



**HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**ARTS & CULTURAL COMMUNITY THRIVES**

Hilton Head Island is well-known as a golf and tennis haven. However, visitors discover a culturally rich and diverse vacation experience. 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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