



## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### HILTON HEAD ISLAND AREA FACTS

#### **LOCATION**

Hilton Head Island is a foot-shaped barrier island located off the Atlantic Coast of South Carolina, approximately 45 miles (72 km) north of Savannah, Ga., 90 miles (145 km) south of Charleston, S.C., and 30 miles (48 km) south of historic Beaufort, S.C. The 12-mile (19 km) long and 5-mile (8 km) wide island was the first Eco-planned destination in the United States.

#### **GEOGRAPHY**

Lying on the Intracoastal Waterway, Hilton Head Island encompasses 42 square miles (68 sq. km) of semi-tropical, Low Country geography. The Island's pristine natural environment offers a relaxing, hospitable atmosphere with subtle signage and no neon lights. Fertile salt marshes, networks of lagoons and creeks, forests of moss-draped oaks, magnolias, pines, palmettos and 12 miles (19 km) of sandy beaches are interspersed with championship golf courses, tennis courts, fine restaurants and luxurious hotels, resorts and private villa accommodations.

#### **CLIMATE**

Warmed year-round by the Gulf Stream, the Island's average daytime temperature is a mild 70°F (21°C). The average annual ocean temperature is 69°F (20°C).

#### **POPULATION**

Approx. 31,000 permanent residents  
2.5 million visitors annually

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Hilton Head Island has an array of accommodations, from luxurious resorts and full-service hotels to exclusive beachfront villas equipped with private swimming pools and tennis courts to a quaint bed and breakfast in the heart of town. Accommodation options include more than 6,000 villas; 3,000 hotel/motel rooms; 1,000 timeshare units; 22 properties offering meetings and convention facilities; two RV resorts and one campground (off-Island).

#### **AIRLINE SERVICE**

Two airports service the Hilton Head Island area: Hilton Head Airport, located approximately 5 miles (8 km) from all Island resorts, and Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport, located approximately 45 miles (72 km) south of the Island. Air service providers and major gates include:

### Airlines Major Gates

USAirways Express Charlotte, NC; New York/LaGuardia; Washington, DC

Delta Air Lines Atlanta, GA

Delta Connection/Comair Cincinnati, OH ; Dallas/Ft. Worth; Cleveland, OH

USAirways Charlotte, NC

United Express Chicago O'Hare; Washington, DC/Dulles

AirTran Airlines Atlanta, GA

Continental Express Newark, NJ; Houston, TX

### **RECREATION**

Golf Courses: 23 (5 private) on-Island; 40 in Lowcountry area

Tennis Courts: 300 (8 clubs available for resort play)

Marinas: 8

Activities: Biking, kayaking, sailing, surfing, scuba diving, parasailing, windsurfing, waterskiing, fishing and crabbing, horseback riding, nature-based tours/nature preserves, miniature golf, playgrounds, swimming pools, dolphin-watching cruises, historic tours, Gullah heritage tours, hayrides, arts and cultural activities, shopping, fine dining and sightseeing

### **CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

Hilton Head Island boasts a flourishing cultural community of fine art, music and theatrical venues. Island offerings include cultural exhibits, galleries and performances at the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, Hilton Head Playhouse, Reperatory Theatre, Hilton Head Orchestra, Hilton Head Dance Theater, Coastal Discovery Museum and the Cole-Heyward House Historic Center in Bluffton, S.C.

### **BEACHES**

Hilton Head Island offers 12 miles (19 km) of beaches, with public access and metered parking available at the following locations: Coligny Beach, Alder Lane, Folly Field Road, Dreissen's Beach Park, Islanders Beach Park, Collier Beach Park.

### **DINING**

There are over 250 restaurants on Hilton Head Island, ranging from fast-food to gourmet. Dining venues include all types of major ethnic cuisine, including French, German, Italian, Caribbean, Japanese, Greek, Chinese, Thai and Mexican. For those with a milder palate, the Island also offers great All-American and southern-style fare as well as famous local seafood.

### **SHOPPING**

More than 200 shops are located on Hilton Head Island, from elegant boutiques and art galleries to an indoor mall with major department stores and specialty shops. The Island also has two outlet malls featuring designer brands at a significant savings.

For more information about the Hilton Head Island area facts, please [Contact Us](#) or visit our [Economics Page](#).

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### LOWCOUNTRY FAMILY FUN

*A Vacation the Entire Family Can Enjoy*

Pristine beaches, flexible accommodation options and endless recreation have made Hilton Head Island a first choice for family vacations. Both day and evening entertainment for the entire family is far reaching.

Budget friendly activities are available day and night on the Island. Families can venture to the top of the Harbour Town Lighthouse in Sea Pines for only a dollar each person. This activity offers a clear view of the Island's south end as well as the eye pleasing Harbour Town Marina. Also available in Sea Pines is shopping, waterfront dining and horse back riding. Families could spend at entire day in Sea Pines alone.

Other family friendly spots include Shelter Cove Harbour, Adventure Cove and the Coastal Discovery Museum. Shelter Cove Harbour offers a variety of experiences such as shopping, kayaking, sailing and cruise excursions, fireworks and concerts. All Shelter Cove Community Park events are free and open to the public.

Activities at Adventure Cove include laser tag, bumper cars, video arcade, an indoor play room, miniature golf and more. Other miniature golf courses include Legendary Golf and Pirate's Island Adventure Golf.

The Coastal Discovery Museum offers programs, activities, and exhibits to make learning about Hilton Head and other sea islands an enjoyable experience. The museum is a great place to visit any time of the year. With indoor and outdoor exhibits, activity centers in the Sea Island Classroom, the History Time-line Exhibit and museum store, plus 11 different tours and cruises around the island, the museum is a fantastic way to become familiar with the Island's unique history and ecology.

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For a more relaxing adventure, two multi-screened movie theaters and one independent film theater allow families to catch the latest on the silver screen. In addition, the stage is always set at the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, the South Carolina Repertory Company and the May River Theatre Company.

