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Travel

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Three days in Savannah, Ga.

By Necee Regis | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 08, 2014



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The Jepson Center, a Telfair museum.

Eighth in a series highlighting cities to which you can fly nonstop from Boston.

With its tree-filled squares and parks, well-preserved architecture, historic sites, cultural attractions, and residents oozing Southern charm, Savannah is an easy city to love. From the wide and lazy Savannah River to cemeteries on the outskirts of town, there is plenty for visitors to see and do. More than 40 companies offer guided tours on themes including architecture, African-American heritage, gardens, military history, food, ghosts, nature, and

more. Students at Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) add a vibrant layer of enthusiasm to the community, as do the many restaurants, cafes, and boutique shops. Georgia's first planned city may be rich with history but it is not stuck in the past.

DAY 1

Noon. Start your visit with Historic Savannah Carriage Tours and get acquainted with the 2.5-square-mile Landmark Historic District. Public tours depart from the Hyatt Regency Hotel and last about 50 minutes. Adult \$20, children ages 5-11 \$9, under 5 free.

(912-443-9333, www.savannahcarriage.com)

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1 p.m. Enjoy lunch at the Jepson Cafe on the second floor of the Jepson Center — one of three Telfair museums in town (912-790-8800, www.telfair.org). The contemporary spot serves wraps, panini, salads, and small plates (207 West York St., \$7-\$13).

2 p.m. Depending on your pace, explore one, two, or all three of the Telfair Museums. The Jepson Center, designed by architect Moshe Safdie, hosts traveling exhibitions of contemporary art, and ArtZeum, a hands-on gallery for kids. Telfair Academy, site of the former royal governor's residence, houses 19th- and 20th-century American and European art (121 Barnard St.). The 1816 Owens-Thomas House, a well-preserved example of Regency architecture, can be visited only with a guide (124 Abercorn St.). Daily tours of the home — complete with intact slave quarters — are given at 30-minute intervals. The last tour begins at 4:30 p.m. Tickets adults \$12, children \$5. Pass to all three museums \$20/\$10; family pass (two adults and two children) \$40.

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6 p.m. Sip classic and contemporary cocktails at 22 Square Bar at the Andaz Savannah hotel (14 Barnard St., 912-233-2116, www.savannah.andaz.hyatt.com/en/hotel/home.html). You won't see a mint julep on the menu but if you ask you'll get an excellent version served in a frosty silver mug. Cocktails \$9-\$14.

7 p.m. Stroll through Ellis Square and adjacent City Market, a four-block pedestrian-only courtyard with shops, restaurants, and galleries in restored warehouses. The area is touristy, colorful, and bustles nightly with street entertainers (912-232-4903, www.savannahcitymarket.com).

8:30 p.m. For farm-to-table dining, return to Andaz and the 22 Square Restaurant for sustainable Southern cuisine with a modern twist (\$14-\$40). Or dine casually at Churchill's (13 West Bay St., 912-232-8501, www.thebritishpub.com), a British pub serving traditional dishes, contemporary American fare, and Southern favorites (\$10-\$23), and more than 50 imported and domestic beers.

10 p.m. Save room for ice cream at Leopold's (212 East Broughton St., 912-234-4442, www.leopoldsicecream.com), an old-fashioned parlor founded in 1919. Sample flavors like butter pecan, tutti-frutti, and caramel swirl as well as seasonal specials such as strawberry shortcake, lavender, and Japanese cherry blossom (scoops \$2.75-\$4.75).

DAY 2

8 a.m. Join the locals at B. Matthews (325 East Bay St., 912-233-1319, www.bmatthewseatery.com), a storefront bistro and bar with high ceilings, exposed brick walls, and friendly staff serving new-American-style dishes. Enjoy made-from-scratch biscuits and gravy, fried green tomato benedict, fried duck and waffles, omelets, salads, and sandwiches (\$5.25-\$10). The house-brewed java, made with beans from local roaster Perc, will satisfy any coffee connoisseur. Reservations encouraged.

10 a.m. Bring your camera along to Chippewa Square for the Architectural Savannah tour, a 90-plus-minute stroll through 300 years of history led by Jonathan Stalcup, a local author and SCAD grad. Stalcup covers all periods, styles, and forms of local buildings. Fun and informative, and decidedly not stuffy. Reservations required (912-604-6354, www.architecturalsavannah.com, \$20).

