THE HOLY CITY BLOSSOMS BEFORE TEMPERATURES HEAT UP AND CROWDS RUSH IN.

BY KELSEY OGLETREE

No trip to The Holy City is complete without a historic walking tour. Book a private excursion through Exclusively Charleston, which customizes routes according to your interests, so even those who’ve been many times will discover something new. And, if you time your trip right, you may be able to visit the long-anticipated International African American Museum. After many delays, it’s finally expected to open in the first half of 2023 (watch iaamuseum.org for details). The $120 million architectural marvel, located along the Cooper River, will guide visitors through the stories of thousands of Africans who passed through Gadsden’s Wharf, and feature beautiful botanic gardens, art installations and an infinity fountain for reflection and remembrance.

You’d be hard pressed to find a destination more beautiful than Charleston, South Carolina, in spring. With average temperatures in the mid-70s in April and early May, this season is a perfect time to explore the colorful streets and view the beauty of dozens of plants in bloom, from delicate jasmine to vibrant azaleas, fragrant honeysuckle and cascading wisteria. Every spring for 75 years, the Festival of Houses and Gardens takes place. March 15 – April 30, provides rare glimpses into private homes and gardens around the city, along with history walks, wine tastings, gardener workshops, musical performances and more.

While you’ll find a wide mix of modern and traditional hotels within downtown Charleston, some that are the perfect blend of both. The Loutrel, which opened in late 2021 a few blocks from Rainbow Row, is a boutique hotel with a design-forward lobby featuring a large-scale mural by local artist Linda Fantuzzo, and one of the best rooftops in town. Each of its 50 genteel rooms are bedecked in soft hues of blue, grey and gold — a restful, quiet respite from the busy cobblestone streets outside.

If you’d like to live like a local in Charleston, book a room at the Mills House hotel, first established in the 1850s and located steps from the famous Gibbes Museum of Art (hosting the second-annual Art Charleston visual arts festival, April 26-30), recently completed a grand renovation that added a rooftop bar and terrace and the charming Black Door Cafe.

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Wine Shop, a neighborhood hangout known for its unusual and trendy bottles (plus free tastings on Tuesdays). No trip to The Holy City is complete without a historic walking tour. Book a private excursion through Exclusively Charleston, which customizes routes according to your interests, so even those who’ve been many times will discover something new. And, if you time your trip right, you may be able to visit the long-anticipated International African American Museum. After many delays, it’s finally expected to open in the first half of 2023 (watch iaamuseum.org for details). The $120 million architectural marvel, located along the Cooper River, will guide visitors through the stories of thousands of Africans who passed through Gadsden’s Wharf, and feature beautiful botanic gardens, art installations and an infinity fountain for reflection and remembrance.