

# WHERE FLAVOR MEETS THE ROAD

By The Editors

THE SOUTH HAS NEVER just been a place—it's a flavor, a feeling, a feast. Food here is more than what's on the plate; it's a language of legacy, a symbol of resilience, and a bridge between past and progress. And now, Michelin is listening.

With the November-launching *Michelin Guide American South* on the horizon, the global gold standard in dining is finally pulling up a seat at the Southern table. In this year's annual travel issue, we're serving up your VIP preview: 10 cities across the seven states that Michelin is eyeing—blending hospitality, heritage and heat (the edible kind, natch). From luxe stays to culture-rich bites, we've got your roadmap to the region's rising stars—before the Stars drop. And let's just say: If you know, you go.

Clockwise from top left, photos: Miller Union by Andrew Thomas Lee; Peg Leg Porker by Robert Jacob Lerma; Herbsaint by Link Restaurant Group; Saltwood by Loews Atlanta Hotel; all courtesy of establishments



# Charleston

SOUTH CAROLINA

Our summer fling? Chucktown—and he’s got serious game. With iconic chefs, seductive stays and endless ways to play, Charleston’s serving Southern charm, rooftop ‘tails, market moments and more than a few reasons to never ghost this city.

## The Restoration Charleston

The Restoration is pure Carrie Bradshaw main-character energy dropped into Charleston’s historic core. With its pick-your-stay setup—sleek hotel suites or local-feel one- and two-bedrooms—you get the best of boutique charm *and* full-on adventure. Tucked off King Street, you’ll be wooed, (ahem) restored, then unleashed on Charleston’s buzzing streets to shop, sip and swirl through the night. Jimmy Choos? Optional. Bold energy? Mandatory. [therestorationhotel.com](http://therestorationhotel.com)

## FIG

Some things never change—and they don’t need to. After ~20 years of serving Chucktown, this elevated eatery is still a shining star of the Lowcountry. Tucked on Meeting Street in a green-adorned building you can’t miss, the straightforward and honest menu pays homage to the South, incorporating seasonal offerings like slow-baked grouper, broiled oysters and blue crab ravioli. No frills, just a labor of love paired with intimate vibes. [eatatfig.com](http://eatatfig.com)

## Sorelle

“A certain something special, every day” can be found at the two historic-chic buildings on 88 and 90 Broad Street—and although the hallowed spots have lived many lives since the 1730s, their new era as a two-story Italian resto and adjacent first-floor mercato has already made its mark. Executive chef Nick Dugan’s divine spuntini (the likes of olives, crudo and bread), pizzette and antipasti—paired with Italian wine and cocktails—deliver an authentic taste of South Italy with a dose of Southern hospitality to boot. [sorellecharleston.com](http://sorellecharleston.com)

## The Spectator Hotel

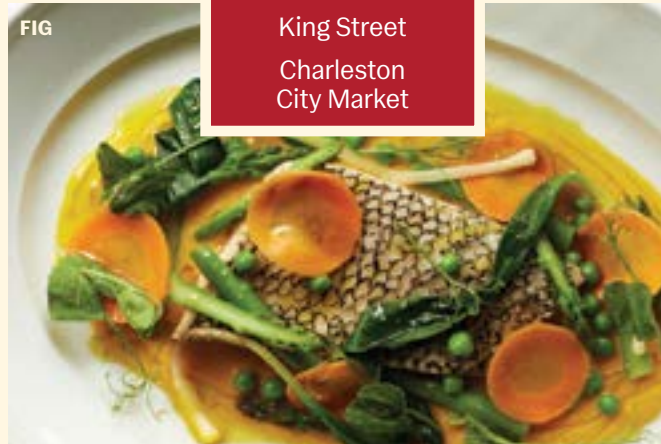
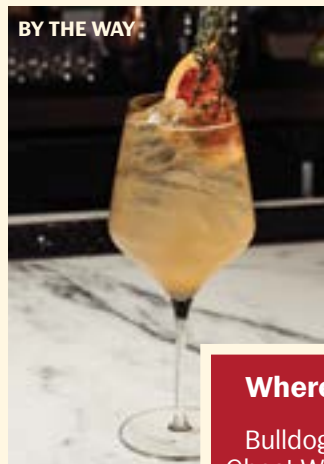
Where the Jazz Age throws down with Old South swagger, you’ll find The Spectator—the only Charleston hotel serving up butler service (and a pour). Steps from the Charleston Art Market and a bike spin to Rainbow Row, this boutique beauty seduces with swanky rooms and a Prohibition-style bar where cocktail maestro Allen Lancaster shakes up the night. Leaving is hard. Coming back? Practically guaranteed. [thespectatorhotel.com](http://thespectatorhotel.com)

## 86 Cannon

Sweet dreams are made of a dip in the vanishing-edge pool, followed by a wine and cheese moment at this historic-with-a-kiss-of-modern B&B in the heart of a bustling foodie district on the rise. The adults-only boutique hotel is ideal for homebodies and busybodies alike, with its tranquil library and sunshine-soaked patios just steps from King Street and a short drive to historic spots like The Battery and Charleston City Market. BRB—checking in to check out. [86cannon.com](http://86cannon.com)

## By the Way

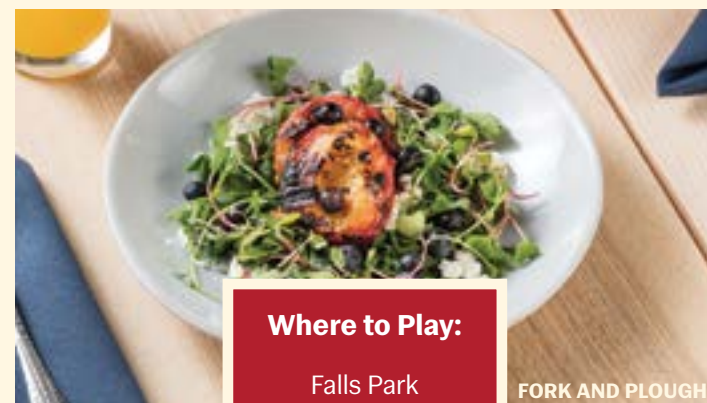
*Southern Charm’s* Craig Conover and Austen Kroll strike the ideal balance with their new modern take on classic tavern fare paired with almost-too-pretty-to-drink bevies and cozy yet bustling neighborhood bar vibes. Locked and loaded for guests to tuck in at all hours of the day (read: till 2am on weekends), find vibey plush booths and banquette seating, bespoke lighting, custom plasterwork, and a handpainted mural—aka the perfect backdrop to enjoy the likes of duck confit, steak frites and wild mushroom ravioli. In short, the ideal spot to toast merry manifestations. [bythewaychs.com](http://bythewaychs.com)



**Where to Play:**  
Bulldog Haunted  
Ghost Walking Tours  
King Street  
Charleston  
City Market



By the Way photo by Lawson Builder, FIG photo by Lindsey Harris Shorter, all photos courtesy of establishments



**Where to Play:**  
Falls Park  
on the Reedy  
The People’s Tap  
The Trappe Door



# Greenville

SOUTH CAROLINA

They don’t call it G-Vegas for nothing. Equal parts urban and outdoorsy and backdropped by the stunning Reedy River Falls—with waterfalls in the heart of downtown, bold bites and a 345-foot Liberty Bridge made for selfies—Greenville’s got charm, chill and just enough spice to keep you coming back.