### **Kids Leave Parents Behind to Explore the Island**

Sometimes kids want to strike out on their own and take advantage of all the Island has to offer. When the simple pleasure of sandcastles is not enough, the Island offers myriad options for kids to pursue their own interests. From supervised recreation at the Island's resorts to specialized sports camps, there is a program that will satisfy every kid's personality and parent's peace of mind. Children of every age will have fun exploring the diverse activities of Hilton Head Island with these programs:

- **Westin Resort Hilton Head Island** – This casually elegant seaside resort offers "**Camp Wackatoo**" for ages 4-12, a full- or half-day program of activities including karate, arts & crafts, safety swimming and "Earthlings," an Eco-program. The bright yellow bird in tennis shoes is the camp mascot, Westy, who helps keep watch over all the children. Cost for Camp Wackatoo is \$50 per day (\$35 for each additional child in the same family) or \$200 per week (\$100 per week for each additional child in the same family). Half-day programs are \$35 per child. Price includes lunch and snacks as well as activities. Older children ages 9-16 will enjoy "**Awesome Adventures**," a sailing, kayaking, windsurfing and boogie-boarding bonanza. Parents and kids love "**Kids Night Out**," an evening of pizza, make-your-own-sundaes, and movies. Summer programs run from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Call (843) 681-4000 for information.
- **Crowne Plaza Resort** – This AAA four-diamond resort offers "**Camp Castaway**" and "**Evening Adventures**" from mid-March through April and from Memorial Day Weekend to Labor Day Weekend, Monday through Saturday, with an open-door policy for residents and visitors staying elsewhere. Families can come together in the afternoon for the "**Kids Play Free Golf**" program.

Kids also can enjoy a free in-room movie and pizzas delivered to the room. Plus, a family of four can take advantage of three complimentary hours of bicycle rentals to explore the Island's miles of scenic bike paths and beaches. Call (800) 334-1881 for information.

- **Sea Pines Resort** – This resort, situated on Harbour Town Golf Links, offers "**Fun for Kids!**" – a summer day camp for ages 4-12. Handpicked counselors entertain kids with bowling, putt-putt golf, beach games and a cruise every Friday to see dolphins in Calibogue Sound. Half and full-day programs are available from Memorial Day to Labor Day. For information, call (843) SEA-PINE.

For kids who want a sports experience, Sea Pines offers a "**Future Stars" Junior Golf Program** for a fun introduction to the game by PGA Golf Professionals. Children also can benefit from the expertise of former U.S. Open and Wimbledon champion, Stan Smith, at **Sea Pines Racquet Club**, ranked number one in the nation for tennis programs by *Tennis Magazine*. For information, call (843) SEA-PINE.

- **The International Junior Golf Academy** offers monthly and weekly boarding camps from mid-June through mid-August for ages 12 and up. Young golfers from around the world come for intensive instruction by PGA teaching professionals, a low student-instructor ratio and fun activities such as pool parties and picnics. Skip Malek, a "PGA Teacher of the Year," directs the school. For information, call (800) 925-0467.
- For kids who want to indulge their creative side, the **Arts Center of Coastal Carolina** offers half- and full-day workshops in dance and theater with artists-in-residence, such as the cast of the summer's feature production. Call (843) 842-ARTS for more information.

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### JUST A CHIP SHOT AWAY

There is a reason why residents and returning visitors to Hilton Head Island affectionately refer to the destination as "The Golf Island." In fact, the game of golf has been a Lowcountry tradition since the first Scottish immigrants to South Carolina organized America's first golf club in 1786. Today, there are more than 20 championship public-access courses located on Hilton Head Island, four of which consistently rank among the nation's Top 100 in key golf publications.

With its sub-tropical climate, sunny skies and lush green fairways, the destination boasts a year-round golf season. Golf enthusiasts will delight in the wide and scenic fairways of the Island's courses, created by golf's most preeminent architects. George and Tom Fazio, Arthur Hills, Rees and Robert Trent Jones, Pete Dye, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, George Cobb, Gary Player, Fuzzy Zoeller and Willard Byrd have all left their distinctive mark on the championship courses, which see 1,000,000 rounds of golf annually and generate revenues for Beaufort County of over \$77 million each year.

For years, golfers of all skill levels have found that Hilton Head Island is a great place to perfect their putts and improve their swings. In fact, all of the Island's public, resort and private clubs offer both group and individual lessons from certified golf-instruction professionals. Most clinics are offered on an hourly, daily or weekly basis and cover all aspects of the game, including warm-up, swing techniques, putting and other short-game skills and course strategy. Women golfers who are looking to improve their games can enroll in "For Women Only" golf school at Palmetto Dunes or LPGA pro Inez Long's clinic at Island West Golf Club.

While there is an amazing amount of golf to be played at Hilton Head Island, there are also a number of prestigious tournaments and special events held every year. Perhaps the most celebrated tournament is The Verizon Heritage Classic, featuring the biggest names on the PGA Tour circuit and a substantial purse of \$4 million. Every Labor Day weekend, the Island proudly holds the Celebrity Golf Tournament, a fun-filled event with celebrity players from the world of sports, television, movies and music. Later in the fall, Hilton Head Island hosts the Golf World/Palmetto Dunes Collegiate Invitational, a popular tournament showcasing the next generation of golfing greats.

To receive a copy of the GOLF PLANNER, a complete guide to golf and accommodations packages on Hilton Head Island, call 888-465-3475. For additional information on Island area golf, visit [www.golfisland.com](http://www.golfisland.com).

