


Southern Living®

THE SOUTH'S BEST

The bars, restaurants, hotels, barbecue joints, beaches,
chefs, cities, and small towns we love **right now**



Dock of the Bay
Twilight in
Fairhope, Alabama

The Perfect Vegetable Garden
Easter Brunch for a Bunch
Creative Strawberry Desserts

APRIL 2019

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Photograph: **Robbie Caponetto**
Prop Styling: **Rachael Burrow**
Hair & Makeup: **Celine Russell/Zenobia**
Shot on location in Fairhope, Alabama, with model **Katrina Spencer/Directions USA**



THE SOUTH'S BEST



You'll breathe easier in the bay breezes of Fairhope, AL.

ROBRIF CAROKOTTO; PROP STYLING: BACH-DEI BURROW; HAIR & MAKEUP: DELENE BUSSELL / ZENOBIA

"Have a favorite?" That's how this all began. Three years ago, we decided to launch our annual crowd-sourced awards to celebrate the people and places you love. As we pored through 65,000 surveys, it was clear that Southerners are passionate about their picks. Join us in toasting this year's winners, from the soulful small town to the three-time-winning city to the chef who is a true hometown hero



THE SOUTH'S BEST

SMALL TOWNS

NO. 1

Beaufort, NC THE SECOND ACT TOWN

It's easy to fall in love with this place. Beaufort (pronounced BOW-furt) is planted on the outermost reach of North Carolina's southern coast. Century-old cottages frosted with white gingerbread woodwork dot sleepy, oak-shaded streets, which crawl down to the water in a tidy grid. This former fishing village is relaxed and low-key, but it welcomes newcomers with exuberant hospitality. People smile and say hello here; they'll stop mid-task to ask passersby how they're doing. It's a community that bands together when the going gets tough; just weeks after Hurricane Florence walloped Beaufort last September, it had all but bounced back to its old self, with live music drifting down the wooden boardwalk once more, floating between boat masts and across brick storefronts. It's the kind of place you visit—maybe once, maybe dozens of times—and eventually decide to remain forever. Here, meet six Beaufort locals who did just that.

Suits Turned Shopkeepers

It's hard for Christina Cunningham to imagine living anywhere else but Beaufort. "I don't care if I have to clean fish," says the owner of lifestyle shop

Beaufort Linen Co. "I'd do anything to stay here."

Before they owned the blue-shuttered store on Front Street, the town's main drag, Christina and her husband, Richie, called Raleigh, North Carolina, home. At the time, both of

Christina Cunningham of the Beaufort Linen Co.



TOP 10

BEST SMALL TOWNS

1. Beaufort, NC
2. Beaufort, SC
3. St. Augustine, FL
4. Aiken, SC
5. Fairhope, AL
6. Columbia, TN
7. Gatlinburg, TN
8. Bluffton, SC
9. Cleveland, MS
10. Blowing Rock, NC

them were working for a privately held financial firm.

"We spent every free moment we had down here, and on Sunday afternoons when we would leave, I would cry riding across the bridge," says Christina. "I was just so in love with this place and the community and how we felt when we were here."

The two of them started discussing what it would take to make moving to Beaufort a reality. Christina had always dreamed of designing a textile line, and her parents and Richie's grandparents had owned

stores. Retail was in the couple's DNA. So when a space opened up on the town's bustling Front Street, Christina and Richie quit

CHRISTINA CUNNINGHAM

BY BETSY CRIBB

Beaufort's neighborhoods are lined with historic homes.





their jobs, made the move to Beaufort, and opened a store focused on clothing and home goods.

Almost five years and a major hurricane later, their shop is a survivor; it's a fixture of the town's landscape and stocks everything from works by local artists to a line of pajamas that Christina designed. Tourists pop in for souvenirs to commemorate their travels, but locals stop by to shop and say hello too.

"The biggest surprise of living here is how much love we've received," says Christina, who donated 10% of all her shop's sales in the weeks after Hurricane Florence to relief efforts in the Carolinas. "We had our son Baker's first birthday

party in our front yard, and the mail lady stopped by. Customers even came to the store to bring him a book. The love that everyone has for each other surprises me every day in the very best way."