## Jianna

Not your nonna’s Italian, noodles get a glow-up by chef/owner Michael Kramer—alum of famed La Folie and Wolfgang Puck’s Spago—in reinvented takes on classics like housemade fusilli, bavette steak tagliata, potato gnocchi and freshly shucked oysters. Set against the casual-cool light-filled interior, Negroni-inspired cocktails, wine and beer altogether make for a slurp-and sip-worthy la dolce vita experience. [jiannagreenville.com](http://jiannagreenville.com)

## Grand Bohemian Lodge

Falls Park brings the charm—but the boho-luxe GVL vibes’ll make you extend your stay. Equal parts wonder and wow, the boutique stay tempts you to stroll the on-site gallery, soak up Poseidon Spa vibes, savor seasonal bites at Between the Trees, or cozy up with a cocktail at Spirit & Bower. Find us staying in. [kesslercollection.com](http://kesslercollection.com)

## Soby’s

Serving rustic-industrial chic for over 27 years, the iconic spot blends friendly vibes with refined Southern fare made from seasonal, local ingredients. From fried green tomatoes to braised short rib, a meal here is standard on any visit to GVL—especially during weekend brunch on the sunny streetside patio. [sobys.com](http://sobys.com)

## Mint House

Swapping key cards and room service for kitchens, washers, contactless check-in and a 24-hour gym, these mod hotel apartments offer a true home away from home. With studio to three-bedroom suites in two locales (downtown and West End), you’re free to explore the likes of nearby Swamp Rabbit Trail, the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Fluor Field. Truly a home run stay. [minthouse.com](http://minthouse.com)

## Fork and Plough

The brainchild of farmer Roddy Pick and chef Shawn Kelly, farm-to-table levels up. Grass-fed/-finished beef and in-season organically grown produce from Pick’s Kingbird Pastures star on Kelly’s twice-daily-changing menu, serving the likes of creamy crab and brie soup, smoked trout dip, shiitake Swiss cheeseburger, and a chicken salad sandwich. No matter what you spring for, it’s 100% guaranteed fresh. [forkandplough.com](http://forkandplough.com)

## Hotel Hartness

Named *Travel + Leisure’s* 2024 best in-state resort, Hotel Hartness is like if an estate from *Bridgerton* were brought into the 21st century, with each of the elegantly appointed rooms, lobbies and balconies steeped in luxury. A ~24-minute drive from downtown takes you to a serene retreat at the former home of one of Greenville’s most prominent families, nestled on a 449-acre parcel featuring a gorgeous 15-mile trail network weaving through woods, ponds and streams. And definitely not to be overlooked is the cozy Captain bar and glass-encased Patterson Kitchen + Bar. [hotelhartness.com](http://hotelhartness.com)

# Atlanta

G E O R G I A

Where the swagger of the South collides with global energy, Atlanta sees millions flowing through its mammoth airport and interstates for its raw energy, fearless flavors, and a city wired for wild and wonderful moments. From boundary-pushing chefs and scene-stealing hotels to gritty art, pulsing music and after-dark thrills, A-Town hits you with its signature blend of Southern charm and urban edge. Whether you're crashing for a night or staking your claim for a weekend, one thing's clear: Atlanta never does boring.



BACCHANALIA

## Hotel Clermont

Hotel, motel—Clermont is the inn. The 2024 Michelin Key retro-mod gem on historic Ponce de Leon channels vintage cool via 93 bespoke rooms, skyline views and all the buzz factor. In the groovy '70s-chic lobby, velvet couches and greenery vibe while Outkast lyrics hide in the corners like little Southern secrets. Take it all in with slow sips in the lobby cafe, then hit Tiny Lou's for French-American bites or the newly remodeled rooftop bar for cocktails at golden hour. But no matter the hour—Hotel Clermont owns that unmistakable ATL edge. [hotelclermont.com](http://hotelclermont.com)

## Miller Union

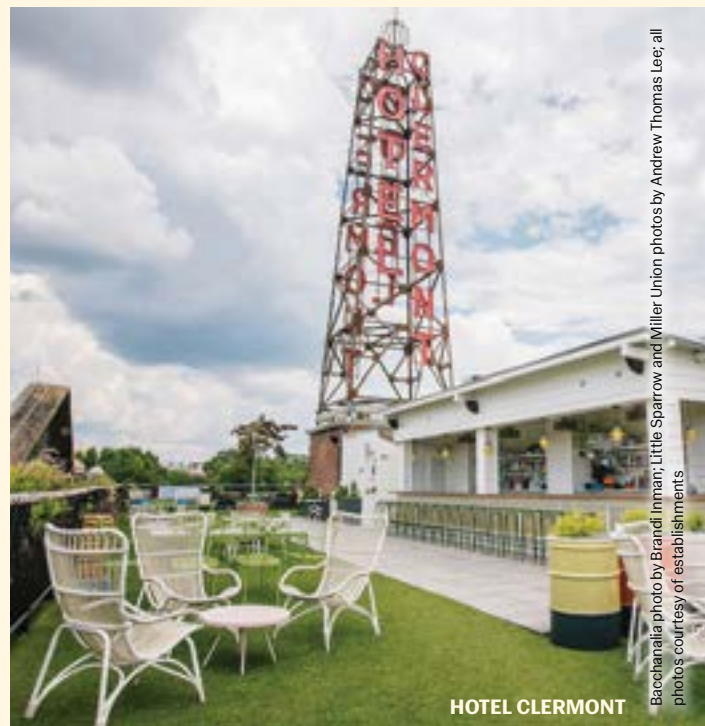
Farmstead core shines in Atlanta's old stockyards-turned-Miller Union, where the reimagined 1880s warehouse sets the stage for chef Steven Satterfield's seasonal Southern magic. Rustic yet refined, the menu spins local harvests into plates like warm goat cheese and rabbit & ricotta dumplings, while Neal McCarthy's sharp, sustainable wine list nails every pairing. Not just a restaurant—Miller Union is an Atlanta landmark of flavor and soul. [millerunion.com](http://millerunion.com)