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The following is a list of public courses in the Hilton Head Island area:

**HILTON HEAD ISLAND AREA COURSES - LENGTH, PAR & RATING**

**Arthur Hills Course** - Palmetto Dunes Resort (843) 785-1140 Head Pro: Clark Sinclair

Course Designer: Arthur Hills = 18 Holes

6,651 72 71.4

6,122 72 69.9

4,999 72 68.5

**Arthur Hills Course** - Palmetto Hall Plantation (843) 689-4100 Head Pro: Bob Faulkner

Course Designer: Arthur Hills = 18 Holes

6,918 72 74.0

6,582 72 71.8

6,257 72 70.6

4,956 71 68.6

**Barony Club** - Port Royal Plantation (843) 689-GOLF Head Pro: Jim Williams

Course Designer: George Cobb = 18 Holes

6,530 72 71.2

6,038 72 69.2

5,253 72 70.1

**Country Club of Hilton Head** - Hilton Head Plantation (843) 681-GOLF

Head Pro: Tim Eckstein - Course Designer: Rees Jones = 18 Holes

6,919 72 73.6

**Crescent Pointe Golf Club** (843) 706-2600 Director of Golf: Bill Layman  
= 18 Holes

6,773 71 72.9

6,440 71 70.9

6,013 71 68.5

5,219 71 70.2

**Eagle's Point Golf Club** = (843) 815-3100 Director of Golf: Bill Layman  
= 18 Holes

6,738 71 72.5

6,358 71 70.0

6,018 71 68.2

5,210 71 69.8

**George Fazio Course** - Palmetto Dunes Resort (843) 785-1138 Head Pro: Samm Wolfe; Course Designer: George Fazio = 18 Holes

6,873 70 73.9

6,534 70 71.8

6,239 70 70.2

5,273 70 70.8

**Golden Bear Golf Club** - Indigo Run (843) 689-2200 Head Pro: Neil Ryan

Course Designers: Bruce Borland/ Jack Nicklaus = 18 Holes

7,014 72 73.7

6,643 72 72.2

6,184 72 64.9

4,974 72 69.3

**Harbour Town Golf Links** - Sea Pines Resort (843) 363-4485 Head Pro: John Farrell

Course Designers: Pete Dye/ Jack Nicklaus = 18 Holes

6,973 71 75.2

6,603 71 72.9

6,040 71 69.9

5,208 71 70.7

**Hilton Head National** (843) 842-5900 Head Pro: Shannon Archer

Course Designers: Gary Player/ Bob Weed = 27 Holes

6,779 72 72.8

6,260 72 70.1

5,589 72 66.8

4,649 72 66.2

**Island West Golf Club** (843) 689-6660 Director of Golf: Butch Bloomer

Course Designers: Fuzzy Zoeller/ Clyde Johnston = 18 Holes

6,803 72 72.1

6,208 72 69.9

4,948 72 66.5

**Ocean Course** - Sea Pines Resort (843) 363-4475 Head Pro: John Richardson

Course Designer: Mark McCumber = 18 Holes

6,906 72 72.8

6,493 72 71.4

6,172 72 69.7

5,325 72 71.1

**Okatie Creek Golf Club** (843) 705-GOLF Director of Golf: Bob Pfeezer

Course Designer: Mark McCumber = 18 Holes

6,724 72 71.9

6,432 72 69.4

5,955 72 61.1

5,348 72 63.9

4,763 72 65.7

**Old Carolina Golf Club** (843) 785-6363 Head Pro: Paul Schell

Course Designer: Clyde Johnston = 18 Holes

6,805 72 73.1

6,445 72 70.3

6,065 72 67.0

4,725 71 67.0

**Old South Golf Links** (843) 785-5353; 837-7155 Head Pro: Mike Jenkins  
Course Designer: Clyde Johnston = 18 Holes

6,772 72 72.4

6,354 72 70.9

5,779 72 67.3

4,776 71 69.6

**Planter's Row Course** - Port Royal Plantation (843) 689-GOLF Head Pro: Jim Williams; Course Designer: Willard Byrd = 18 Holes

6,520 72 72.2

6,009 72 70.6

5,126 72 68.9

**Robber's Row Course** - Port Royal Plantation (843) 689-GOLF Head Pro: Jim Williams; Course Designer: Pete Dye = 18 Holes

6,642 72 72.6

6,146 72 70.3

5,000 72 70.4

**Robert Cupp Course** - Palmetto Hall Plantation (843) 785-1138 Head Pro: Bob Faulkner Course Designer: Robert Cupp = 18 Holes

7,079 72 75.2

6,522 72 72.3

6,042 72 69.2

5,220 72 71.1

**Robert Trent Jones** - Palmetto Dunes Resort (843) 785-1138 Head Pro: Bobby Downs; Course Designer: Robert Trent Jones = 18 Holes

6,710 72 72.6

6,148 72 69.6

5,425 72 70.3

**Rose Hill Golf Club** (843) 842-3740 Head Pro: Craig Riddle  
Course Designer: Gene Hamm = 27 Holes

6,808 72 72.9

6,276 72 70.3

5,656 72 67.1

5,099 72 69.4

**Sea Marsh Course** - Sea Pines Resort (843) 363-4475 Head Pro: John Richardson Course Designers: George Cobb/ Clyde Johnston = 18 Holes

6,515 72 70.0

6,169 72 69.0

5,054 72 69.8

**Shipyard Golf Club** - Shipyard Plantation (843) 689-GOLF Head Pro: David Crosby Course Designers: George Cobb/ Willard Byrd 27 Holes

6,830 72 73.0

6,167 72 69.7

5,391 72 70.5

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### **Bluffton & Beyond**

The Town of Bluffton is situated on a high bluff overlooking the pristine May River, source of the world-famous Bluffton oysters. This historic riverfront community still welcomes visitors with as much charm and vibrancy as it did in its antebellum heyday. Its location was prized by Lowcountry planters and their families as a refuge from the harsh plantation environment of mosquitoes and heat. The high bluffs welcomed strong, southerly breezes that kept yellow fever infection at bay and dispelled sultry summer doldrums.

Bluffton was the first town developed in southern Beaufort County. The town's reputation as a summer resort village helped it grow into a commercial center, welcoming packet ship trade between Hilton Head Island and Savannah.

The rich history of the area includes native American Yemassee Indians and the Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas. From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, the region is full of history lessons. A hotbed for political rhetoric in the 1840's and '50's, cries of secession were first given serious voice and debate in Bluffton.

After incorporation in 1852, the town continued to grow. Then came the Civil War. Initially raided and scavenged in the early days of the conflict by Union forces occupying Hilton Head Island, Bluffton was finally shelled and burned in 1863. The Heyward House, Campbell Chapel AME Church and the Church of the Cross were among 17 structures to escape destruction. These three historic buildings and seven other houses can be seen today in the Town's Historic District.

