

# Twin cities of the Carolinas

To better understand the dunes, marshlands and wild ponies of North Carolina's barrier islands, Fort Macon State Park and the National Estuarine Research Reserve are replete with self-guiding tours and trails

By PAGE SHUGRUE



Both Beauforts present an eclectic, home-grown range of shops, restaurants and inns

**T**here are two coastal Southeastern towns with the same name, which were simultaneously chartered, settled, occupied, ignored and rediscovered, but have no formal ties with one another.

Welcome to Beaufort, N.C., and Beaufort, S.C. Both boast exquisite examples of 18th-century West Indian architecture and both are identically blessed with mild winters, sheltered off-shore islands and proximity to the Intracoastal Waterway. Nicknamed "Beauforts-by-the-Sea," both have survived a wide range of inhabitants including Native Americans, pirates, patriots, redcoats, rebels, Yankees, movie moguls, tourists and transplants.

Indeed, for three perilous centuries, the namesakes of Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort, have forged their separate destinies in an eerily similar way. Local livelihoods fluctuated with the years and included shipping, whaling, ship-building, farming and pirating. One of Beaufort, N.C.'s more notorious early residents was Blackbeard who, in Jean Bruyere Kell's bi. The Old Port Town, Beaufort, North Carolina, ei. "built (Hammock House) with plans brought from the Bahamas ... (where) he and his pirate crew planned more blood-curdling adventures on the seas. ... Here he left (one of his many wives) to be done away with and buried (sic) neath the live oak trees. Her ghost still remains, screaming on the nights the moon is full, for her lover to return and save her."

Pirates also plagued Beaufort, S.C., alternately home to Native Americans and French Huguenots, as well as Spanish, Scottish and English immigrants. Finally claimed and chartered by Great Britain, Beaufort enjoyed some stability during the mid-1700s, as indigo, rice

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Photo by Bill Gleasner

The graceful, pre-Civil War homes of Beaufort, S.C., seem oddly familiar, thanks to all the movies filmed here

## Harmony reigns at Spoleto festival

By JOEL SLEED  
Star-Ledger Travel Editor

**A**fter a couple of discordant years, all is harmony again at Spoleto, one of the country's most famous music and arts festivals, which has been heralding spring for the past 18 seasons in historic Charleston, S.C.

Festival manager Milton Rhodes told a New York press conference that this year's 19th season will have a full 17-day schedule from May 26 through June 11, during which time there will be 51 programs of opera, symphonic music, choral music, chamber music, jazz, cabaret, theater, dance and literary and visual arts.

"With the first event of each day beginning around noon and the last generally starting near midnight, the Spoleto Festival will offer participants a total immersion in the arts. ... When you put this schedule into the context of the charm and beauty of Charleston itself, then you have an experience that can't be matched anywhere in America."

The only American arts festival hosted by an entire city, Spoleto U.S.A. is staged throughout the center of Charleston, he said, including its historic theaters and churches, City Hall, the campus of the College of Charleston, and the gardens of 18th-century Middleton Place plantation, the oldest landscaped gardens in the country.

The U.S. festival was founded by composer Gian Carlo Menotti in 1977.

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Both Beauforts are blessed with mild winters, sheltered islands and proximity to the Intracoastal Waterway