## The Georgian Terrace

If you're not on Peachtree, are you even in The A? Doubling as a hotel + hotbed for a host of Hollywood A-listers and flicks (see *The Change-Up*, *Identity Theft* and *Anchorman 2*), the official hotel partner of adjacent Fox Theatre serves as a historic homebase for culture vultures and star-chasers alike. Also home to iconic Livingston Restaurant & Bar, Edgar's Proof & Provision and neighborhood hub Buffalo Bayou Café—it's more than just a landmark, it's a destination. Hey—if it's right for Ryan Reynolds, it's right with us. [thegeorgianterrace.com](http://thegeorgianterrace.com)



LOEWS ATLANTA HOTEL



HOTEL CLERMONT

Bacchanalia photo by Brandi Inman; Little Sparrow and Miller Union photos by Andrew Thomas Lee; all photos courtesy of establishments



LITTLE SPARROW

Bacchanalia photo by Brandi Inman; Little Sparrow and Miller Union photos by Andrew Thomas Lee; all photos courtesy of establishments

## Little Sparrow

If it's Ford Fry fare, we're eating it. From the brains behind local Supercia and Little Rey, five-time Beard semifinalist Fry serves mouthfuls of mems in this almost-too-pretty-to-dine neighborhood "continental" restaurant serving up refined bites, from tried-and-trues to worth-the-mess indulgences—think burgers, Bolognese and raclette fries. While you're at it, Fry's famed Marcel resto is also worth every morsel. [littlesparrowatl.com](http://littlesparrowatl.com)

## Loews Atlanta Hotel

A road-tripper's retreat, Loews rises 26 striking glass stories over Midtown's vibrant walkable arts district—blending sleek, contemporary style with signature Southern hospitality. Any of the 414 luxe rooms beckon with bespoke touches and sweeping floor-to-ceiling vistas, while the exhale Spa tempts you to unwind or sweat it out. Refuel Southern-style at Saltwood Charcuterie & Bar or grab-and-go at Market Eleven—then tromp to nearby Piedmont Park, the Beltline and the Fox Theatre. And, yes, Bark Twain is welcome too. [loewshotels.com](http://loewshotels.com)



THE GEORGIAN TERRACE

## Where to Play:

- Centennial Park
- High Museum of Art
- Ponce City Market



MILLER UNION

## Bacchanalia

The, ahem, star of Star Provisions' primo portfolio, Atlanta's OG fine-dining rebel flips farm-to-table on its head via a sharp, ever-evolving four-course prix fixe that's as bold as it is refined. Stars in their own right, chef/owners Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison craft contempo American plates with hyperseasonal organic ingredients from their own Summerland Farm—spinning Southern roots into light, artful moments. On scene since '93, the palatable powerhouse packs precision, punch and a damn good wine pairing. [starprovisions.com](http://starprovisions.com)



THE HERMITAGE HOTEL



1 NASHVILLE HOTEL



PEG LEG PORKER

**Where to Play:**  
 Broadway  
 The Bluebird Cafe  
 Grand Ole Opry

# Nashville

T E N N E S S E E

More than Music City, Nashville is where Southern charm meets modern swagger. Across its tuneful streets and vibey venues, tradition and innovation jam in perfect harmony, from welcoming smiles to unforgettable tables. It's a city that rolls out the red carpet with a wink—classic enough to feel like home, fresh enough to keep you coming back for an encore.

## The Catbird Seat

Perched atop the Bill Voorhees Building—and Bourdain approved—The Catbird Seat remains Nashville's high-wire act of culinary creativity. With cult-favorite chefs Andy Doubrava and Tiffani Ortiz now leading the charge, the tasting-menu icon blends boundary-pushing technique with a deep respect for sustainable seasonality, with foraged finds like kudzu vine and clover lending wild Southern soul. Intimate, ambitious and ever-evolving, it's not just a reservation—it's a rite of passage. [thecatbirdseatrestaurant.com](http://thecatbirdseatrestaurant.com)

## The Hermitage Hotel

Somewhere between boutique and high luxury is this Southern grand dame with serious staying power. Holding court in downtown Nashville since 1910, the ren'd historic haunt is still the belle of the ball. Draped in marble, stained glass and handcarved opulence, the two-Michelin-key icon blends old-school elegance with new-school polish (see: Jean-Georges Vongerichten's Drusie & Darr). From etiquette classes to pet butlers, it's not just a stay—it's a standard. [thehermitagehotel.com](http://thehermitagehotel.com)

## Peg Leg Porker

Serving Southern hospitality you won't soon forget, there's a reason pitmaster Cary Bringle's porker racks up nods as the best Q in the South. Smokin' since 1827, the good-as-grandma's family-run joint with a full rooftop bar bowed its brick-and-mortar in 2013 to cult following. Smoked-daily and scratchmade everything—it's a flavor-forward fixture that's Southern to the bone. [peglegporker.com](http://peglegporker.com)

## 1 Hotel Nashville

Proof Music City's hotel scene has grown up fast, high design and eco-luxury collide in a one-Michelin-key downtown den. At once laid-back and stylish—and cloaked in a 56K-plant ivy facade—the sustainably minded stay serves up organic materials, skyline views and a rooftop

bar worth the elevator ride. Add a Bamford spa, wellness-forward amenities and farm-to-table dining, and you've got nature meets next-level in the heart of Nashville. [1hotels.com](http://1hotels.com)

## Rolf and Daughters

Cutting-edge and comfort collide in a buzzy industrial-chic Germantown brick-enveloped, glow-backed RAD resto, where chef Philip Krajeck turns Tennessee's agricultural rhythm into hyperseasonal small plates, New American provisions and housemade pastas. With indie-driven wines, inventive 'tails, a knockout amari lineup and effortless hospitality to boot, it's the kind of place that's cool without trying—proof that timeless always beats trendy. [rolfanddaughters.com](http://rolfanddaughters.com)

## Soho House Nashville

In a Bauhaus-inspired former sock factory, the one-Michelin-key House fuses hotel with creative hub in a sleek twist on the London members' club. Tuned to Music City's vibe via three indoor/outdoor venues—including the Sock Room and Secret Garden—its open industrial spaces, retro-mod style and 150-year-old elm-anchored garden strike a bold balance between legacy and cutting-edge cool that crafts a reputation all her own. [sohohouse.com](http://sohohouse.com)

Peg Leg Porker photo by Alyssa Jiosa Cox; all photos courtesy of establishments

# Birmingham

A L A B A M A

There's more to Bama than "Roll Tide." Framed by the lush Appalachian foothills and steeped in Civil Rights history and industrial grit, Magic City earns its nickname—and then some. The knockout hospitality scene? Just the final spell in its charm offensive. Here, hospitality isn't an afterthought—it's part of the city's evolving narrative.

