

For the Love of Travel



Aaron Leventhal

Mount Pleasant, S.C. A surprising Destination

Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, settled in 1779, is today a thriving resort community. It's only a short drive across the imposing Ravenel Bridge from downtown Charleston and has become a seniors' favorite for both vacationing and retirement.

I escaped the cold, dreary winter days this past January for a three-week, laid back holiday in Mount Pleasant. I found a comfortable studio apartment across from the Shem Creek Marina (call the Conners for information at (843) 881-6033).

The popular vacation destination had everything I wanted — warm, sunny days and mild evenings, wide sandy beaches to stroll on nearby islands, exquisitely landscaped golf courses, dozens of hiking trails through dense woods and lush lands, delicious Lowcountry cuisine, compelling sightseeing attractions and a warm and hospitable residential community.

I was surprised to discover that there was so much to see and do in Mount Pleasant and its nearby barrier island neighbors, Sullivan's Island and Isle of Palms. I crossed the Ravenel Bridge to downtown Charleston on only a few occasions.

I recommend driving to Mount Pleasant. It's a beautiful trip through the Smok-

ies and Blue Ridge Mountains. Since Mount Pleasant is a large community, now approaching 70,000 residents, an automobile is an absolute necessity to experience everything.

Below are some of the exceptional places I experienced during my stay.

Golfing

Though I seldom break 100, I am an ardent golf enthusiast. During my stay, I played rounds on six beautiful public courses. I often was paired with senior retirees who had happily settled "East of the Cooper," the term locals use for Charleston's suburban communities of Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island, Isle of



Dunes West Golf & River Club, Mount Pleasant

Jones; Dunes West (www.duneswestgolfclub.com, (843-856-9000), an Arthur Hill masterpiece; Patriots Point Links (www.patriotspointlinks.com, (843) 849-2385) with breathtaking views of Charleston Harbor and Fort Sumter; and Riverton Country Club (www.rivertownecountryclub.com, (843) 849-2400), designed by Arnold Palmer, featuring stunning coastal

On days I didn't golf, I explored a variety of world-class attractions and outdoor recreational activities. Some of my Mount Pleasant favorites include: Historic Old Village, a hidden gem just off busy Coleman Boulevard. The village is a National Register District with stately colonial homes and churches, lovely boutique shops, bakery and restaurants. The historic neighborhood Post House Inn (www.oldvillageposthouse.com) is a gracious bed and breakfast with six guest rooms, a lively tavern and fine restaurant.

Memorial Waterfront Park, just across the Ravenel Bridge, is home to the Mount Pleasant Visitors Center, open daily from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. and stocked with useful information. Don't miss the Southeast's longest fishing pier, the War Memorial and Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Pavilion, where skilled basket makers weave and sell their handcrafted creations in a large, open air pavilion.

Boone Hall Plantation in Mount Pleasant, famed

for its scenic corridor of live oaks, was established by Englishman Major John Boone on the banks of the Wampacheone River in 1681. Its attractions include a tour of the mansion, gardens, original slave cabins, and a nearby farmer's market with local produce and homemade meals.

Patriots Point is home to the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown, destroyer USS Life, submarine USS Clamagore, Medal of Honor Museum and America's only Vietnam Naval Support Base Camp.

Fort Moultrie, located on Sullivan Island, is a log fort on the slopes of Charleston Harbor, managed by the National Park Service. The fort is famous for the first patriot victory over the British Navy in 1776. Check out the visitor's center, which features a 20-minute film and exhibits. Shem Creek Marina is a popular dining and entertainment complex just across the Ravenel Bridge. Shem Creek Park features a 2,200-foot boardwalk through marshland. It is home to many restaurants and pubs (including Red's Ice House, Shem Creek Bar and Grill, and Tavern & Table) along with kayak and paddleboard rentals along Shrimp Boat Lane. Shem Creek Inn (www.shemcreekinn.com), located across the marina, has private balcony rooms, breakfast included, free parking and a large outdoor pool.

Dining

When you want to eat at the best places in any vacation destinations, my advice is to ask the locals. Since Lowcountry cuisine is

what's featured here, I dined primarily on fresh fish and seafood, rice and beans and BBQ, usually outdoors on spacious patios. Some of my favorites in Mount Pleasant, suggested by locals, included:

- **Pages Okra Grill** (www.pagesokragrill.com)
- **Mustard Seed** (www.dinewithsal.com/mustard)
- **Boulevard Diner** (www.boulevarddiners.com)
- **The Shelter Kitchen and Bar** (www.theshelterkitchenandbar.com)
- **Five Loaves** (www.five-loavescafe.com)

Any visit to Mount Pleasant will include a 20-minute drive to Sullivan's Island, noted for its historic beach houses, sandy beaches, wooded marshlands and restaurants, most with large outdoor patio seating. Locals' favorites include: Poe's Tavern (www.poestavern.com); Salt at Station 22 (www.saltstation22.com), Sullivan's Steakhouse (sullivansteakhouse.com); and Dunleavy's Irish Pub (dunleavysonsullivan.com).

Nearby, Isle of Palms features six miles of wide Atlantic sandy beachfronts and majestic dunes. Recommended dining includes The Boathouse Breach Inlet (www.boathouserestaurants.com), Obstinate Daughter (www.theobstinatedaughter.com), and the Windjammer (www.the-windjammer.com), featuring a bar menu, outdoor deck overlooking the ocean and live music most nights.

For more information, contact the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-794-0006 or visit explorecharleston.com.

Columbus-based travel writer Aaron Leventhal conducts small group travel trips. He is interested in developing a trip to Mount Pleasant at the end of the year that will feature golfing. Interested persons should email leventhal43206@gmail.com.



Shem Creek Marina, just across the Ravenel Bridge from Charleston

Palms and Daniels Island. I learned that most courses offer reduced rates during the weekdays.

In Mount Pleasant, I played Charleston National Country Club, (www.charlestonnationalgolf.com, (843) 884-7799) designed by the legendary Reese

views along the Wando River. On the Isle of Palms at the Wild Dunes Resort (www.wilddunes.com, (843) 886-2164), I was challenged by its Harbor and Links courses, both with gorgeous Atlantic Ocean views. The renowned Tom Fazio designed this course.

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