The City-Weary Couple

"Living in a big city can be stimulating and exciting, but my wife, Ann, and I like a little fresh air," says Albert Goellner of his decision to

move from New York City to Atlanta some 40 years ago.

Of course, he says, it was only a matter of time before Atlanta grew from a manageable city into a sprawling one.

With retirement from a

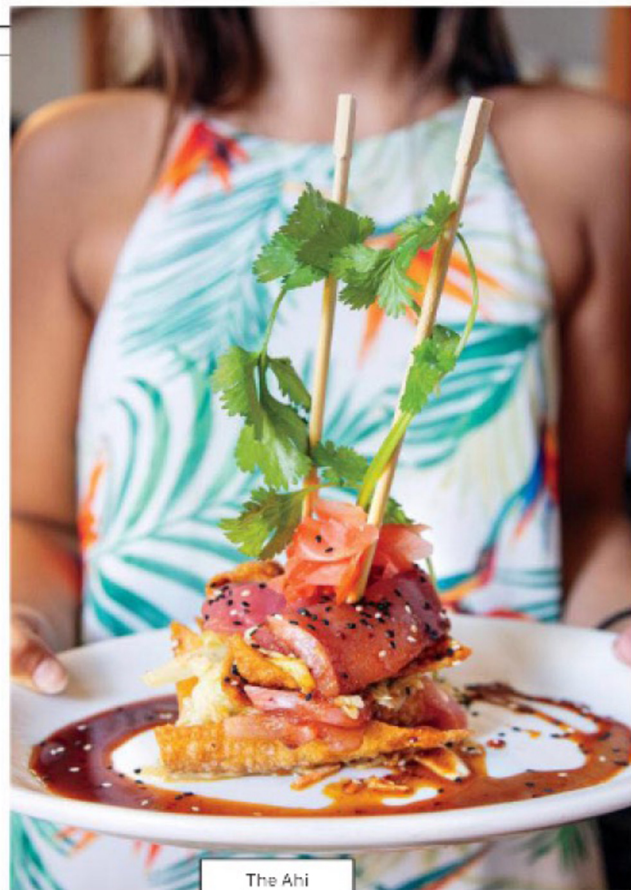
Cape Lookout Lighthouse, built in the 1850s





St. Augustine, Florida

In 1565, the Spanish explorer Pedro de Menéndez founded the city of St. Augustine, Florida, the oldest continuously inhabited European settlement in the United States. The city is a blend of history and modernity, with a rich cultural scene and a vibrant arts community. It is a beautiful coastal town with a mix of architectural styles, from historic Spanish buildings to modern homes. The city is known for its beautiful beaches, historic landmarks, and delicious food. It is a great place to visit for anyone interested in history, culture, and the outdoors.



The Ahi Napoleon at Beaufort Grocery Co.

career in graphic design and advertising on the horizon, Albert and Ann began looking for a small town to call home. "We were in the Museum of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and we told the nice lady there we were looking for retirement possibilities," recalls Albert. "She said, 'Have you seen Beaufort?' I said, 'We've seen Beaufort [South Carolina]!' And she said, 'No, I want you to look at Beaufort.'" They were charmed by the quiet, easygoing nature of the town, as well as the mix of architectural styles, from coastal cottages to Beaufort's more decorative homes.

The couple bought a circa-1900 Queen Anne cottage in the historic district. It's easy to spot amid the street's sea of little white houses: The roof is a rich maroon (as are the shutters), and a deep olive green trims the house, but it was white when they found it. "The older neighbors kept bringing us photos of how it was painted previously," says Albert of the house. "That's where we got the idea to go with multiple colors." If the paint job doesn't encourage passersby to slow down, the wildflowers sprouting along the sidewalk might. "I planted them there to try to entice pollinating

FROM LEFT: ROBERT CARPENTIER, CERIC ANGLIES



insects, like bees," says Albert, who also paints maritime scenes in his home studio. "We have a neighbor who's been here for probably 70 years. She lives two doors up and has a fabulous garden. I go out to get the paper every morning, and sometimes I find her with her little cart, working on my front yard. That's the difference between a city like Atlanta or New York and Beaufort. It's just the nature of this town."

Town Pedalers

Two and a half minutes—that's how long it took Betsy and David Cartier to decide Beaufort was the place they would settle down for good. For three years, the hospitality vets had searched the North Carolina coast for a year-round city with tasteful tourism, and, in an instant, Beaufort filled the bill.