## Automatic Seafood and Oysters

An automatic fan-fave, James Beard-decorated chef Adam Evans and wife/designer Suzanne Humphries Evans' ode to the Americana coast made immediate waves when it splashed onto the resto scene six years ago—and is still holding steadfast to this day. Gulf of Mexico fish, Southern and Eastern coastline oysters, plus a garden variety of local produce and proteins star across creative takes on the likes of crusted yellowfin tuna and crispy fish collars that don't just ride the wave—but *are* the tide. [automaticseafood.com](http://automaticseafood.com)

## The Painted Lady

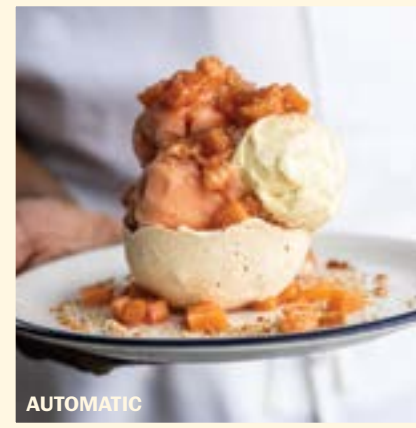
Both history and generosity lend inspo to this historic Eyer-Raden building-set boutique stay in Magic City's former Automotive District. Built to honor the colorful and questionable character of local heroine Louise Wooster (read: brothel owner and hero of the city's cholera epidemic), the storied setting is backdropped by the rolling Cotton State hills paired with the city's bustling arts scene. Select rooms sport vintage Lilly Pulitzer-esque wallpaper and cheery colors, while others lean more moody-floral—but all elicit the distinct Southern charm the inn was founded on. [thepaintedladyhotel.com](http://thepaintedladyhotel.com)

## The Bright Star Restaurant

The brainchild of a Greek immigrant family, the James Beard America's Classics Award-winning resto reigns as the oldest generationally owned eatery in Bama—and more than a century in, its, ahem, bright star shines on. First launched as a 12-seat bar in 1907, its current perch between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa dishes out the region's unexpected love affair with Greek flavors—think tenderloin with a twist, Gulf-kissed gumbo and baklava reimagined as cheesecake. A living legend—on a plate. [thebrightstar.com](http://thebrightstar.com)

**Where to Play:**

- Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame
- Dread River Distilling Co.
- Birmingham Museum of Art



AUTOMATIC



AUTOMATIC



THE PAINTED LADY

# New Orleans

LOUISIANA

Built on Bayou mystique and Big Easy magic, New Orleans is a city that doesn't chase trends—it births them. Here, history hums louder than hype; elegance leans lived-in; and the past lingers in every bite, brass note and brick. This isn't nostalgia... it's culture, soul and staying power—pure and simple.

## Herbsaint

A pioneer of mod NOLA fare, Herbsaint fuses French-Southern soul with rustic Italian flair on storied St. Charles Ave. James Beard Best Chef South Donald Link's flagship keeps things local and seasonal—from Gulf seafood, gumbo and housemade spaghetti to farm-picked produce—served with quiet confidence and spot-on wine pairings. Awards? Stacked. But the food does all the talking. [herbsaint.com](http://herbsaint.com)



THE COURT OF TWO SISTERS



MAISON MÉTIER

## Maison Métier

A jewel box of a guesthouse, the one-Michelin-key Maison feels more like an art-filled atelier than a hotel. Wrapped in restored architectural charm and layered with bold design by Studio Shamshiri, it's part Euro workshop, part French Quarter fantasy, where every plush detail, vintage artifact and curated artwork tells a story—and captures the effortless blend of grit and grandeur that defines the Big Easy. [maisonmetier.com](http://maisonmetier.com)



HERBSAINT

## The Court of Two Sisters

Serving straight Creole soul from its OG "Governor's Row" storied digs, the lush, wisteria-draped haunt dishes dazzling dinner selects like jalapeno bacon-wrapped duck and Louisiana shrimp and grits—while live jazz-laced brunches bring the band (and the Benny), starring such staples as gumbo and jambalaya. So, more than a French Quarter fixture, she's a NOLA legend. [courtoftwosisters.com](http://courtoftwosisters.com)

## Columns

An Uptown Victorian fantasy, the maximalist-leaning one-Michelin-key 1883 Italianate villa flips history into 20 rooms dripping with color and personality. Claw-foot tubs and sky-high ceilings keep it classic with a vibe that's raw and collected—and just polished enough—with the pulsing mahogany-ceilinged bar spilling into the porch and garden, and soulful jazz brunch coming together for a "laissez les bons temps rouler"—meets—"la dolce vita" moment we'll call mandatory. [thecolumns.com](http://thecolumns.com)



COLUMNS

## Where to Play:

Cafe du Monde  
Bourbon Street  
Cemetery tour

Herbsaint and Cochon photos courtesy of Link Restaurant Group; remaining photos courtesy of establishments



COCHON

## Cochon

Rustic, real and unapologetically South, at Cochon, chef Donald Link gets back to his roots—think bold, no-frills Cajun Southern cooking built on local pork, Gulf seafood (fried alligator, anyone?) and time-honored technique. Alongside chef Stephen Stryjewski, he brings the smoke, the soul and the cracklins in a space that hums with energy from the chef's counter to the patio. [cochonrestaurant.com](http://cochonrestaurant.com)

## Hôtel Peter and Paul

No need for modern flash—history does the heavy lifting here. Equal parts bohemian and romantic, the one-Michelin-key stay serves up a reverent reimagining of a Catholic schoolhouse + 19th-century church rectory and convent—layered, lush and lived-in. Tucked in tranquil-hip Faubourg Marigny, with The Elysian Bar as its soulful anchor, it's a reverent retreat—rooted in story, not modernism. [ash.world](http://ash.world)



HÔTEL PETER AND PAUL

# Oxford

## MISSISSIPPI

Consistently ranked among the best and prettiest U.S. college towns, Oxford calls to more than just Rebels. Ole Miss' stomping grounds also touts the "Cultural Mecca of the South" title thanks to its on-point hospitality and literary legends (s/o John Grisham and Willie Morris). That said—if college football isn't your religion, sched your Southern sojourn for offseason.