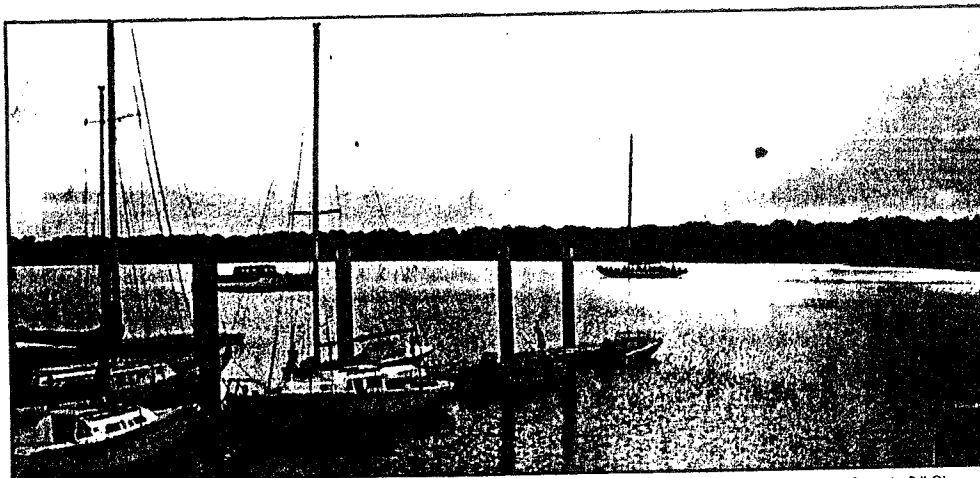


Photo by Bill Gleasner

The peaceful harbor of Beaufort, S.C., has been plundered by pirates and occupied by British and Yankee

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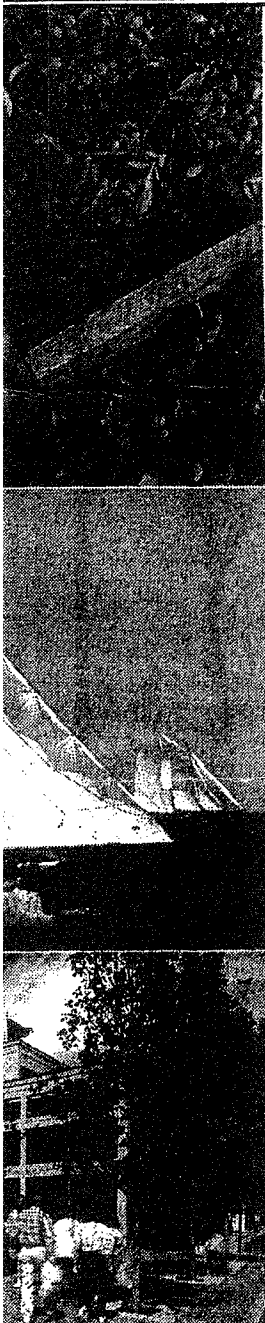
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# The 2 Beauforts-by-the-Sea forged separate destinies in the Carolinas

Continued from Page One

and cotton plantations prospered.

But with the American Revolution looming, these two communities became particularly vulnerable. British Major Stuart of the Dragoons invaded, burned, plundered and otherwise occupied Beaufort, N.C., in one of England's last incursions on American soil. At the same time, Beaufort, S.C., home of distinguished patriot and Declaration of Independence signer Thomas Hayward, also suffered British occupation.

The Civil War brought even more defining moments for both towns. Surrendering early on, the North Carolina residents had watched "fathers, sons, husbands, or brothers fighting in the doomed fortification (of Fort Macon)," town historian Jean Bruyer Kell continues. "Cheers were said to arise from the troops and inhabitants when the white flag appeared. . . . It is said that when the pine boxes carrying the bodies of two townsmen killed were claimed by the sorrowing loved ones, sympathetic tears rolled down (Union Gen. Burnside's) cheek." Captured once again, Beaufort, N.C., ultimately made its own peace with Yankee invaders, forging friendships, promoting marriages and strengthening industry. In fact, Rhode Island-inspired menhaden fishing is a town staple even today.

### Cradle of secession

In South Carolina, many Beaufortians believe the Civil War didn't really begin at Fort Sumter but their own town, where the Ordinance of Secession was crafted and signed in 1860. Yet ironically, the invasion of 30,000 Union troops a year later displaced most of Beaufort's population and enabled immediate compliance with President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Producing the first black congressman, Beaufort also led the South in educating former slaves and allocating land to them, not as sharecroppers but as owners.

Occupation in Beaufort, S.C., clearly had another advantage as well. With the Union securely ensconced here, the town was spared Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's infamous torch. But at the war's conclusion, Beaufort's elegant homes had accrued enormous federal tax liabilities, which their landlords were unable to pay at public auction. With few exceptions, many invaders-turned-inhabitants bought these homes and permanently settled in South Carolina.

