

Fall Into The Lowcountry

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 27 September 2011 13:16

The Backyard Tourist has a list of suggestions to help you make the most of the season.



(Editor's Note: This is an update of an article originally published 10/27/10)

Southerners have an inborn appreciation of the autumnal equinox. Those of us who can still recollect a time before the ubiquity of “conditioned air” appreciate the change of seasons even more. This is why some of us are good churchgoers: by the middle of July we are all aware of what Hell must be like. Fall means the end of summer’s stifling tyranny, a time when our primary occupation is staying cool and moving as little as possible. By the end of August we are practically motionless.

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Then one morning the thick, murky haze is gone, replaced with a shade of blue unseen for what



seems an eternity. The sun is a little brighter, everything appears somehow clearer. The beached armadas of summer partiers dwindle on the rivers' sandbars, thinned by a slight nip in the air and a corresponding plunge in water temperature. The scent of the marsh at low tide is clean and heady as the vivid green begins to gradually drain from the savannahs of spartina grass. Each gust of breeze brings with it a shower of leaves and talk turns to football and weekend oyster roasts.

Even the local wildlife notes the change. Our indigenous state bird, the mosquito (*Vampirus Gigantus*),

and its close relative, known affectionately to locals as the "No See-um" (*Gnatus Vampirus*

Gnatus Vampirus

) migrate back to their ancestral breeding grounds in Hell. Once again people begin to emerge from hermetically sealed houses like survivors of the zombie apocalypse, safe again to go outside without fear of being drained dry like a cheap wine sack.

There is much to see and do in this Lowcountry fall. Let's get to it.

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Get in the Spirit



Since the Halloween season is upon us we're naturally predisposed to the supernatural and the Lowcountry is loaded with enough specters to open a Ghostbusters franchise. One of the best known is the Land's End Light, famous for spooking locals and tourists alike for decades and maybe even luring some to their ultimate reward. From downtown Beaufort take highway 21 out to St. Helena Island, hang a right on Dr. Martin Luther King Road in the heart of Frogmore, drive a few miles past the Penn Center. When road turns long and straight, pull over and wait if you dare for a glowing phantasm that seems to move about a dozen feet above the road. Some say it's the spirit of a decapitated confederate soldier searching for his head. Others believe the light is the ghost of a slave separated from his family and literally sold down the river. Be warned, should the light shine in your direction think twice before giving chase. At least two people have followed the light to their doom.

In historic Beaufort the Old Point is particularly lousy with ghosts, the most famous is the ironically named Monsieur Gauche, said to be the spirit of a 16th century Huguenot dwarf.

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Appropriately enough Gauche haunts the old home called The Castle and is known for tapping out coded messages and leaving red handprints on windows – gauche, indeed.

The privately owned Castle may be off limits, but you can still get intimate with the indigenous



undead (or at least their stories) through The Spirit of Old Beaufort (www.thespiritofoldbeaufort.com). Evelene Stevenson has guided tours through the eerie moss-shrouded streets and alleys for more than a decade and a half. Although she hasn't actually come face-to-face with any spirits she says, "I have seen some really scary live people." Her "Whispers From the Grave Lantern Tour" tour is a half-mile, 90-minute walk by lamplight through the centuries with Evelene leading the way in period costume.

And this season she's joined forces with oral historians and well-known raconteurs from throughout the region to form Lowcountry Storytellers. Evelene says the idea is pretty simple, "Sit around campfires or lowcountry porches and pass down the heritage of the art of telling and listening to the stories that we love to remember." Call The Spirit of Old Beaufort for all the details at 843-525-0459.

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For the past 19 years The Exchange Club of Beaufort has been raising money for the Child Abuse Prevention Association with its Ghost Tours. According to a club source, “ghostly visions have been known to appear on past tours,” which take place both by carriage and on foot. These tours begin October 14th and run through the 30th and tend to fill up fast. Call 843-524-4678 for reservations.

Back to Nature

There are plenty of less terrifying ways to get out and enjoy autumn in the Lowcountry. In downtown Beaufort most of the tours are headquartered in or near the City Marina at Bay and Charles Streets. Climb aboard one of the famous horse-drawn Southurn Rose Buggies (www.southurnrose.com) for a leisurely carriage ride while your driver guides you through time and history.

Find out what this three hundred year old river

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Mark Shaffer is a writer and photographer who has been covering the Lowcountry for over 20 years. He is currently working on a book about the region's history and culture. You can reach him at backyardtourist@gmail.com.