### The Oliver Hotel

The gateway to charm lies just "a hop from The Square and a skip to the Grove." Once The Chancellor's House, this quaint inn rewrites Southern hospitality via patioed resto, intimate bar, and 40 Fido-friendly rooms feat. thoughtful touches like claw-foot tubs and tall ceilings. Classic masonry and Juliet balconies showcase its rich history—balanced perfectly with mod comforts that make you feel right at home. [theoliverhotel.com](http://theoliverhotel.com)

### Saint Leo

Aptly named before white smoke went up and the Chicago pope came to reign, this holy mainstay's MO is generous proportions with attention to detail—just like owner Emily Blount's mother did. Blending big-city style with a touch of small-town hospitality and the simplicity of wood-fired Italian, the distinction can be easily distinguished in the resto's pizza, antipasti, salads and large plates. Cin cin! [eatsaintleo.com](http://eatsaintleo.com)

### Snackbar

Making rounds in Oxford's "neighborhood restaurant and living room" are the freshest raw oysters the country over, artfully crafted 'tails and internationally inspired food curated and cooked by 2019 James Beard Best Chef South Vishwesh Bhatt. To boot, the Southern Brasserie uses Magnolia State ingredients that keep visitors and locals alike coming back for far more than just a snack. [citygroceryonline.com](http://citygroceryonline.com)

### Good Day Cafe

Kick off a good day—or wind it down—at this walk-up window-turned-dine-in spot where classic Southern comfort is an all-day affair. Born to fill Oxford's need for quick, quality lunch, it's leveled up to a bigger space—and a bigger menu, serving up steak frites, roasted chicken and small plates for dinner, while still dishing out OG burgers, and fish and turkey sammies at lunch. Southern simplicity at its finest. [gooddayoxford.com](http://gooddayoxford.com)

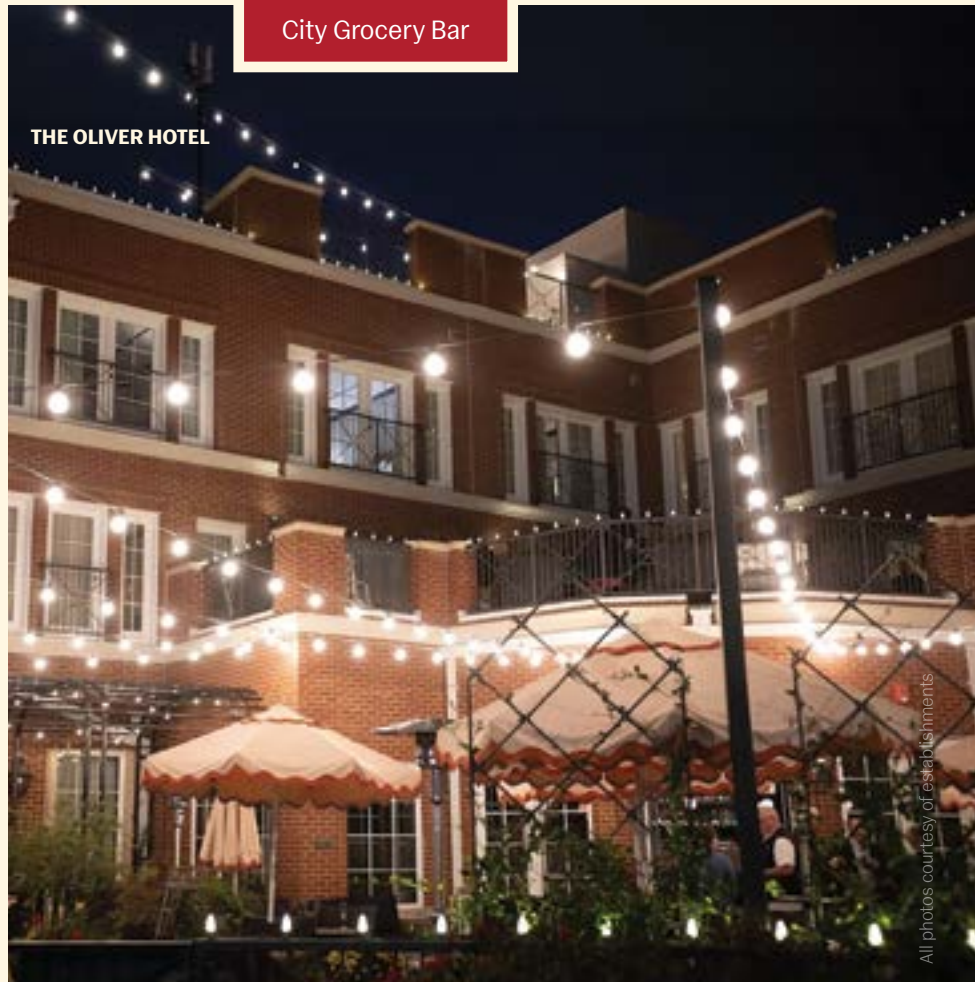


SAINT LEO



GOOD DAY CAFE

**Where to Play:**  
The Lyric Oxford  
Rowan Oak  
City Grocery Bar



THE OLIVER HOTEL

All photos courtesy of establishments

# Asheville

## NORTH CAROLINA

Call it what you want—Beer City, Paris of the South, the region's boho capital—but Asheville stays serving, and the crown jewel of WNC is finding her shine again. Cradled by the ancient Blue Ridge Mountains and channeling her wild-meets-refined energy with a craft brew in one hand and hiking boots in the other, the metro-meets-earthy hub pairs epic outdoors with bold flavor, buzzy breweries and artsy offbeat energy. Hiking, rafting, ziplining by day; cocktails and concert-hopping by night—it's a vibe: crunchy, creative and cooler than it needs to be.