For over 100 years, the Beauforts retreated from the limelight. "Until the early 1970s, we were an accident in terms of 20th-century development," says former Air Force pilot and mayor of Beaufort, N.C., Glenn Adair. "Tourism has taken over 30-40 percent of our industry."

Similarly, the other Beaufort has become a tourist mecca, ranked South Carolina's No. 2 favorite destination after Myrtle Beach. "We've been discovered," admits Mayor David Taub, biological anthropologist and founder/president of Family Resources, a statewide agency delivering children's mental health services.

Originally hailing from Houston, Taub describes the pieces of Beaufort's economic pie: "While the town's major revenue source is still nearby Parris Island Marine Corps base, tourism and film production have grown dramatically

in recent years. Movies like "The Big Chill," "The Great Santini," "The Prince of Tides" and "Forrest Gump" continue to pinpoint Beaufort, S.C., on the map.

For travelers, getting around the Beauforts is easy by foot. The Beaufort, N.C., Historical Association offers a restored collection of buildings dating from a 1778 fisherman's cottage to an elegant Victorian, post-Civil War manse, all with appropriate furnishings. In addition, hosts in 18th-century-styled costumes offer several daily guided tours throughout the year, giving the visitor a quick, thumbnail-sketch of Beaufort's past. Once every June, some of the town's private homes open to the public, displaying the insider's look at historic Beaufort. Walking through the Old-Burying Ground on Ann Street will tell even more town stories and colorful anecdotes. The gravestones, facing east for Judgment Day, trace Beaufort residents from revolution to rebellion and beyond.

### Carolinian gem

Museums are another way to appreciate this Carolinian gem, particularly its fragile coastline. Front Street's North Carolina Maritime Museum and the nearby state aquarium offer a variety of hands-on exhibits and educational programs. To better understand the barrier islands' dunes, marshlands and wild ponies, Fort Macon State Park and the National Estuarine Research Reserve are replete with self-guiding tours and trails.

For South Carolinian visitors, a leisurely stroll, comfortable carriage ride or brisk boat tour will instantly acquaint them with Beaufort, bathed in history, culture and Spanish moss.

Beaufort's oldest section, "The Point," represents the area's largest cluster of local historic properties, some of which officially open twice-yearly. With an explanatory map, walking around the Point's barely paved streets is a delightful exercise in deja vu. This medley of graceful, pre-Civil War homes seems oddly familiar, thanks to the plethora of movies filmed here.

The John Mark Verdier House Museum on Bay Street gives an inside, year-round glimpse of historic Beaufort, which also boasts an arts council, art association, chamber orchestra, film society, dance theater, ballet company and several jazz groups.

### Cultural diversity

In addition, just across the bridge off Saint Helena's Island Route 21, Beaufort, S.C., celebrates its rich cultural diversity at Penn Center, the 1862 Quaker school for freed slaves where Martin Luther King wrote his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Now a museum of African-American history, the center is an easy one-mile drive from downtown Beaufort. One bridge later is Hunting Island State Park, a semi-tropical paradise with flora, fauna, wildlife and a 19th-century lighthouse.

Shopping, dining and overnighting in both downtown Beauforts strictly conform to a common respect for historic

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W H O R E O R D I N I L E O O

# Superb southern cuisine bountiful in the Beauforts

From preceding page

preservation and tradition. Eschewing large hotels, motel chains, clothing franchises and discount emporiums, they present instead an eclectic, home-grown range of stores, restaurants and inns.

In Beaufort, N.C., for instance, are shops like Scuttlebutt, self-described dealers in "nautical and boating bounty," the Rocking Chair Bookstore and the Downeast Gallery, featuring local artist, Alan Cheek. The dining possibilities are many, including Clawson's 1905 Restaurant, which directly faces Beaufort Harbor and suggests "dirigibles," baked potatoes stuffed with almost anything. On Turner Street, the Net House concocts bisque from freshly caught seafood and sells a tasty key lime pie. Bed and breakfasts also abound here, like the recently restored 1860s Pecan Tree Inn, Victorian-style Captain's Quarters and larger, waterside Beaufort Inn. Accommodation prices vary seasonally from \$50-\$100 per night.

