

INDAGARE

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CHECKING IN: CHARLESTON

As the International African American Museum opens, the city's hotel scene is heating up. **Jen Barr** reports.

CHARLESTON'S WELCOMING Southern charms, distinctive sense of place and layers of history are reflected in its best hotels—like The Dewberry, the mid-century modern design haven John Dewberry launched in 2017; the historic 18-room Zero George, which just turned 10; and new grande dame Hotel Bennett, overlooking Marion Square, which developer Michael Bennett opened before Covid. And now, the battle of independents is on again in this city that takes its hospitality seriously. On a recent visit, we learned more about the revamp of The Charleston Place (formerly a Belmond property) being led by the Beemok Hospitality Collection, founded by local businessman and philanthropist Ben Navarro, a proponent of generational hotel ownership. The BHC is also behind The Cooper, which promises to transform the city's waterfront by 2025. The 209-room hotel will have multiple restaurants and shops and a 7,000-square-foot spa, along with a rooftop bar, pool and marina, space for events—and some of the city's best harbor and skyline views. Union Pier, a boardwalk project in the works, plans to extend northeast from Concord Street to the new International African American Museum (IAAM) that's opening this summer (see Insider Picks). It's an essential stop in this city for a fuller understanding of Black history and Gullah culture. Building cranes are visible from the rooftop of The Loutrel, a 50-room property that opened just south of City Market, post-Covid. We also checked in at The Pinch, the stylish newcomer with 22 rooms, The Quinte Oyster Bar and suites and three residences that make you want to stay a while; its sister residential-style property, Roost, will open nearby in early 2024.

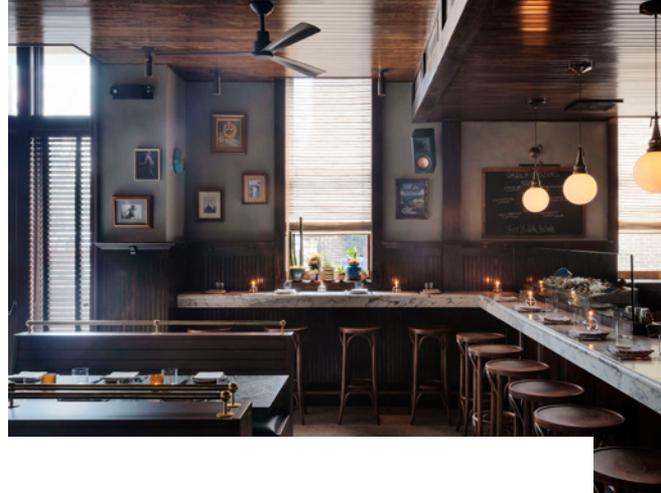
Last but not least, a Four Seasons appears to be in the offing: a rezoning request for 155 Meeting Street was read at a spring City Council meeting, but will have to pass muster with the Board of Architectural Review and Historic Charleston Foundation first to raise the roof in this town. That the city's hotel scene has been mostly controlled by locals seems right when you consider that its motto, *Civitas Regimine Donata*, translates to "given to the rule of the citizens." And with the arrival of the International African American Museum, we couldn't be happier for more reasons to head to Charleston. ■

MORE ON CHARLESTON

Listen to International African American Museum (IAAM) president and CEO Dr. Tonya Matthews on the *Passport to Everywhere* podcast. Find reviews and intel on Charleston at indagare.com.

A loft-style King Suite at The Pinch, below. Right: Rooftop city views from The Citrus Club at The Dewberry hotel. Far right: The Quinte Oyster Bar at The Pinch.





Know Before You Go

Tips from Indagare's Charleston-based Elise Bronzo

TOP TABLES

“Add **Sorelle** to the short list with **Fig**, **167 Raw** and **167 Sushi**, **Chez Nous**, **Chubby Fish** and **Vern’s**. **Sorelle** opened in February in my neighborhood, so I eat here (and stop in at the shop) often. It’s my new favorite for business and pleasure. And for ice cream, **Off Track** has the best gluten-free and vegan ice cream. Need to give your gut a break? **Basic Kitchen** has tasty, healthy fare and an excellent beetroot margarita. (It’s all about balance.)”

BEST SIPS

“For coffee, **Mudhouse**, **Harken** (great for a light lunch, too) or **Sorelle Mercado** (don’t miss the pastries). For something stronger: Wine at **Bin 152** or **Stems and Skins**, cocktails at the bar at **Husk**, **Bar 167** (not to be confused with 167 Raw), **Babas**, **Citrus Club** at **The Dewberry** and the bar at **Sorelle**.”

TOP SHOPS

“**Ibu Movement**, for caftans, hand-embroidered coats and one-of-a-kind pieces crafted by and supporting women’s collectives from 40 countries—and their mission to create

‘the means and the marketplace to rise through the art of their hands.’ King Street used to be lined with antique shops, many of which have now turned over to brands that can afford the rent. **Tucker Payne Antiques** remains on the main drag and is worth a stop and a gab for serious treasure hunters. **Fritz Porter** and **Nomad** are great, too.”

TOP STROLL & GO-TO YOGA

“Go to the corner of Legare and Broad and walk south to Tradd, South Battery, and get lost in the **south of Broad neighborhood**. My favorite time of day is dusk, which provides voyeuristic delight. Time to give your calves a break? **Grayce Yoga** is my favorite studio and has drop-in rates.”

NOT TO BE MISSED

“A visit to the **International African American Museum**, which celebrates stories of innovation, community, hope and empowerment across the African diaspora and has a free genealogy library, where visitors of all backgrounds, especially African American, can trace their ancestral roots. The museum has already made an enormous impact on the local discourse around race and slavery and is helping the community heal and step into a united future.”



Clockwise from top left: Andrew Cabalka, courtesy The Dewberry; by Matthew Williams; by Christian Harder Photography, courtesy The Pinch.