CHESTNUT

### Mother

Bread is science in theory, art in the hands of a baker and love when shared with others—and this resto-bakery-wine shop hails all three with its tried-and-true sourdough breads and baked goods that are "baker's kiss". The carby creations pair perfectly with a dinner menu dishing the likes of seared prawns, spring risotto, fried brie and beyond—just like your mother used to make. [motherav.com](http://motherav.com)

### Chestnut

From the masterminds behind the temporarily closed Corner Kitchen in Historic Biltmore Village is this craft sip and sup spot drawing inspo from WNC bounty. Both the monthly rotating dinner ops and menu mainstays—think calamari and kale salad, charcuterie, and scratchmade lobster bisque—take advantage of the array of local growers, ranchers and dairies in the area. And the housemade desserts, sorbet and ice cream are not to be slept on. So, in a nutshell, come hungry. [chestnutasheville.com](http://chestnutasheville.com)

### Neng Jr's

Transforming the West Asheville space from an arcade to the city's first Filipinx foodie haven, Neng Jr's micro dining den serves up the complexities of global tastes, techniques and traditions across just 18 seats. Balancing

consistency with reinvention, the 2023 James Beard finalist crafts a menu guided by the day's best from local farmers, anchored by a handful of nonnegotiables that dish a true taste of its signature Filipino-Southern fusion. [nengjrs.com](http://nengjrs.com)

### Blind Tiger

No blind faith needed—just insider vibes of a boutique hotel that feels like crashing at the "guest house of a well-connected friend..." and even Michelin agrees. Tucked just off the beaten path outside downtown, this homey neighborhood inn is richly coated with luxe textures and thoughtful amenities—think tiled walls, in-room fireplaces, curated live music and an open pantry—all just steps from the bustling resto and brewery scene. [larkhotels.com](http://larkhotels.com)

### The Omni Grove Park Inn

Guests have been kicking back at The Grove Park for over a hundred years—and for good reason. Sitting pretty atop Sunset Mountain, the legendary 18-hole golf course, full-service spa and outdoor tennis courts are backed by the resort's expansive red-roofed inn, where fresh mountain air is always in stock, alongside all the R&R you could need. History has never felt so luxurious. [omnihotels.com](http://omnihotels.com)



BLIND TIGER

**Where to Play:**  
Pisgah National Forest  
Asheville Yards Amphitheater  
Highland Brewery Company



NENG JR'S

### Wrong Way River Lodge & Cabins

Less campground, more glampground, this home base just outside Downtown lets visitors wander on the wild side—sans the dirt, bugs and lack of AC. Lining the French Broad River, the luxe lodge and A-frame cabins deliver an adventure-forward vibe just minutes from rafting, canyoneering, ziplining and hiking—but with private bedrooms, Wi-Fi and minifridges to keep things civilized. Outdoorsman mindset: on. [wrongwaycampground.com](http://wrongwaycampground.com)



THE COVE RIVERWALK VILLA

**Where to Play:**  
 Live Oak Bank Pavilion  
 at Riverfront Park  
 Blue Post Billiards  
 FleaBody's Antique Mall  
 The Cargo District

# Wilmington

NORTH CAROLINA

Scenic, sunny and steeped with standout stops, Wilm is no longer just a beach town. A mashup of Southern charm and coastal cool, the popular port city continues to crank up the destination dial with crave-worthy cuisine and spirited bars, primo shops and galleries, and more—perfect for a road trip or weekend escape.



OLIVERO

## The Cove Riverwalk Villas

Life's better on the water. So goes the MO for these 35 floating houseboats where the sound of waves lapping on the dock becomes your new lullaby. Cozy, spacious and stocked with your standard amenities—including Wi-Fi, heat/AC and a loaded kitchen—each villa also boasts a private patio perfect for basking in the sunrise and sunset hues. [thecovewilmington.com](http://thecovewilmington.com)

## Benny's Big Time Pizzeria

Pizza—but make it chic. Helmed by celeb chef Vivian Howard and husband Ben Knight, ILM's only true classic wood-fired Neapolitan pizza joint sets the bar for tasty pies big time, what with its 100% 00 Caputo Italian wheat flour-based dough cooked in authentic Acunto Mario ovens. The result? A lightly charred yet airy crust that delivers the most perfect chew. Not to mention the pepperoni cups will literally bring you to tears, while the "secret sauce" (aka hot honey) will become your new obsession. And don't sleep on the fresh housemade pastas, garlic knots or cocktails—period. [bennysbigtime.com](http://bennysbigtime.com)

## Hotel Ballast

From its primo position on the Riverwalk, this sleek stay fuses maritime heritage with modern flair, featuring nautical-inspired rooms and suites opening to views of the Cape Fear River and historic downtown. And with all-day on-site dining ops—see: Buffalo Bayou Coffee, Board & Barrel Coastal Kitchen, and Sugo Italian Steakhouse—you won't have to stray far for standout bites and bevs. [hotelballast.com](http://hotelballast.com)

## manna

Boasting "everything you need to survive," manna is not purely an American restaurant—it's a masterclass in survival, turning local and regional ingredients into daily-changing menus that span handmade cavatelli with beef Bolognese and ricotta to poached yellowfin tuna with peppers and onions. An AAA Four Diamond mainstay since 2015 (the only restaurant in Wilm to ever do it), the magic of manna is as apparent as the care and attention to detail that goes into every single dish—and cocktail. [manनावenue.com](http://manनावenue.com)



BENNY'S BIG TIME PIZZERIA

## Olivero

Raleigh's Sunny Gerhart (of St. Roch fame) has done it again, this time taking downtown diners on a culinary tour of Spanish- and Italian-influenced New Orleans cuisine alongside co-executive chef Lauren Krall Ivey, most recently of Ashley Christensen's Death & Taxes. Rooted in his mother's heritage, the menu dishes an experience that "tastes like travel, but feels like home," blending NC-sourced ingredients with wood-fired flair to reimagine The Big Easy in such plates as 'nduja-filled dates, wild harvested mussels escabeche, and grilled rabbit garganelli. [oliveroilm.com](http://oliveroilm.com)

## Trailborn Surf & Sound | WB

Fittingly fixed where the surf meets the sound, Trailborn's first beachfront resort—reborn from the historic Blockade Runner Beach Resort—serves up endless ops to relax, recharge or romp. Think rentals and excursions, complimentary chairs and umbrellas for prime beach lounging, beachside pool and Blockade Surf Bar, plus on-site La Duna Paradiso resto and Bar Duna. DND mode, activated. [trailborn.com](http://trailborn.com)