The Heyward House, an outstanding 1840's example of early Carolina farmhouse style, is the Town's official Welcome Center. It is open Wednesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and is a great place to start your docent or self-guided tour of the House and of the National Register Historic District along with the thriving, vibrant arts community. The Bluffton Old Town Merchants Society invites you to discover the many delightful retail shops, art and antique galleries and restaurants with Southern regional cuisine along Calhoun Street and the surrounding Old Town. A trip to Bluffton is not complete without a visit to Bluffton's tallest potter, Jacob Preston.

See South Carolina's oldest and continuous oyster shucking facility at the Bluffton Oyster Company and Community Park along the May River. Or enjoy contemplative moments at Bluffton's Riverfront Pocket Park and Garden, a living example of the Bluffton Overlay Protection District.



## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### VACATION FITNESS

*A Vacation for Those Who Just Can't Relax*

Hilton Head Island is stocked full of fitness activities for land and sea lovers alike. Ideally situated on the Intracoastal Waterway, a 1,200-mile stretch of well-marked channels and passages running along the Eastern Seaboard from New England to Florida, the Island's share of this spectacular seascape is marked by white sandy beaches, tree-shaded land, open seas and miles of small inlets and channels, bordered by wide-open savannahs of salt marsh. The temperate climate and Gulfstream-warmed waters enable travelers of many interests to explore the Island's beautiful waterways and take advantage of a fabulous array of both land and watersports year-round.

#### **Cycle Island**

Visitors can keep the cars parked during their stay on Hilton Head Island! One of the most popular activities while visiting is cycling. With miles of both paved and dirt paths covering the Island, there isn't a place visitors can't go with their bikes, including the 12 miles of sandy beaches.

Cycling is not limited to the sand and trails on Hilton Head Island. Water bikes, also known as aquatrikes, are available for rent at many of the public and private beaches. Visitors can feel the unique sensation of riding atop waves as they pedal across the surface of the Atlantic Ocean.

The Island also boasts a multitude of rental companies offering bikes of all shapes and sizes, including attachable children's tandem bikes, kiddie carts, carriages and children's seats. Some rental companies even offer online advance ordering so that bikes and accessories are ready for pick-up upon arrival.

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For visitors who don't stray far from the gym, Hilton Head Island is the perfect vacation spot. Many of the Island hotels, resorts and villa rentals offer state-of-the-art fitness equipment or access to the nearest gym.

For the sports enthusiasts, some of the most enjoyable competition can be found on the fairways, beaches, baseball diamonds, waterways and tennis courts in the Hilton Head Island area. The possibilities for play range from kayaking, to beach volleyball, to playing the finest fairways in

America. And for sports with a more competitive edge, try a triathlon, a marathon, a soccer game or a tennis tournament. Other sports that can be played locally include basketball, beach cricket, billiards, boccie ball, bowling, croquet, equestrian, frisbee golf, gymnastics, lacrosse, racquetball, rugby, soccer, softball, swimming and ultimate frisbee.

### **Sail Away**

At all of the Island's nine public marinas, visitors will find first-class facilities providing a variety of boat rentals, from a sporty Sunfish to a sleek 70-foot yacht, in addition to dockage, wet and dry storage, launch facilities, supplies and fuel. Several of the marinas also provide fresh water, telephones, cable television hook-up, shower facilities, fitness centers, saunas and laundry rooms.

Visitors also can book excursion tours such as dolphin-watching cruises, shopping/lunch cruises to Savannah, sightseeing trips, group fishing, sailing charters and overnight sails at any of Hilton Head Island's major marinas. Both private and group sailing instruction is offered for children and adults of all skill levels.

Canoe and kayak rentals and instruction are available for those who want to explore the Island's creeks, marshes and inlets along Calibogue Sound. Outside Hilton Head offers a year-round kayaking school led by an expert staff of ACA Certified instructors, as well as guided tours and day and overnight trips to destinations such as Cumberland and Pritchards Islands. Lucky kayakers might even catch a glimpse of a bottle nose dolphin during their ocean outing.

### **Go Fish**

In the warm ocean waters around Hilton Head Island, anglers can catch snapper, grouper, kingfish, cobia, bluefish, spot tail bass, swordfish and shark, while flounder, sea trout and croakers are found inshore. A license is needed for both saltwater and freshwater fishing in South Carolina. The following is a list of license prices:

- Annual Resident License                      \$10
- Resident 14-day License                      \$5
- Annual Non-resident License                \$35

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- Non-resident 14-day License                \$11
- Shrimp Baiting License                      \$25

You can obtain a license at many local sporting goods stores, bait and tackle shops or major retailers. Call 1-888-434-7427 for more details or to obtain a license by phone.

Crabbing, which requires minimal equipment, is an inexpensive activity that the whole family can enjoy. Found in shallow waters, crabs are easy to catch from docks, boats or banks.

### **Fly High, Dive Deep**

Active visitors can enjoy recreational activities both above and below the water's surface. Those with an adventurous spirit can check out spectacular views of the Island from high above the water while parasailing, and those who want to explore the mysteries of the ocean can dive or snorkel with the Island Scuba Club. Waterskiing, jetskiing, windsurfing and surfing also are available for wind and water enthusiasts.

For more information about boating, fishing and other watersports available on the Island, please contact the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce at (800) 523-3373 or visit us at [www.hiltonheadisland.org](http://www.hiltonheadisland.org).

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### ARTS & CULTURAL COMMUNITY THRIVES

Hilton Head Island is typically considered a golf and tennis haven, rather than a culturally rich and diverse vacation experience. However, the Island's splendid beauty and rich history have inspired a vibrant arts and cultural community that rivals many metropolitan areas. In his recent book, "The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America," author John Villani ranked Hilton Head Island number 22, and it's no wonder. From museum exhibits to gallery openings to big-name Broadway shows, the Island offers a wide variety of artistic and cultural venues to explore.

#### *BRAVO – Arts & Cultural Festival*

BRAVO-Arts & Cultural Festival is not just for artists; it's a festival for the entire community to enjoy together. BRAVO, a month-long festival of the arts, was conceived by the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce's Arts and Cultural Committee. More than 25 area groups and organizations come together to bring an array of arts and cultural activities to the Lowcountry throughout the month of May. In addition to the arts and cultural groups that participate in BRAVO, area hotels, restaurants, the Hospitality Association, schools and historical organizations are among the numerous groups participating. In addition, *Southern Living Magazine* has partnered with the chamber to bring BRAVO to a national audience.

