

Backyard Tourist on Staycation

Written by Mark Shaffer

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Story and Photos by Mark Shaffer

I recently had a series of conversations



with friends who mentioned that for one reason or another an actual summer vacation just wasn't in the books this year. This got me thinking about the original concept for this column, essentially a local behaving like a tourist and doing things most natives and residents take for granted or simply ignore.

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Back in 2008 I wrote that I'd be "willing to bet that the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers have never been to the Statue of Liberty... Or that "a similar percentage of Parisians have never gazed down upon the City of Light from the Eiffel Tower, startling numbers of Los Angelinos have yet to pass through the turnstiles of Disneyland, and perhaps millions of native Romans will never tread in the footsteps of gladiators by visiting the Coliseum. As a species we tend to take our surroundings for granted, which explains a lot when you think about it."

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Indeed. When I lived in Las Vegas all I wanted to do on my time off was escape. And then I came to heed the sage advice of a friend and colleague who said, “Embrace it and it will surprise you.” And so it did. Not always in a good way, either. But I got what he meant and I’ve tried to apply this philosophy here, as well. Which brings me back to the original point: even if you can’t take a vacation, a staycation is the next best thing. And one of the best things about taking a staycation in a tourist town is the long list of choices when it comes to actual tours. There’s a tour for just about every taste, age, physical ability and meteorological circumstance. You can walk, boat, bike and even surrey (provided that’s a verb). You can bone up on local history during a leisurely ride in a horse drawn carriage, relax in an air-conditioned van, head out on a river cruise or lace up the walking shoes and hoof it, the choice is yours.

HIT THE BRICKS. Of course the most popular way to hoof it in Beaufort involves an actual



horse. Two carriage companies operate out of the downtown marina. Southurn Rose Buggy Tours (843-524-2900) and Sea Island Carriage Company (843-525-1821) offer the town’s quintessential tourist experience via a leisurely, relaxing ride through our canopied, moss-drenched streets. Drift back in time to the *clomp, clomp, clomp* of the big draft horses.

Reservations are recommended and during the summer months it’s best to call ahead and make sure the tours are running. When the mercury spikes the horses tend to get a well-deserved day off.

Evelene at The Spirit of Old Beaufort has been walking around Beaufort in period dress for so

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long she's practically part of the scenery. Evelene and her staff offer a wide variety of experiences highlighting the area's rich cultural heritage. Check out the full menu at www.thespiritofoldbeaufort.com

. We recommend the famous walking tour through the historic district. It's a well-paced two-hour journey through more than three centuries of Beaufort history with Evelene or one of her guides decked out in period garb serenading the tour with songs from the past. The Spirit of Old Beaufort is located at 1001 Bay Street across from the marina. Call (843) 525-0459.

EAT, DRINK, REPEAT. If you're like me the ideal summer stroll is the shortest distance



between two bars. Beaufort's blessed with a vibrant and eclectic downtown bar and restaurant scene. So much so, in fact, that one average staycation simply may not afford enough time to sample all the good stuff. That's why we're here. We've already done it for you. Someone had to. You'll find our complete rundown of the cocktail trail at LowcountryWeekly.com. Hit the "Cuisine" button on the main menu and click on Life Behind Bars. Our two-part "Drinking in Beaufort" guide is all you need to know. Use it wisely. And remember the words of Benjamin Franklin, "In wine there is wisdom, in beer there is freedom, in water there is bacteria." Cheers.

If you're looking for a more food-themed walkabout consider taking A Taste of the Lowcountry. Erin Walker created this ever-changing 2 1/2 hour culinary adventure out of her own curiosity about our regional cuisine. She personally guides each group through a half dozen stops, each featuring a different and unique component of our rapidly growing local food scene. Space is limited and reservations are required. Book yours at 843-441-7923.

GO FISH. Beaufort has been called a "Quaint drinking town with a fishing problem." The only way to confront a problem is by facing it head-on. Tony Royal and his crew of Orvis

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