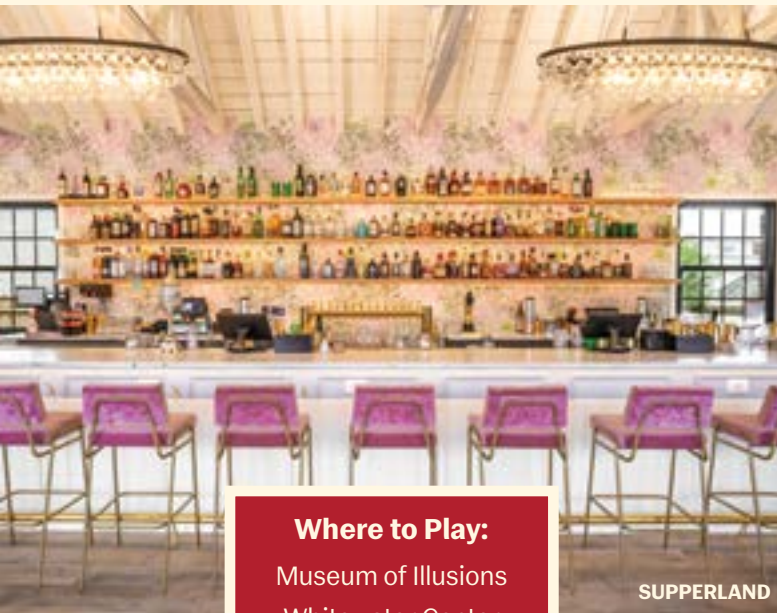
From left, photos by: OneEleven Group, Anna Routh; Baxter Miller; all courtesy of establishments



GRAND BOHEMIAN



FIN & FINO



SUPPERLAND

**Where to Play:**  
 Museum of Illusions  
 Whitewater Center  
 The Mint Museum  
 NASCAR Hall of Fame



THE DUNHILL

# Charlotte

NORTH CAROLINA

The "Queen City" says it all: Charlotte's got a lot, indeed. A royally bustling metro, it's long been on the come up—both literally and figuratively—for its top attractions, breweries, restaurants, outdoor escapades, nightlife and art stops, luring all travelers hungry for Southern-infused urban energy. And that's some real queen sh\*t.

## Supperland

Take me to church—er, to supper—literally. Housed in a restored midcentury church in Plaza Midwood, "Southern steakhouse meets church potluck" via reverent riffs deserving of all the praise—think wood-fired onion dip, Carolina gold rice casserole and wagyu pot roast. Brunch, clever cocktails at neighboring Bar at Supperland, and nostalgic desserts like PB&J cobbler and raspberry chocolate pie are equally worth the hype. Bless up. [supper.land](http://supper.land)

## The Ivey's Hotel

Unlike any other stay in Banktown, this one-Michelin-key hotel in Uptown serves touches of timeless Parisian-esque elegance with a side of high-design and mod comfort over 47 truly luxurious rooms. Immerse yourself in the hip, exclusive Library Lounge, a serene space for working, reading or sipping in peace—or get in the spirits (and snacks) at upscale cocktail bar Sophia's Lounge for a nightcap infused with vintage panache. [theiveyshotel.com](http://theiveyshotel.com)

## counter-

Take everything you know about your status-quo supper and toss it out the window. Turning dining on its head is counter-, an employee-operated culinary experience led by executive chef/founder and 2023 James Beard Award Best Chef Southeast finalist Sam Hart. Taking cues from a theater performance, the tasting menu—or "themes," as they aptly call them—rotates quarterly, oft paired with a splash of vino, a vibe-heavy soundtrack and art that hits. So, dinner and a show, if you will. [counterclt.com](http://counterclt.com)

## The Dunhill

In a gleaming city where almost everything is shiny and new, CLT's sole historic hotel stands out—fusing deep roots with modern edge into a boutique oasis just steps from Uptown's art and culture havens, retail therapy, nightlife hubs, and foodie finds. Though steeped in history, its refined rooms bring you back to the 20th century—with Southern charm carried over into The Asbury's traditional menus. [dunhillhotel.com](http://dunhillhotel.com)

## Fin & Fino

Who says Charlotte doesn't do good seafood? Keeping things fresh, the urban seafood house prides itself on curating a peerless small plates menu that changes with the tides and boasts delivered-daily fish and shellfish (all sustainably caught or raised), plus seasonal ingredients sourced from nearby farms. The furikake fries are a fan-fave, along with other must-haves like the crab dip, scallops and anything from the raw bar. One bite paired with a 'tail crafted by bar team BK & The Clams and you'll be beachside. [finandfino.com](http://finandfino.com)

## Grand Bohemian Charlotte

Art deco and upscale glam collide in this colorful, edgy hotel boasting bold design and luxurious spaces—think fresh air and skyline scenes at the whimsical Bohemian Garden, rooms decked with bespoke furnishings and artwork, rooftop sips at Búho Bar, and bold bites at Argentinian-inspired Mico. Talk about urban elegance at its finest. [kesslercollection.com](http://kesslercollection.com)

Photos: Fin & Fino by The Plaid Penguin; Supperland by Kenty Chung; The Dunhill by Anna Barzin; all courtesy of establishments