Autumn Arts Weekend in September features Art Around Town and A Taste of the Musical Season. Visitors can shop and peruse the array of fine arts and crafts at art galleries on Hilton Head Island and in Bluffton during a self-guided tour. Hilton Head Island's choruses, bands and theater groups also showcase the rich heritage of talent in the Lowcountry during a special performance.

#### *Gullah Culture Year-Round*

Originally descended from African slaves who worked the Southern plantations, the Gullah people of the Lowcountry and nearby coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia are the most culturally distinctive African-American population in the United States. In addition to a special language (a Creole blend of European and African tongues), the Gullah people developed a unique culture based on folktales, superstitions and a distinct cuisine which shaped generations of families living on Hilton Head Island and in the Lowcountry today. Visitors to the Island during the month of February can attend the

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annual Native Islander Gullah Celebration, a spirited festival that features the arts, crafts, history, music and food of the Gullah people. Other opportunities to experience Gullah culture on Hilton Head Island year-round include Gullah-N-Gechee Mahn Tours (843-838-7516); Gullah Heritage Trail Tours (843-681-7066); Hallelujah Singers (843-525-6129); and Lowcountry Artists Guild (843-846-0044).

### *Arts & Cultural Activities for the Whole Family*

The Arts Center of Coastal Carolina is a multi-million-dollar fine arts facility which showcases some of the country's most renowned visual and performing artists in a variety of events throughout the year. Broadway-style theatre, pop, jazz and classical concerts, children's events and gallery exhibitions are among the enriching, family-friendly experiences offered at the center. For a schedule of events call (888) 892-ARTS.

In addition to the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, families seeking new learning experiences can visit the Coastal Discovery Museum located at historic Honey Horn. It features a hands-on interactive museum and walking tours that highlight the Island's history, ecology and cultural heritage. Children will delight in the Museum's exhibits, which include live animals, dioramas and historical replicas. Visitors of all ages will enjoy the museum's beach and nature walks, dolphin cruises, Civil War and Gullah heritage tours, conservation programs and renowned archaeological research. Call (843) 689-6767 for more information.

### *On-Island Performing Arts*

Visitors to the Island can appreciate live performances of the Hilton Head Orchestra and Hilton Head Dance Theater throughout the year. Begun 18 years ago as an informal meeting for local musicians, the Hilton Head Orchestra now features more than 65 talented players. The orchestra, guided by conductor Mary Woodmansee Green, plays a spectacular 10-program season from October to May. For more information about the Hilton Head Orchestra's program lineup, call (843) 842-2055.

Another of the Island's performing arts groups is the Hilton Head Dance Theater, an organization dedicated to fostering a public interest in dance through an outstanding repertoire of classic and modern dance performances. For more information or a schedule of performances offered this year call (843) 785-5477.

### *On-Island Visual Arts*

For fans of the visual arts, the Island offers the Hilton Head Art League and over two dozen art galleries and studios. With more than 800 members, the Art League promotes visual arts by sponsoring workshops with nationally known artists, hosting two annual art shows and supporting a gallery in Pineland Station where local artwork is sold year-round. Call (843) 671-3242 for additional information.

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The Island's art galleries host a number of local and traveling exhibits during the year, and many hold studio workshops for those who want to improve their artistic skills.

### **Historical Tours**

Built as a summer home for plantation owners, the Heyward House Historic Center combines Lowcountry history, crafts and culture. An 1840s structure in near original condition, the Cole-Heyward House offers guided tours and living history exhibits highlighting Lowcountry lore, domestic arts and details of upcoming preservation and restoration efforts. Please call (843) 757-MAYE for more information.

History buffs also can learn of the nation's first "freedman's" community and explore an African American Civil War stronghold through the historical tours at Fort Mitchell and Fort Howell. Call (843) 689-6767 for details.

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### GULLAH CULTURE IS NOTHING SHORT OF UPLIFTING

**HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC** -- Although it had its origins in slavery, the history and culture of the inhabitants that call Hilton Head Island and the Lowcountry coastal region of South Carolina “home” is an inspiration to all Americans. Living simply just as they did more than a hundred years ago, these people, whose ancestors are known as the Gullah [pronounced **ˈgə – ˈlə**], subscribe to high religion and the celebration of spiritual redemption in leading their daily lives.

#### *Historical Perspective*

The original Gullah were African slaves who were shipped across the Atlantic from West Africa to work the cotton plantations of the South. While plantation owners built their fortunes upon slave labor, the slaves were able to create something of their own -- the unique culture that is now known as Gullah. With that culture came a thriving mix of language, folktales and superstition, a mix that has shaped generations of families who live on Hilton Head Island and in the Lowcountry today.

Plantation owners originally built Praise Houses as a means of social control. The Praise Houses, however, proved to be the base upon which the Gullah founded their culture, providing a central place for spiritual guidance and group leadership. Religion, a blend of both the ideologies of the Baptist Church and African heritage, became and today remains the very basis of Gullah culture. In fact, the Gullah often express time in terms of before or after they “had sense,” referring to the time of completion of membership in the Church and the Praise House.

In commemoration of this achievement the new member is immersed in water, clothed in new garments and invited to partake in communion with the other “true believers” of the Church. In order to articulate their spiritual lives, the Gullah often participate in the “shout,” an adaptation of the West African ring dance performed counter-clockwise to joyous handclapping and foot stomping. Only “true believers” may participate in the “shout.”

The religion of Gullah also is deeply rooted in superstition. For example, most island graveyards are located near water to ensure that spirits will travel back to Africa to be among ancestors. The Gullah often place broken dishes, shells, water pitchers and shiny objects on graves to prevent

the deceased from returning from the dead to look for former personal belongings, and even children are passed over the caskets of deceased relatives for protection against future harm.