"It was almost a flashback to my childhood," says Betsy, who grew up in small-town New Jersey. The couple then went home to Portsmouth, Virginia; closed their coffee shop; and moved to Beaufort 45 days later with no jobs and no real plan. "We just loved the feel of the town," Betsy says.

David learned the local

businesses by building websites for them while Betsy wandered around town on her bicycle.

"I would ride my bike, take pictures, write little things down in my notepad, and match up all the houses to the brochures," she says. Once, she adds with a laugh, somebody in town thought she was working for the tax assessor's office.

These days, locals know exactly who Betsy is when they see her riding around. For six years, she and David have owned Hungry Town Tours, introducing hundreds of guests each year (some on bikes and some on foot) to Beaufort's many charms, from waterfront eateries with delicious fresh seafood to landmarks made famous by Nicholas Sparks' novels (the most popular of their 16 tours).

"We're from 'off the island,' as most people say," says David. "But they've embraced us because we've tried to really tell people the story of Beaufort."

That warm welcome is this little port town's calling card. Wherever you come from, wherever you've been, Beaufort invites you to come on in, sit down, and stay awhile—maybe even for the rest of your life.



Fairhope, Alabama

Growing up in Fairhope, Alabama, meant... (The rest of the text is extremely blurry and illegible.)

ROBBIE CAPONETTO: PROP STYLING; RACHAEL BURDA: HAIR AND MAKEUP; CELINE RUSSELL/ZENOBIA

- **SOUTH'S BEST SMALL TOWNS BY STATE** **Alabama:** Fairhope; **Arkansas:** Hot Springs; **Delaware:** Lewes; **Florida:** St. Augustine; **Georgia:** Helen; **Kentucky:** Bardstown; **Louisiana:** Natchitoches; **Maryland:** Annapolis; **Mississippi:** Oxford; **Missouri:** Branson; **North Carolina:** Beaufort; **Oklahoma:** Stillwater; **South Carolina:** Beaufort; **Tennessee:** Gatlinburg; **Texas:** Fredericksburg; **Virginia:** Williamsburg; **West Virginia:** Morgantown



THE SOUTH'S BEST
BARS

NO. 1

Sloppy Joe's
KEY WEST, FLORIDA

SIGNATURE DRINK:
Sloppy Rita

Pour 1 oz. **Sauza Signature Blue Silver tequila**, ½ oz. **Gran Gala orange liqueur**, 3 oz. **sour mix**, and a splash of **orange juice** into a shaker, and shake to combine. Pour contents into a 12- to 14-oz. glass with **ice** and a **salted rim**. Top with a dash of **club soda** and a squeeze of **fresh lime juice**.



NO. 2

Flora-Bama
Pensacola, Florida
SIGNATURE DRINK: Famous Flora-Bama Bushwacker

NO. 3

The Backstreet Pub
Beaufort, North Carolina
SIGNATURE DRINK: Abundant Sunshine IPA by Waterman's Brewing Company

NO. 4

The Esso Club
Clemson, South Carolina
SIGNATURE DRINK: Bloody Mary

NO. 5

The Red Bar*
Grayton Beach, Florida
SIGNATURE DRINK: Grayton Beer Company's 30A Beach Blonde Ale

NO. 6

The Carousel Bar & Lounge in Hotel Monteleone
New Orleans, Louisiana
SIGNATURE DRINK: Vieux Carre

NO. 7

Pat O'Brien's
New Orleans, Louisiana
SIGNATURE DRINK: The Hurricane

NO. 8

The Bar at Husk
Charleston, South Carolina
SIGNATURE DRINK: Charleston Light Dragoon's Punch

NO. 9

Ice Plant Bar
St. Augustine, Florida
SIGNATURE DRINK: Tiempo de Fiesta Excelente (a seasonal menu offering)

NO. 10

Thirsty Monk
Asheville, North Carolina
SIGNATURE DRINK: Rattle Skull

PHOTO: VANLIE; STYLING: MARY BETH WETZEL; FOOD STYLING: KYLE GERBER; LILLY

*On February 13, the beloved Red Bar was destroyed by fire. Plans to rebuild are in the works.