidents that led to the historic confrontation.

Charleston's abundance of restaurants mostly offer 'Lowcountry' cuisine, including southern favorites such as grits, okra and 'chow-chow'. On my first evening I dined at Poogan's Porch, a landmark house where I lingered outside, people-watching.



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Another restaurant was chosen for its snob appeal, given its name, Slightly North of Broad. It served exceptional crab cakes and organic vegetables. On the last day I finally discovered a waterside restaurant. Fleet Landing, in a renovated former Navy building, has a casual, airy ambience, and its outside terrace was the perfect spot to take in the expansive views of the harbor.

The Pavilion Bar, on the roof of the fashionable Market Pavilion Hotel, was my final stop. There was a lively social



scene surrounding a brightly lit swimming pool and fountain. I only stayed for one drink, anxious to leave the scene behind in favor of the relaxed southern atmosphere I only had hours left to enjoy.

—Nancy Lazarus