The Gullah culture is kept alive through vivid storytelling in the native tongue of Gullah, a dialect that appears to be a combination of a variety of African languages and English. Forbidden by plantation owners to speak their native tongue, the African slaves developed the dialect out of necessity by incorporating broken English with African words. The Gullah dialect survives today as a “creolized” version of English. Through passionate prayers, sermons and tales, the Gullah remember their past and look toward the future preservation of their culture; a culture distinguished by the crafts of sweet grass basket weaving, boat building and quilting. Remnants of the past, including old churches and once segregated school houses, are well-preserved and legally protected since the 1991 passage of an ordinance prohibiting the destruction or looting of archaeological or historical sites. In fact, native islander communities comprise nearly 3,000 acres of Hilton Head Island.

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### THE BIRTH OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

In 1663, English sea captain William Hilton landed on Hilton Head Island and, thus, the seeds of the first successful plantations were sown. Commissioned by a group of Barbados planters to find new land on which to plant sugar and indigo, Hilton soon claimed the Island in the name of the British Crown.

Hilton, however, was not the first European to visit the Island. In 1521, the Spanish were the first confirmed Island visitors, but many historians speculate that English explorer Sebastian Cabot may have sighted its shores during his expedition to the New World in 1497. In the 1560's, French Huguenot colonists sought refuge on Hilton Head Island, fleeing persecution in their own Catholic homeland. The Huguenots christened Port Royale Harbour, now known as Port Royal Sound, and charted the Island on French maps as "Ile de la Riviere Grande" - Island of the Broad River. Soon they moved to more protected water, settling in an area that today is known as Beaufort, South Carolina.

#### *Earliest Inhabitants*

When Hilton landed on the Island in 1663, he was greeted by Spanish-speaking Indians from the Yemassee tribe who had migrated north from Florida a hundred years earlier at the behest of Spanish colonists. He also encountered the native Ewascus Indians, but little is known of the earlier native civilization which inhabited the Island 4,000 years ago. Remnants of mysterious shell rings, measuring up to 240 feet across and nine feet high, can still be found on the Island. Yet, like the enigmatic rocks of Stonehenge and the carvings of Easter Island, their secrets remain hidden from history. Today, visitors to Hilton Head Island can view these rings in Sea Pines Forest Preserve and on the north end of the Island off Squire Pope Road.

#### *Plantation Life*

In 1698, the English king granted several islands and some of the Lowcountry's mainland to John Bayley. While the entire area was named Bayley's Barony, Hilton Head Island was referred to as Trench's Island, in honor of Alexander Trench, Bayley's property agent and collector of landlease fees.

John Barnwell became Hilton Head Island's first English settler in 1717 after receiving a

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grant of 500 acres in what is now Hilton Head Plantation. However, Hilton Head Island did not gain worldwide recognition until 1790 when another planter, William Elliott, successfully raised the first crop of long-stem Sea Island cotton. Elliott, with the help of his neighbor, Will Seabrook, pioneered a new type of fertilizer for the cotton, resulting in record crops and wide acclaim for the Sea Island cotton.

By 1860, 24 plantations were in operation on Hilton Head Island. Although the main crop was cotton, indigo, sugar cane, rice and other crops also were cultivated. Due to the land's low elevation and hot summers, the wealthy landowners spent little time on the Island, opting to locate their beautiful townhouses in less tropical environments on the mainland.

### *Civil War*

Seven months after South Carolina seceded from the Union, the shots fired on Fort Sumter reverberated on Hilton Head Island. On November 7, 1861, the Island became the scene of the largest naval battle fought in American waters. More than 12,000 Union soldiers and marines landed on the Island, and in less than five hours, the Union fleet captured both Fort Beauregard near Beaufort and Fort Walker on Hilton Head Island. The Island fell into the hands of Federal troops, forcing Island families to evacuate their plantation homes.

The Civil War and the subsequent abolition of slavery altered the prosperous and patrician lifestyle of the plantation owners forever. The boll weevil proved to be even more devastating, as the new technology took a fearful toll on Sea Island cotton. Consequently, Hilton Head Island lapsed into obscurity, remaining isolated for over 90 years.

During this period, the Island maintained a small population of mostly the descendants of former slaves. They survived modestly on small farms and as hunters and fisherman. Their culture and language, both known as Gullah, survive today as a living legacy of their strength and perseverance.

In the 1940's, the Island experienced a sort of re-birth when a group of timbermen recognized great potential in the Island's tall, straight pines. Popularly called sea pines, the trees produced lumber for a variety of uses.

### *The First Resort*

In 1956, Charles Fraser, son of one of the families that owned the Island, realized that Hilton Head Island had more to offer than just timber. Armed with vision, energy, modern air conditioning and investment dollars, he created a master plan for a resort community. His efforts were aided by the construction of a bridge to the mainland the same year. Sea Pines Plantation became the prototype of the modern resort community, now copied around the world.

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Incorporated as a town in 1983, Hilton Head Island is now home to several environmentally planned resort and residential communities, supporting more than 30,000 full-time residents. These communities have been named "plantations," but cotton fields have been replaced by lush green golf courses, tennis courts, shimmering lakes and beautifully designed resorts and villas.

Despite this development, much of the Island remains as it was when sighted from William Hilton's ship more than 300 years ago. Hilton Head Island's natural beauty, spectacular seascapes and exceptional ecology now beckon a new generation of explorers.

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### SHOPPING, DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT ABOUND

Interspersed among the salt marshes, forests, sandy beaches and lush green fairways of Hilton Head Island reside upscale shops, fine restaurants and world-class entertainment. In fact, visitors to the Island will delight to find big-city shopping, gourmet dining and entertaining in this friendly, quaint setting.

#### *Shopping*

From chic boutiques to exclusive outlet shops, Hilton Head Island offers fashionable, fine-quality products in a pleasant shopping atmosphere. More than 200 on-Island shops are located in intimate plazas, quaint marinas, elegant harbors and full-service shopping centers, which compliment the Island's environment, architecture and history. Shoppers will also find several upscale, recently renovated outlet centers that offer designer name brands at significant savings, including: J.Crew, Ralph Lauren, Donna Buchman, Coach, Nike, Waterford/Wedgewood, The Gap, Eddie Bauer and Brooks Brothers. A wide selection of distinct art galleries, antique stores, specialty gift shops, gourmet stores, sporting goods shops and jewelers complete the Hilton Head Island shopping experience.