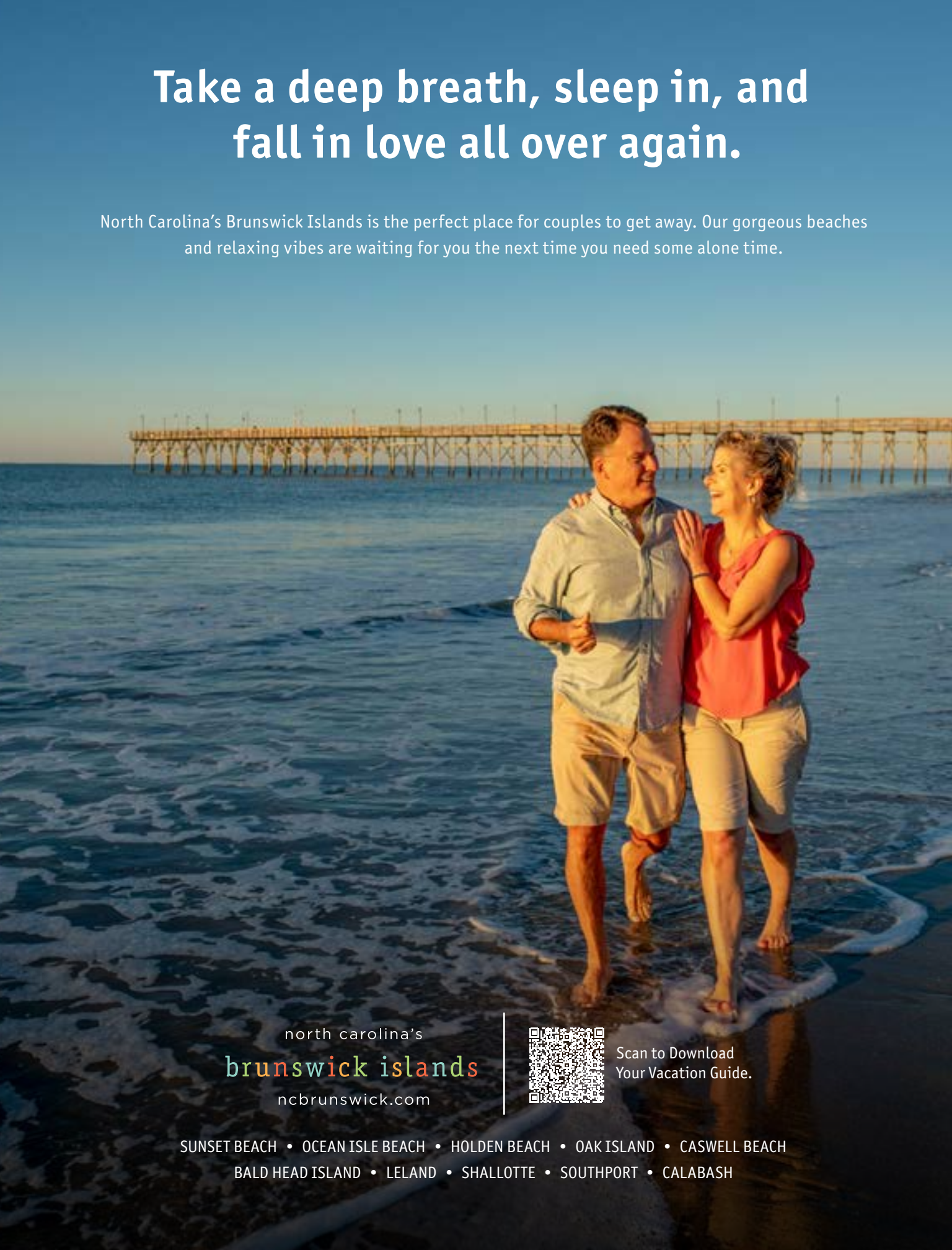
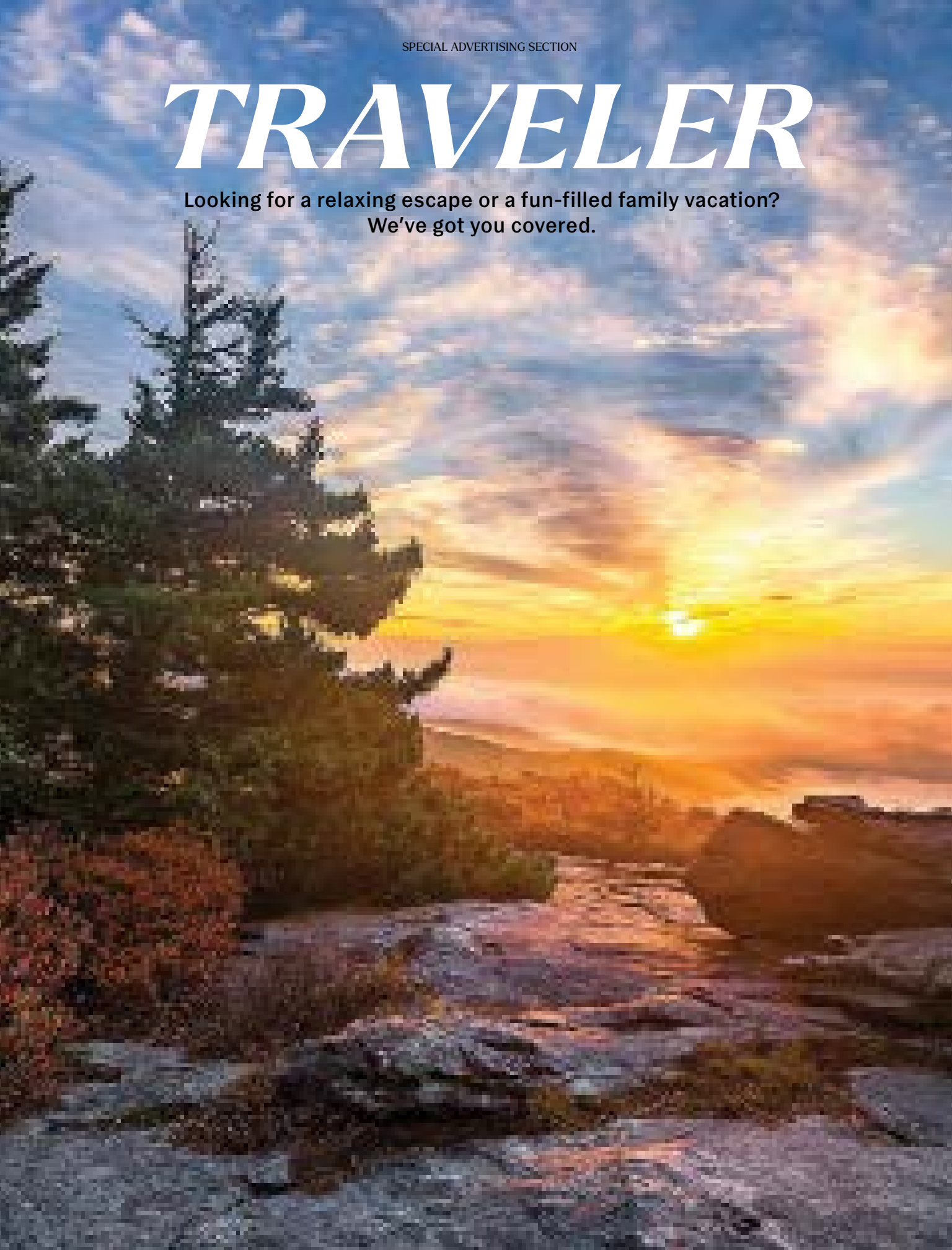
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the "Oscars" of the food world, the James Beard Awards, to publications like Eater, Bon Appetit and more, it's possible to spend an entire staycation if not longer sipping and snacking solely at award winning Bull City establishments.

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