

Inside Charleston's The Dewberry, Where Mid-Century Design Meets Southern Comfort



Opened in June 2016, The Dewberry occupies a former federal building overlooking Marion Square.

It was my third time in Charleston in less than a year, but the Holy City continues to warm and charm me through and through. This time around, though, I made [The Dewberry](#) my home base.



Even the hotel lobby was thoughtfully considered in the design process.

Background in Brief

Opened in June 2016, the boutique hotel occupies a former federal building overlooking Marion Square. And when local investor John Dewberry purchased the mid-century structure in 2008 from the federal government, many locals reportedly wanted it torn down. But Dewberry had a different vision, to bring it back to life as a luxury property, while honoring its roots and bones. To that end, the interiors are a thoughtful mix of old and new, Southern and Old World, colors and textures. During a tour, the charming concierge Larry Crosby pointed out that the lobby, for example, is kitted out with custom white marble floors sourced from Vermont to mirror the original 1964 commemoration plaque by then-president Lyndon B. Johnson—which is still in place, behind the concierge desk.



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Accommodations

All 155 rooms and suites are cloaked in a clean palette of ivory and chocolate, and simply, but chicly appointed with dramatic pendant lighting, patinated mirrors, and round marble tables with rattan seats. My only gripe was not having a proper desk to work at, but that's where The Living Room saved the day (more on that later). And as odd as it may sound, it was the bathroom that stole the spotlight. Incredibly spacious and decked out with elegant marble, cherry wood, and brass fixtures, even the signature toiletries impressed. Created by skincare and spa expert Lydia Mondavi (yes, of the famous winemaking family), the custom scent—a heady blend of berries and woods—is so refined that at one point I said to my travel companion, a fragrance aficionado: “This is so lovely, I could see you wearing this as a perfume.”



The handsome brass bar is the focal point of The Living Room.

Restaurants and Bars

Henrietta's, the cheerful brasserie open from morning to night, does much more than familiar French food. (Though it does that exceedingly well.) Given its location, lots of the menu skews Southern (with a refined twist), as evidenced by the creamy shrimp and grits spiced with andouille sausage, trout roe-topped deviled eggs, and an impossibly delicious fried chicken sandwich: a gloriously oversized creation of a crispy, juicy thigh topped with house made pickles and spicy mayo. (Yes, you'll need both hands to eat this.)

As the name implies, The Living Room is far more than your typical hotel lobby bar. It opens daily at 3pm, but I discovered it's the perfect spot to work during before cocktail hour, as there's plenty of striking mid-century tables and seats to curl up with, and lots of natural light on a sunny day. Come evening, the scene livens up quickly, with the handsome brass bar as the centerpiece. But beyond good looks, it's the famed, spot-on service that keeps locals returning and hotel guests put. While the capable bartenders can shake up anything you desire, the classics (like negronis, Vieux Carrés, and martinis) are exceptional here, and if you're feeling peckish, you can nosh on some small plates (think oysters, fries, and gougères).



The Spa at The Dewberry is a cozy oasis, with treatments created by Lydia Mondavi.

Spa and Fitness

Opened late last year, this spa might not boast the most spacious of facilities, but it's discreet, well-appointed, and the treatments—all of which were created by Mondavi, and feature local natural ingredients like the dewberry plant and sea extracts—are delivered with top-notch care. And instead of sporting a sterile, all-white decor like many others, this one features lush wallpaper and curated pieces by local artists, lending the entire space a warm and cozy vibe. Treatment wise (especially if this is your first visit), Mondavi recommends The Dewberry Signature Massage, an indulgent, head-to-toe 90-minute treatment combining various massage modalities with the spa's signature botanical blend to target your individual concerns and needs.



The Ultimate Coconut Cake at The Peninsula Grill is not to be missed.

Nearby Dining Recommendations

Fresh off a sparkling renovation completed earlier this month, **Charleston Grill**—tucked away on the ground floor of Belmond Charleston Place—feels more posh than ever, thanks to locally-sourced chandeliers, mahogany panels, and brass fixtures. The menu by beloved chef Michelle Weaver, however, maintains an elegant, globe-trotting feel with Moroccan panzanella, ahi aguachile, and mushroom cavatelli. **The Peninsula Grill** at Planters Inn is a Holy City institution that matches faultless, polished service with a menu packed with refined continental favorites, including baked Oysters Rockefeller, sizzling steaks, and last but not least, the legendary ultimate coconut cake. (Imagine 12 alternating layers of moist, buttery cake and fluffy coconut filling—all of which is finished with a thick layer of cream cheese frosting and toasted coconut flakes.) For a laid-back lunch, pop by **Leon's Oyster Shop**, housed in what used to be a garage. The vibe is funky and friendly, and given its name, fresh seafood abounds. Standouts include anything from the raw bar and Leon's Fish Fry, a steaming, oversized tray of crispy assorted seafood, hush puppies, pea salad, and house made sauces. And for the best burger in town (not to mention, one of the best in the country), beeline to Leon's sister restaurant down the street, **Little Jack's Tavern**. Your best bet—I got this tip from a bar manager at The Dewberry—is to skip the Double Tavern Burger and order two single-patty Tavern Burgers instead. Also, skip the garlic and herb fries and go with the plain. After a single bite, you'll know: this is pure patty perfection.

The Dewberry

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