#### *Dining*

Hilton Head Island boasts more than 250 restaurants representing a wide variety of cultures and tastes. In addition to fine continental, family style and home-style Southern cooking, the Island offers all types of ethnic cuisine including French, German, Italian, Caribbean, Japanese, Greek, Chinese, Thai and Mexican. Those wishing to sample the local fare should visit an Island restaurant specializing in Lowcountry cuisine, where dishes such as She-Crab Soup and Frogmore Stew - a savory South Carolina blend of shrimp, hot sausage, potatoes and corn on the cob - capture the flavor of the region. A visit to Hilton Head Island also would not be complete without sampling the famous local seafood, including shrimp, sweet blue crab and briny oysters.

Hilton Head Island offers a variety of restaurant settings including spectacular seaside restaurants, elegant hotel dining rooms, casual cafés, pastry shops and friendly bistros. Fast food restaurants also are available for those who want food on the go, but they may not look as familiar as those from home. All Island restaurants must conform to a strict building code requiring construction to blend with the local environment.

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### *Evening Entertainment*

The Island also is home to a thriving arts and cultural community showcasing jazz, rock and country music concerts, as well as comedy, cabaret and family-friendly shows. The

multi-million dollar Arts Center of Coastal Carolina presents a calendar of events that includes classes, arts exhibits, and outstanding dance, orchestra and theatrical performances. In addition to scores of art galleries featuring the works of Island artists, Hilton Head Island has its own local symphony and chamber orchestra and hosts modern dance and ballet troupes throughout the year. The Hilton Head Playhouse Theater, three cinemas and nightclubs provide additional evening-out options.

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### CONVENTIONS GONE LOWCOUNTRY

*A Look at Meeting Options on Beautiful Hilton Head Island*

Temperate year-round climate, exceptional natural beauty and challenging golf courses have earned Hilton Head Island a reputation as one of America's premier leisure and business destinations. While warm sand and world-championship golf remain leading attractions, superb conference facilities and meeting packages also serve to draw millions of annual visitors. Best of all, Hilton Head Island offers a variety of diverse accommodations and outdoor activities to customize any meeting or convention.

#### **Accommodations and Facilities**

From large, recently renovated resorts equipped with traditional meeting facilities and state-of-the-art conference technology, to quaint seaside villas outfitted with private swimming pools and tennis courts, Hilton Head Island has an appropriate venue for any size or type of meeting. More than a half dozen major conference resorts with approximately 150,000 square feet of meeting space line the beaches of Hilton Head Island. These exceptional oceanfront properties maintain the highest industry accolades, feature the latest technological equipment, banquet catering for up to 2,000 attendees and professional sales and conference staffs to help coordinate every detail. As an added bonus, several of Hilton Head Island's premier golf courses, tennis courts, health spas, restaurants and shopping areas can be found at these resorts.

The Island also features 6,000 villas for those groups preferring a little extra room or privacy. Villas offer more casual and relaxed atmospheres for executive meetings and retreats. Whether oceanfront or on the golf course, the villas are tastefully furnished and carefully maintained, and many are equipped with private swimming pools and tennis courts onsite.

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### **Group and Convention Services**

Meeting and incentive planners will enjoy the wide range of on-Island group tour and convention services available to assist with organizing any event, including golf, tennis or fishing tournaments; dinner cruises; spousal programs; event entertainment; and nature and heritage tours.

Complete meeting support is readily available, including equipment rental, media production and A/V services. Transportation around Hilton Head Island also is easy and convenient with numerous car rental, limousine and motorcoach companies offering services throughout the Island and surrounding areas.

### **A New Spin on Recreational Activities**

After meetings have adjourned, guests on Hilton Head Island can enjoy a multitude of leisure pursuits. In addition to golf on one of the Island's renowned courses, excellent shopping and dining opportunities, and Broadway-style performances at the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, distinctive Hilton Head Island activities include:

- A guided walk along the Gullah Heritage Trail to discover a culture that encompasses a thriving mix of language (a Creole blend of European and African tongues), folktales, superstition and distinctive cuisine that has shaped generations of families who live on Hilton Head Island and in the Lowcountry today. The tour concludes with a traditional Gullah meal prepared over an open fire, with uplifting entertainment provided by gospel singers.
- Participate in a team-building triathlon comprised of biking, canoeing or kayaking and a fun three-legged race on the sand. After the race, enjoy an oyster roast or a picnic on the beach.
- Tour an art gallery or museum to experience the Island's rich Lowcountry art and history. Afterwards, sip cocktails and nibble hors d'oeuvres while aboard a sunset dolphin-watching cruise.

### **Top Notch Facilities and Properties**

**The Westin Hilton Head Island Resort and Spa** is an oceanfront resort in Port Royal Plantation with 28,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. They have recently opened the first Heavenly Spa by Westin in the Continental United States. They have also completed a covered, outdoor beach pavilion with an expansive open-air deck for group functions. Other renovations include all the guest rooms, public space, spa and food and beverage areas.

The Westin also features access to three championship golf courses, premier tennis facilities, the Westin Kids Club, Westin Workout, and three swimming pools near the outdoor oceanfront function space.

**The Hilton Head Marriott Resort and Spa in Palmetto Dunes Resort** is the largest oceanfront resort on the island with 513 guest rooms and over 45,000 square feet of meeting and banquet space. The 2,000+ acre resort features rental homes and villas, with courtesy shuttle transportation within Palmetto Dunes Resort and Shelter Cove Harbour.

The Marriott is completing more than \$20 million in renovations, including the addition of Spa Soleil, a 17 room facility. Inside Palmetto Dunes, there is access to three championship golf courses, 25 tennis courts and numerous other recreational activities. The picturesque Shelter Cove Marina offers a 175-slip marina with dolphin tours, boat rentals, in-shore and off-shore fishing, shopping and dining.

**The Sea Pines Resort** is a full-service, oceanfront resort featuring villas, homes, and the AAA Four-Diamond Inn at Harbour Town, featuring private butler service, evening turndown service, complimentary valet parking, wireless internet, and more. The total inventory is nearly 500 inn rooms, villas, and homes. Award winning conference space includes the Harbour Town Conference Center and spectacular outdoor venues featuring ocean, golf, and harbour views. Total indoor space exceeds 15,000 square feet plus several outdoor venues for any size group.

