

Taking the Low Road

ests, antebellum architecture, and enough comfort-food joints in between to fill a lifetime. Its anchor cities, Charleston and Savannah, draw visitors from around the globe, and you can easily make a four-day excursion in each, and perhaps have. Yet taken together, they showcase the best of what the Lowcountry has on tap—and can bookend an adventurous, 100-odd-mile afternoon road trip, filled with wild landscapes, offbeat pit stops, good grub, and gone-era charm, for an entirely new southern experience.

Plan a Wednesday through Saturday trip, since many Lowcountry businesses are closed on Sundays. The beaches, though, are always open, including serene Sullivan's Island (pictured), outside Charleston.



Clockwise from above left: The crew downs oysters at luxe seafood spot 167 Raw; a stack at Daps; menswear staple Oobe Brand; drinks at the Dewberry; the live oaks of White Point Garden.



DAY 1: CRUISING CHARLESTON

There's no better base camp from which to explore Charleston, South Carolina, a peninsula port city founded in 1670, than the **Dewberry**. Located on Marion Square, a 10-acre downtown park, the hotel is a mid-century modern jewel in a city best known for colonial mansions. It occupies a converted JFK-era government building with a handsomely restored

brick facade, and its spacious, wood-paneled lobby looks straight out of *Mad Men*. Be sure to snag a piña colada at the **Citrus Club**, on the rooftop terrace, the highest commercial perch in town. And for city cruising, make use of the hotel's French-style touring bikes to navigate the live-oak and palmetto-laden historic core.

But first, breakfast. Charleston rises early, and **Daps**, on Ashley Avenue, is a welcome newcomer to the morning-dining lineup—and not just because it's in the emerging

cultural hub north of the Crosstown; Daps serves up one of the best stacks of pancakes in the South.

For shopping, you can't beat **Oobe Brand**, a menswear staple on lower King Street that specializes in classic American cuts (field coats, fisherman sweaters, trim chinos, selva denim) and is run by a pair of former Clemson University roommates. From there, it's on to lunch at **167 Raw**, a luxe seafood joint whose Nantucket roots mix perfectly with the fresh catch from local waters. The restaurant's signature lobster roll is one New England import that locals have near unanimously embraced.

Offset the indulgence with an obligatory spin through **White Point Garden**—at the end of the Battery, a Civil War defensive seawall—which boasts views of Charleston Harbor. Wander the surrounding neighborhoods, to marvel at the 17th-century mansions and old-school row houses, before rounding out the day at **Melfi's**, the pizzeria just opened by



restaurateurs Brooks Reitz and Tim Mink of Leon's and Little Jack's fame. Head a few blocks down to **Uptown Social** for a nightcap. Along with rotating cocktail specials and local beers, the two-story New York City offshoot features live music and a rooftop bar—a rarity downtown.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PETER FRANK EDWARDS/REDUX; COURTESY OF THE DEWBERRY/OLIVIA RAE JAMES; PETER FRANK EDWARDS/REDUX

DAY 2: FISHING + FOLLY BEACH

After checking out of the Dewberry, fuel up with brunch bowls at **Basic Kitchen**, then head down to Folly Beach, a half-hour outside Charleston, for a day on the water with Capt. John Irwin of **Fly Right Charters**. He's been fishing the Lowcountry flats and marshes for decades and can help even the most novice of fishermen land a serious trophy. The fall "is ideal for hooking trout and redfish on the fly," he says, since both school up near shore. Fly Right will have just about everything you need to hit the water, but swing by **Charleston Angler** if you're looking to score a new rod or reel, or some meaty saltwater flies.

Odds are you'll be exhausted and grimy after a day of wrangling reds, but no one will care at Folly Beach's **Bowens Island Restaurant**, a beachside plywood shack that's arguably the state's best seafood joint, where you can grub on crab cakes, fried fish, and fresh oysters. Afterward, check in at the nearby **Water's Edge Inn** to avoid rush-hour traffic out of Charleston toward Savannah in the morning.



Clockwise from above: The dockside eatery Wyld, in Savannah; a bike gets a tune-up at Coastal Empire Moto; the Old Sheldon Church Ruins, in Yemassee; shrimp at Sorry Charlie's.



DAY 3: PIT STOPS + PARISH RUINS

Take Highway 17 south toward Georgia. Make your first pit stop in Yemassee, South Carolina, at **Caroline Cider Company**, to stock up on deep-fried peanuts (to be eaten shell and all) and peach cider—two Lowcountry staples. Next, continue to the nearby **Old Sheldon Church Ruins**, the remnants of a chapel built in 1745, burned during the Revolutionary War, and burned again during Sherman's March to the Sea. Located in a grove of Spanish

moss-draped oaks, among scattered graves, it's beautiful, spooky, and totally worth exploring. Then cruise down to Beaufort—a waterfront city known for its antebellum mansions and stroll-worthy downtown—and stop by **Old Bull Tavern** for a drink before finishing the day trip.

Once in Savannah, check in at **Perry Lane Hotel**, a brand-new modern retreat in the historic district. There you'll find **Emporium Kitchen**, a food hall with locally sourced fare, and **Wayward Bar**, an old-school haunt with Skee-Ball and arcade machines. Before you

try either, though, check out **Wyld**, a dockside eatery with uber-fresh fish and shellfish, or its sister restaurant, **El Coyote**, a downtown taco spot.

DAY 4: SAVANNAH SIGHTS + VINTAGE BIKES

Savannah is centered around aristocratic urban parks that are best explored by bike. For a convenient rental, the **Perry Rubber Bike Shop** is just a block away from Perry Lane. And, speaking of bikes, once you have a set of wheels, swing by **Coastal Empire Moto**, to see the beautifully restored vintage hogs, before heading to the **Starland District**, a 35-block shopping and hangout hub north of Forsyth Park. And don't miss **V & J Duncan**, which stocks rare books, old maps, and other paperbound gems. Finish the trip at **Sorry Charlie's**, an oyster institution and a good metaphor for the Lowcountry in general: long on ambience, short on pretense, and filled with adventure and surprising flavors for which you'll return again and again. ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: PETER FRANK EDWARDS/REUX; COURTESY OF COASTAL EMPIRE MOTO; PETER FRANK EDWARDS/REUX; COURTESY OF SORRY CHARLIE'S/SCOTT HARRIS



A guide poles the saltwater flats outside Charleston.