Beaufort, S.C., also exudes irresistible southern cuisine and friendliness, beyond its own share of locally owned shops, restaurants and inns. Bay Street's Sea Island Mercantile and Provisions offers a succulent selection of attractively packaged seafood and produce, cooked and seasoned to go or ship. Glad Rags and Flags on King Street will decorate anyone's house, historic or otherwise. For dining options, The Bank, really a restaurant, serves native delicacies like shrimp and she-crab soup, while Gadsby's Tavern gives deliciously authentic, large-portioned Italian fare. Conjuring up images of another era, B&Bs like the 1820 Rhett House, cozy Old Point Inn and TwoSuns Inn on Beaufort Bay embellish this historic landscape and cost from \$65 to \$145 per night.

Despite the Beauforts' mutual past, well-preserved quaintness and warm welcomes, however, only the pronunciation of their names immediately distinguishes the two Southern jewels. "We say it correctly: Bo-Fort," explains Molly Willis of North Carolina's Beaufort Historic Site complex, while South Carolinian guidebooks counter: "We're Beaufort, as in beautiful."

Unfortunately, some visitors don't always make this distinction and arrive in the wrong Beaufort. "It does happen," says North Carolina's Lianne Keeney. "It was a costly mistake for my California friends. Seven more hours on the interstate!"

Regardless of which Beaufort



The Beaufort (N.C.) Historical Association oversees the preservation of properties such as the Blare House

beckons, however, these towns continue to share a common destiny and/or dilemma about preserving their rich heritage while still embracing change.

The mayors offer their own ideas. For North Carolinian Glenn Adair, Beaufort needs to maintain its independence from "the proliferation of environmental organizations," which claim more and more jurisdiction over coastal North Carolina. "A creature of the Legislature," he explains, "Beaufort was granted a charter in 1723 with guardianship over public trust waters. We have not abused that trust in any way."

Beaufort, South Carolina's future, according to Mayor Taub, lies in the delicate balance between economic growth and historic preservation. "We're a living, dynamic community," he concludes, "not a theme park like Williamsburg or Saint Augustine. We want to be hospitable and open to tourism, which is heavily supported by locals. But in the process, Bay Street needn't become Bourbon Street."

Flying: From Newark with 21-day notice and certain time restrictions, fares vary from \$200 to \$300 round trip.

To Beaufort, N.C., USAir offers several daily connecting flights to Wilmington, N.C.; 97-mile, 2¼-hour drive on U.S. 17N, State Route 24E and U.S. 70E.

To Beaufort, S.C., USAir, Delta and Continental Airlines offer many daily connecting flights to Savannah, Ga.; 39-mile, 1 hour drive on U.S. 17N, State Route 170 NE and U.S. 21S; these airlines also service Charleston for a 68-mile, 1½-hour drive on U.S. 17.

Flying between the Beauforts, fares vary from \$220 to \$229 with 21-day notice and certain time restrictions.

USAir and Delta offer some daily connecting flights between Wilmington, N.C., and Savannah, Ga., only.

Driving: 400-mile, 7-hour trip on U.S. 70, I-95 and U.S. 21.

For information: Beaufort (N.C.) Historical Association Welcome Center, 138 Turner St.; (919) 728-5225.

Greater Beaufort (S.C.) Chamber of Commerce, 1006 Bay St.; (803) 524-3163.

Page Shugrue is a Boston-based freelance writer

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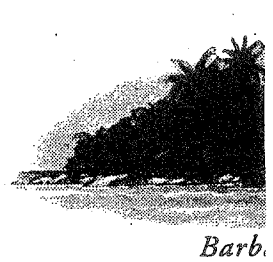
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