FORA

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The Carolinas

· North Carolina, South Carolina



Where to Stay

Charleston

The Cooper: A harborfront luxury hotel combining panoramic views of the Cooper River and Joe Riley Waterfront Park with a sleek marina, outdoor pool deck and refined waterfront dining.

The Charleston Place: A grand Southern landmark occupying a full city block in the historic district, with an iconic double-arm staircase, luxury shopping gallery and rooftop pool.

The Dewberry Charleston: Set inside a restored mid-century federal building overlooking Marion Square, this boutique hotel pairs 1960s design with an acclaimed spa, French-leaning brasserie and rooftop Citrus Club.

The Sea Islands

The Dunlin, Auberge Collection: Set along the Kiawah River, this coastal retreat combines Southern porch culture with refined luxury, featuring cottage-style accommodations, a riverfront pool and curated Lowcountry outdoor adventures.

The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort: Designed to evoke a grand seaside mansion, this oceanfront sanctuary pairs traditional Southern elegance with world-class amenities. A full-service spa, fine dining and direct access to pristine beaches and five championship golf courses elevate the experience.

Omni Hilton Head Oceanfront Resort: This sprawling beachfront resort features subtropical grounds, multi-tiered outdoor pools, spacious suite-style rooms with private balconies and easy access to championship golf, tennis and serene ocean kayaking.

The Inn & Club at Harbour Town: A boutique hotel inside Hilton Head's Sea Pines Resort offering European-style luxury and personalized butler service just steps from the iconic Harbour Town Lighthouse, Harbour Town Golf Links and bustling marina.

Blue Ridge Mountains

Cataloochee Ranch: High above Maggie Valley near Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this historic guest ranch blends rustic luxury with hands-on mountain traditions, offering stone-fireplace cabins, guided horseback rides and immediate access to scenic hiking trails.

The Swag: Sitting near Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this ultra-exclusive, all-inclusive mountaintop hideaway pairs rustic-chic log cabins with exceptional farm-to-table dining, private hiking trails and sweeping high-altitude views.

High Hampton Resort: Set across 1,400 estate acres in Cashiers, this historic mountain retreat combines classic Blue Ridge nostalgia with modern luxury, centered around a restored 1930s lodge, a Tom Fazio-designed golf course and a private mountain lake.

Old Edwards Inn and Spa: Spanning several blocks of downtown Highlands, this European-style mountain sanctuary offers mineral-rich spa treatments, antique-appointed guest rooms and cottages and heated outdoor pools in a vibrant mountain village setting.

The Outer Banks

The Sanderling: Situated on a narrow strip of land in Duck, this premier sanctuary pairs eco-centric luxury with front-row water views from every angle, featuring coastal-inspired rooms, spacious private resort residences, a full-service spa and indoor and outdoor pools.

Day 1: Arrive in Charleston

🌅 Morning

Arrive in **Charleston**, where preserved architecture, coastal landscapes and centuries of Southern history meet one of the country's most dynamic dining scenes.

Settle into **The Cooper**, **The Charleston Place** or **The Dewberry Charleston**, each offering a different perspective on the city, from harborfront luxury to historic-district grandeur and mid-century design.

☀️ Afternoon

Ease into Charleston with a leisurely walk through the **Historic District**, passing cobblestone streets, ironwork gates and beautifully preserved estates before reaching the pastel-painted Georgian homes of **Rainbow Row**.

🌙 Evening

Begin your culinary exploration at **FIG**, a pioneering Charleston restaurant built around seasonal ingredients from Lowcountry farmers and fishermen.

For something more intimate, choose **Vern's**, where European-influenced seasonal cooking and natural wines are served in a lively neighborhood dining room.

Day 2: Charleston History & the Waterfront

🌅 Morning

Begin along **The Battery**, Charleston's historic harbor seawall, before wandering beneath the live oaks of **White Point Garden**, where Civil War-era cannons overlook the water.

Continue exploring the surrounding residential streets, where grand Southern homes and hidden gardens offer a window into Charleston's architectural history.

☀️ Afternoon

Visit **The Charleston Museum**, founded in 1773 and recognized as America's first museum.

Continue to the **International African American Museum**, which explores Charleston's profound role in the history of the African diaspora and connects the city's past with a much broader American story.

🌙 Evening

Head to **167 Raw Oyster Bar** for fresh oysters, crudo and lobster rolls in one of historic downtown's liveliest restaurants.

Alternatively, dine overlooking Charleston Harbor at **Fleet Landing Restaurant & Bar**, housed inside a former 1940s naval building and known for Lowcountry seafood classics.

Day 3: Charleston to the Sea Islands

🌅 Morning

Enjoy a final Charleston breakfast before leaving the city and traveling south into the **Sea Islands**, where tidal marshes, maritime forests and quiet stretches of coastline reveal a distinctly different side of the Lowcountry.

Along the way, visit **Botany Bay Heritage Preserve**, driving through a beautiful maritime forest before continuing on foot to **Boneyard Beach**, known for the sun-bleached skeleton trees scattered dramatically along the shoreline.

☀️ Afternoon

Continue to **St. Helena Island** and visit **Penn Center**, established in 1862 as one of the nation's first schools for formerly enslaved people and today an important place for understanding the history and traditions of Gullah culture.

Continue into **downtown Beaufort**, where preserved waterfront mansions and moss-draped live oaks line the historic streets. Explore on foot or take a horse-drawn carriage tour before enjoying some time along the waterfront.

Settle into your Sea Islands hotel, choosing from the riverfront setting of **The Dunlin, Auberge Collection**, the oceanfront grandeur of **The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort**, or one of Hilton Head's coastal retreats.