A key attraction at The Sea Pines Resort is 54 holes of world class golf including Harbour Town Golf Links, home of the PGA TOUR's Verizon Heritage, and Pete Dye's newest masterpiece, Heron Point. Unlimited recreational opportunities include tennis, water sports, team building events, dolphin or sunset cruises, fishing, horseback riding, biking, nature trails, boat rentals, family and holiday activities, and live entertainment.

**Harbour Town Resort** features luxury oceanfront villas and homes with over 5,000 square feet of meeting space. Charter fishing, golf, tennis and spa available on site where there is free parking and on-site transportation.

**The Hilton Oceanfront Resort** features natural light in every meeting room and all eight newly renovated Promenade rooms have glassed porches. They also feature the largest guest rooms on the island, equipped with complimentary high speed internet and kitchenettes. A private, 7,000 square foot covered oceanfront pavilion has unbroken views of the Atlantic Ocean. The resort's four dining areas will undergo a \$3.5 million update. There is an onsite spa and golf and tennis activities are located within Palmetto Dunes Plantation. Transportation to these activities is complimentary.

**The Crowne Plaza Hilton Head Island** offers groups of up to 200 rooms and it will sometimes be the only group in the resort. There are two oceanfront, food and beverage venues; 7,000 square feet Pavilion and 4,000 square feet beach house. The Crown Plaza

invested nearly a million dollars in 2004-05, involving high speed Internet access in all guest rooms and meeting rooms, wireless access in most public areas, new landscaping, paving, flooring, and other renovation.

**The Inn at Palmetto Bluff**, managed by Auberge Resorts, offers a unique setting for company meetings and catered events. The Inn is located in Bluffton, South Carolina just minutes from Savannah and Hilton Head Island. There are a variety of venues at the Inn to accommodate casual gatherings, stunning events and formal meetings.

**Daufuskie Resort and Breathe Spa** is a 1,200-acre island escape not reachable by car. The world class facility features Melrose Beach Cottage rooms the Melrose Beach Villas. The Swiftcat Catamaran recently joined their fleet of boats and passenger ferries. The Island House Conference Center includes executive and function rooms for up to 400 guests, boardrooms with seating for 24, and the Daufuskie Ballroom which can seat up to 300 for a private dinner. Business services include teleconferencing, high speed Internet access and audio-video equipment.

For more information on selecting an Island property for a meeting or to request a *Meeting Planner's Guide*, contact the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce at 800-523-3373 or visit us at [www.hiltonheadisland.org](http://www.hiltonheadisland.org).

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## HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### ISLAND WEDDINGS

The swaying palms and gentle tides of Hilton Head Island provide a beautiful setting for a destination wedding. From secluded beach ceremonies, sailboat ceremonies and grand ballroom receptions, the Island caters to weddings of all tastes, styles and budgets.

South Carolina's barrier island allows wedding guests to enjoy a variety of activities and Lowcountry treasures. From world-class golf, fine dining and shopping to water sports and arts and cultural events - choosing Hilton Head Island for a destination wedding will create lasting memories for everyone.

Brides and grooms can say their vows from the top of the famous Harbour Town Lighthouse, in front of a sand dune on the beach, next to a lagoon shaded by tall oaks and Spanish moss, on a boat in the evening breeze or on secluded Daufuskie Island. The sky is the limit. Big, small, traditional or contemporary, couples will not lack for choices when planning any type of wedding.

### Bachelor and Bachelorette Outings

With the variety of activities Hilton Head Island has to offer, the biggest challenge for a bridal party is deciding which activities to choose. Spend the day at the spa, play golf, tennis or beach volleyball, take a dolphin tour, go deep sea fishing or simply relax on the beach. The possibilities of group fun are endless.

The fun doesn't stop when the sun goes down. "Dinner served 5 p.m.-until..." is a common sight on Island menus, as many of the restaurants keep their kitchens open late into the evening. Bridal parties can dine outside on the waterfront as a solo guitarist banter with the crowd while taking requests or catch a game on the big screen while cuing up for a round of 9-ball in a sports-themed bar.

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Nightclubs and bars are primarily located on the Island's south end as well as inside most of the major resort hotels. Live music and DJ-driven tunes cater to every taste and cover the spectrum from rock, jazz, beach, salsa and pulse-pounding club music.

For a more relaxing evening, two multi-screened movie theaters and one independent film theater allow groups to catch the latest on the silver screen. In addition, the stage is always set at the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, the South Carolina Repertory Company and the May River Theatre Company.

### **Honeymoons**

Destination treasures await newlyweds on Hilton Head Island. Whether it's the relaxed pace, wide beaches, congenial climate or wealth of outdoor activities, the Island offers the perfect year-round getaway for honeymooners.

Active honeymooners can enjoy a game of golf, tennis, croquet, racquetball or beach volleyball. They can go kayaking, deep sea fishing, sailing, horse back riding, cycling, roller-blading and much more.

Couples who wish for a laid back honeymoon can enjoy strolls along the beach, kite flying, nature walks, historic cruises, shopping, spa services and more. Honeymooners will lack for nothing on Hilton Head Island.

Accommodations range from apartment motels to luxury rental properties to full-service resorts. Settings range from Harbour Town lodging to the secluded Shipyard area, friendly Forest Beach and luxurious townhouses and villas facing the ocean or waterways.

Dining options are endless. Couples can choose from exquisite dining by candlelight, casual outdoor meals, trendy bistros or even a murder mystery dining experience. A honeymoon on Hilton Head Island would not be complete without trying the local catch. Island waters teem with shrimp, oysters and softshell crabs. For a real taste of the region, many restaurants serve their version of a Lowcountry boil. This combination of shrimp, sausage, corn on the cob, potatoes and onions traces its roots back to antebellum times.

A world-class resort destination, Hilton Head Island's warm hospitality, professional services and tranquil beaches create pure bliss. Newlyweds are invited to share life's most special moments on Hilton Head Island.

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