

3 weekend getaways in the South

Macon, Beaufort and Greenville

A celebration of music, literature, architecture and good food draw people to these three classic Southern towns

By LISA MOWRY



Otis Redding Museum or Allman Brothers Band Museum.

Downtown delivers: Stroll among the historic buildings for more culture, food and people-watching. Macon's downtown Visitor Center is a good place to start, and it's within walking distance of the famed Tubman Museum—the nation's largest museum devoted to African-American culture.

When you're hungry, go where the locals go downtown: The Rookery and Dovetail are favorite restaurants for a more hearty meal, but casual diners that are fun to try include H&H Soul Food and Nu-Way Weiners. Ocmulgee BrewPub has a winning combo of locally made craft beer with custom burgers.

Good night's sleep: Macon is often a "pass through" town for Atlantans, but for a thorough look, book a room at one of three downtown properties. The new Hotel Forty-Five has a modern-industrial vibe and particularly shows off at its rooftop bar, with views for miles. Two Airbnbs get high marks and offer an elegant approach to Macon architecture. A historic house set on gardens once featured in Garden & Gun magazine includes three bedrooms and two baths (Airbnb 41814693). Artist Joe Adams renovated a turn-of-the-century house with an upstairs "atelier" for rent, while downstairs is his vibrant art studio (Airbnb 36336991).

To get started on your trip: maconga.org



▶ MACON

Macon may be best known for its thousands of Yoshino cherry trees that burst into bloom during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival in March, but this mid-sized city 80+ miles from Atlanta has quite a few other lures. Head down I-75 for a dip into '70s rock, an Italian Renaissance mansion and a walkable downtown that's been revitalized—just for starters.

Epicenter of soul and blues rock 'n roll: Musical greats Otis Redding, Little Richard and The Allman Brothers all began their careers in Macon. Take a tour through Rock Candy Tours to walk or ride around town and hear about its rich musical history, or go DIY by visiting maconmusictrail.com to learn about concerts, self-guided walking trails and more. Anybody can go on their own to the Capricorn Recording Studio and Museum,



▶ BEAUFORT
South Carolina

If Beaufort (pronounced "Bew-fer") seems like a town right out of a movie, that would be entirely correct. This historic coastal town halfway between Savannah and Charleston plays a starring role in well-known movies such as "Forrest Gump," "The Big Chill," "The Great Santini" and "G.I. Jane." Consider its attributes: graceful Southern homes, live-oak trees filled with Spanish Moss, a charming downtown and all sorts of water views from marsh to lighthouses on a rugged coast.



The Gullah Art Gallery & Museum

ALL PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE BY LISA MOWRY

▶ GREENVILLE South Carolina



Greenville keeps getting better and better. This mid-sized city a little over two-hours from Atlanta is a model of great city-planning, starting with its urban water park that's a scenic draw for visitors. Add in cultural events, walkable streets, a top-notch bike trail and award-winning restaurants, and now it should be on everyone's rotation as a regular weekend getaway. USA Today recently called it the No. 1 most-friendly city in the country, and Money Magazine referred to Greenville as "picture perfect."

Downtown delights: Stay downtown for the best experience. Many top hotel chains have facilities in the heart of activity; one that captures the soul of Greenville is AC Hotel by Marriott. Its location on Main Street means you can head out the door in either direction to



Greenville is known for its urban water park just off Main Street

the attractions: Reedy Falls, art galleries, cafes and stores galore. Views from AC Hotel show the buzz of Greenville, with its mix of buildings old and new, and streets hopping with visitors and locals both. The city has more than 100

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Home base: The elegant Rhett House Inn (circa 1820) is everything you'd want in a bed-and-breakfast in Beaufort, from its lovely porches and gardens, antiques, wonderful staff and little touches such as iced tea and cookies in the afternoon, then dessert in the evening. Breakfasts are amazing—pick-your-own delights from a list of specialties, served on the porch or in a cozy dining room. When it's time to explore, Rhett House Inn is just a few blocks from the downtown area, and even offers complimentary bikes for exploring.

What to see: Often referred to as a mini-Charleston, Beaufort can be enjoyed for its architecture, fresh seafood and history, with blocks and blocks of old houses, cemeteries and museums to explore. A local resident leads Janet's Walking history tour (janetwalkinghistory.com), covering 500 years of Beaufort history along two miles of neighborhoods. The Pat Conroy Literary Center celebrates the esteemed author and other writers. Nearby, the Gullah Art Gallery/Museum honors African-American culture on the coast. When it's time to be outdoors, explore the salt marsh ecology with Beaufort Kayak Tours or head to Hunting Island State Park for ocean fun and the state's only public lighthouse.

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Camp Greenville Restaurant



AC Hotel by Marriott



"The Big Dog" sculpture by Dale Rogers

works of public art to spot, and when you're thirsty, 20 breweries to discover.

Get ready to eat: The food scene has become a popular draw. Several rooftop bars and restaurants are fun to try, with Juniper (at the top of AC Hotel)

being an Instagram favorite. Its views of the city, specialty cocktails, garden-décor and fun menu (appetizers such as crispy cauliflower with a buffalo-sauce spice, with a gorgonzola sauce on the side to cool things down) make it a must-see, and reservations are highly recommended. Pomegranate on Main is a good spot for lunch, healthy and delicious, too. Its Persian menu — think hummus, kabobs and delicious salads — joins outdoor eating and original art for a memorable experience. New to Greenville is CAMP, which comes with the pedigree of the famed French Laundry restaurant in Napa Valley; it's already popular enough that reservations are a must, with guests wanting to sample the small plates and big ones, too.



The Juniper bar and restaurant



The Sweet Rabbit Trail

For more information, including fall events and

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