🌙 Evening

Enjoy dinner at **Old Bull Tavern in Beaufort**, an intimate neighborhood gastropub with an ever-changing menu of European-inspired comfort food, craft beer and creative cocktails.

Travelers staying on Kiawah can instead dine at **Jasmine Porch at The Sanctuary**, where refined Lowcountry seafood and regional produce are served in an elegant oceanfront setting.

Day 4: The Sea Islands

🌅 Morning

Spend the morning exploring **Hunting Island State Park**, where maritime forest meets an undeveloped stretch of Atlantic coastline. Climb the **167 steps of South Carolina's only publicly accessible lighthouse** before following coastal trails past dunes, driftwood and the island's distinctive shoreline.

Alternatively, take the ferry to **Daufuskie Island**, exploring its unpaved roads by golf cart while stopping at historic churches, artisan workshops and quiet beaches.

☀️ Afternoon

Return for a slower afternoon along the coast. Relax beside the riverfront pool at **The Dunlin**, enjoy the beach or golf at **The Sanctuary**, or take advantage of kayaking, tennis and other outdoor activities on Hilton Head.

For travelers continuing to Hilton Head, settle into **Omni Hilton Head Oceanfront Resort** or **The Inn & Club at Harbour Town**, the latter positioned near the marina, Harbour Town Lighthouse and Harbour Town Golf Links.

🌙 Evening

If staying on Hilton Head, head to **Skull Creek Boathouse** for waterfront dining and sweeping sunset views, or visit **Hudson's Seafood House on the Docks**, a longtime island institution serving fresh seafood brought in by its own fishing fleet.

Those remaining closer to Kiawah can enjoy **Minero on Johns Island**, a lively Mexican cantina combining traditional flavors with Southern influences.

Day 5: Sea Islands to the Blue Ridge Mountains

🌅 Morning

Leave the coast behind and travel northwest toward the **Blue Ridge Mountains**, watching the landscape transform from tidal marshes and coastal plains to wooded foothills and increasingly dramatic mountain scenery.

Continue into western North Carolina and settle into one of the region's distinctive retreats: **Cataloochee Ranch** or **The Swag** near Great Smoky Mountains National Park, **High Hampton Resort** in Cashiers or **Old Edwards Inn and Spa** in Highlands.

☀️ Afternoon

Spend the afternoon discovering the mountain landscape along the **Blue Ridge Parkway**, stopping at scenic overlooks before hiking the open, high-elevation balds of **Black Balsam Knob** for expansive views across the surrounding ridges.

Alternatively, explore **Pisgah National Forest**, where hardwood forests lead to landmarks such as **Looking Glass Falls** and **Sliding Rock**.

Return to your hotel for a slower late afternoon, perhaps with a spa treatment at Old Edwards, horseback riding at Cataloochee Ranch, lake time at High Hampton or a walk along The Swag's private trails.

🌙 Evening

Settle into mountain life with dinner at **Sweet Onion in Waynesville**, a cozy neighborhood bistro known for Southern-accented regional cooking and local trout, or **Southern Porch in Canton** for elevated Southern comfort food and relaxed porch-side dining.

Day 6: Asheville & Depart the Carolinas

🌅 Morning

Spend your final morning at the **Biltmore Estate**, exploring George Vanderbilt's extraordinary 250-room French Renaissance château before wandering through the gardens designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and visiting the estate winery.

☀️ Afternoon

Continue into **Asheville** and explore the **River Arts District**, where former industrial warehouses have been transformed into working studios for painters, glassblowers and sculptors.

Enjoy lunch in the city and, if time allows, sample Asheville's celebrated craft-beer scene before beginning your onward journey.

🌙 Evening

For travelers departing later or adding an extra evening, finish the trip at **Sunset Terrace at The Omni Grove Park Inn**, where mountain views accompany steaks, seafood and cocktails.

Alternatively, dine at **Chestnut** for seasonal American cooking or **Jazmin** for contemporary Pan-Asian flavors.

The Carolinas Summary

Hotel Recommendations

Charleston
- The Cooper
- The Charleston Place
- The Dewberry Charleston

The Sea Islands
- The Dunlin, Auberge Collection
- The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort
- Omni Hilton Head Oceanfront Resort
- The Inn & Club at Harbour Town

Blue Ridge Mountains
- Cataloochee Ranch
- The Swag
- High Hampton Resort
- Old Edwards Inn and Spa

Activity Recommendations

Charleston
- Historic District & Rainbow Row
- Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art
- Gibbes Museum of Art
- The Charleston Museum
- International African American Museum
- The Battery & White Point Garden
- Charleston City Market

The Sea Islands
- Hunting Island State Park
- Botany Bay Heritage Preserve & Boneyard Beach
- Daufuskie Island
- Penn Center
- St. Helena Island
- Downtown Beaufort

Blue Ridge Mountains
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Craggy Gardens Visitor Center
- Devil's Courthouse
- Black Balsam Knob
- Pisgah National Forest
- Looking Glass Falls
- Sliding Rock
- Biltmore Estate
- Asheville
- River Arts District

Dining Recommendations

Charleston
- FIG
- 167 Raw Oyster Bar
- Leon's Fine Poultry & Oyster Shop
- Home Team BBQ
- Lewis Barbecue
- Callie's Hot Little Biscuit
- Vern's
- Fleet Landing Restaurant & Bar

The Sea Islands
- Minero — Johns Island
- Old Bull Tavern — Beaufort
- Jasmine Porch at The Sanctuary — Kiawah Island
- Skull Creek Boathouse — Hilton Head
- Hudson's Seafood House on the Docks — Hilton Head

Blue Ridge Mountains

- Sunset Terrace at The Omni Grove Park Inn — Asheville
- Chestnut — Asheville
- Jazmin — Asheville
- Sweet Onion — Waynesville
- Southern Porch — Canton