12:30 p.m. Step into the past for lunch at Crystal Beer Parlour (301 West Jones St., 912-349-1000, www.crystalbeerparlor.com), Savannah's second-oldest restaurant, open since 1933, and a gathering spot for generations. Sit in booths, at the bar, or in one of the dining rooms and indulge in old-time favorites such as fried green tomatoes with horseradish cream sauce (\$7.50), a bowl of thick and creamy crab stew (\$5.95), fresh off-the-dock seafood and shellfish, plus burgers, salads, steaks, hand-cut fries, and more (\$8.50-\$23.95). The beer selection features more than 25 brews on tap, over 40 in bottles, plus 10 specialty beers to share.

2 p.m. Wander along Whitaker Street exploring dozens of fashion boutiques, decorative arts

and jewelry galleries, design shops and antiques stores housed in historical storefronts in the Downtown Design District (www.facebook.com/DowntownDesignDistrict). Within two blocks you'll find women's clothing and shoes at Custard Boutique (422 Whitaker); couture and designer apparel at James Hogan (412-B); antique and estate jewelry at Small Pleasures (412-B); gifts and upscale souvenirs at One Fish, Two Fish (400); and stationery at La Paperie (409). On Madison Square, shopSCAD features artwork and designs by students, staff, faculty, and alumni (340 Bull St., www.shopscad.com).

4 p.m. For an afternoon pick-me-up, stop at The Public Kitchen & Bar for a cappuccino (1 West Liberty St., 912-200-4045, www.thepublickitchen.com). Or enjoy a spot of tea at the Gryphon Tea Room (337 Bull St., 912-525-5880, <http://web.scad.edu/experience/gryphon/index.cfm>).

5 p.m. Meander through any of the 24 squares that dot the city, enjoying the historic homes, commemorative statues, and live oak trees bedecked with Spanish moss.

7 p.m. Reserve a table at Vic's on the River (26 East Bay St., 912-721-1000, www.vicsontheriver.com) for fine dining with a Southern flair. This former warehouse and shipping space, circa 1859, has been transformed into a casually elegant restaurant with high ceilings, attentive service, and windows looking out across the Savannah River. Sample award-winning crawfish beignets, pecan-crusting local flounder, jumbo lump crab cakes, braised lamb shank, and more while listening to jazz played nightly (\$15-\$30). Be sure to see the hand-drawn map on the dining room wall. Sketched when General William Tecumseh Sherman's junior officers used the building during the Civil War, it details Sherman's march from Tennessee through Georgia.

9 p.m. Take Vic's elevator down four flights and board one of the River Street Riverboat Co. ships docked on the river. The 90-minute Moonlight Entertainment cruise (March-October) features live music, dancing, and cash bar. Or simply gaze at the stars from the open-air third deck (adults \$22.95, ages 4-12 \$12.95, 800-786-6404, www.savannahriverboat.com).

DAY 3

9 a.m. See the river sparkle from the outdoor terrace at Huey's on the River (115 East River St., 912-234-7385, www.hueysontheriver.net), known for its ample New Orleans-style brunch menu. Huey's egg creations are served with your choice of grits: regular, cheese, or Parmesan garlic (\$6.50-\$14.95). Or keep it simple with café au lait (\$2.75) and piping hot beignets (\$3.95-\$9.95).

10:30 a.m. A walk along River Street offers views of the elegant Talmadge Memorial cable-stayed bridge leading to Hutchinson Island. Along the strip, you'll find casual restaurants,

seafood houses, pubs, and shops mainly offering touristy items.

11 a.m. Indie-owned antiques emporiums and other establishments on nearby West Bay Street might appeal to those looking for different kinds of treasures. Spend hours poking through the Cobblestone Lane Antiques Mall (230 West Bay St., 912-447-0504, www.cobblestonelaneantiques.com), a 9,000-square-foot shop on two levels where 20 dealers offer all manner of antiques, gifts, and decor.

Glass and ceramic fans will appreciate Fiesta & More (224 West Bay St., 912-238-1060, www.fiestaandmore.com), a shop selling colorful Fiestaware, depression glass, and Blue Ridge collectibles. A doorway in the rear leads to Books on Bay (912-236-7115, www.booksonbay.com), a book collector's dream selling thousands of titles from the 1600s to the late 1900s. In the same building, you'll find The Attic Antiques (912-236-4879).

2 p.m. Say "Goodbye, Savannah" with a photo-op stop at the cast iron fountain, circa 1858, in 30-acre Forsyth Park.

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