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Georgia on My Mind

A VISIT TO ST. SIMONS ISLAND

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This little slice of paradise in Georgia offers visitors luxury accommodations, down-home eats, eclectic shops, surf, and sand.



IN MY MIND WAS A SCENE STRAIGHT OUT of a Ginger Rogers' movie: swirls of silk and velvet as the ladies were twirled around the terrazzo dance floor by sure-footed, rhythmically inclined gentlemen in tuxedos. I could almost hear the big band tunes wafting in and out of the dancers, carried along by the sea breeze to the dance floor under the stars. This was a reality in 1935, when the King and Prince Club opened its doors, quickly establishing its reputation for elegance and warm hospitality. The stained glass windows in the ballroom-turned-dining room depict scenes from the resort's history and serve as a beautiful reminder of that time. The hotel closed to guests for five years during World War II, remaining open only to house US Navy personnel.

THE KING AND PRINCE

This club is now the famed King and Prince Beach and Golf Resort, situated on the largest

of Georgia's Golden Isles—St. Simons Island. Home to beautiful beaches, golfing, fishing, shopping, and outdoor activities, this oasis of an island has something to offer everyone. The King and Prince takes hospitality very seriously—from the gentleman who selected peach wine for a welcoming gift, to the bartender who offered to open it, to the chefs and waiters who were diligent in accommodating special food requests, to the directors and assistants who knew how to extend warm welcomes, a few laughs, and help at every turn. The staff takes pride in this Mediterranean-inspired respite, and it shows.

The breakfast buffet is not to be missed. A good motto: seize every opportunity for grits! Add to that made-to-order omelettes, Belgian waffles, bacon, biscuits, fresh fruit, and pastries, all while dining oceanside at the King's Tavern Restaurant inside the King and Prince. On a rainy day, it's the



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perfect spot to watch the waves crash over the sand. The Ocean Terrace Grille puts you even closer to the shore. The black bean hummus plate and a frozen daiquiri taste delicious in the sunshine.

PIER VILLAGE

To take further advantage of the sunshine, rent bikes at Ocean Motion Surf Co., and follow Ocean Boulevard down to the Pier Village. Eclectic shops and restaurants line Mallery Street, like Moondance Vintage Clothing which features pieces from the 1940s to the 1970s. Grab some frozen yogurt at Yobe, and write a message or doodle on their outdoor chalkboard. Turn the corner onto Beachview Drive, and spend some time at the Serenity House Tea Society, where someone is always happy to brew up some tea for you to try. It's easy to lose track of time with neat rows of tea

canisters just begging for a sniff. The Nutty Toasted Almond fruit infusion smells heavenly, with apple pieces, crushed almonds, and bits of cinnamon. For true tea lovers, try a flavored black or green tea. Beacon Blend is the perfect summertime iced tea, with a base of black and green tea, plus papaya cubes, rose hip peels, and sunflower petals.

For the best ice cream on the island, swing by Moo Cow Ice Cream on Ocean Boulevard. Popular, albeit quirky, ice cream flavors include candied bacon, avocado, and chocolate-covered potato chip ice cream. Peruse the other side of the shop for eclectic home goods as you take licks of homemade yumminess.



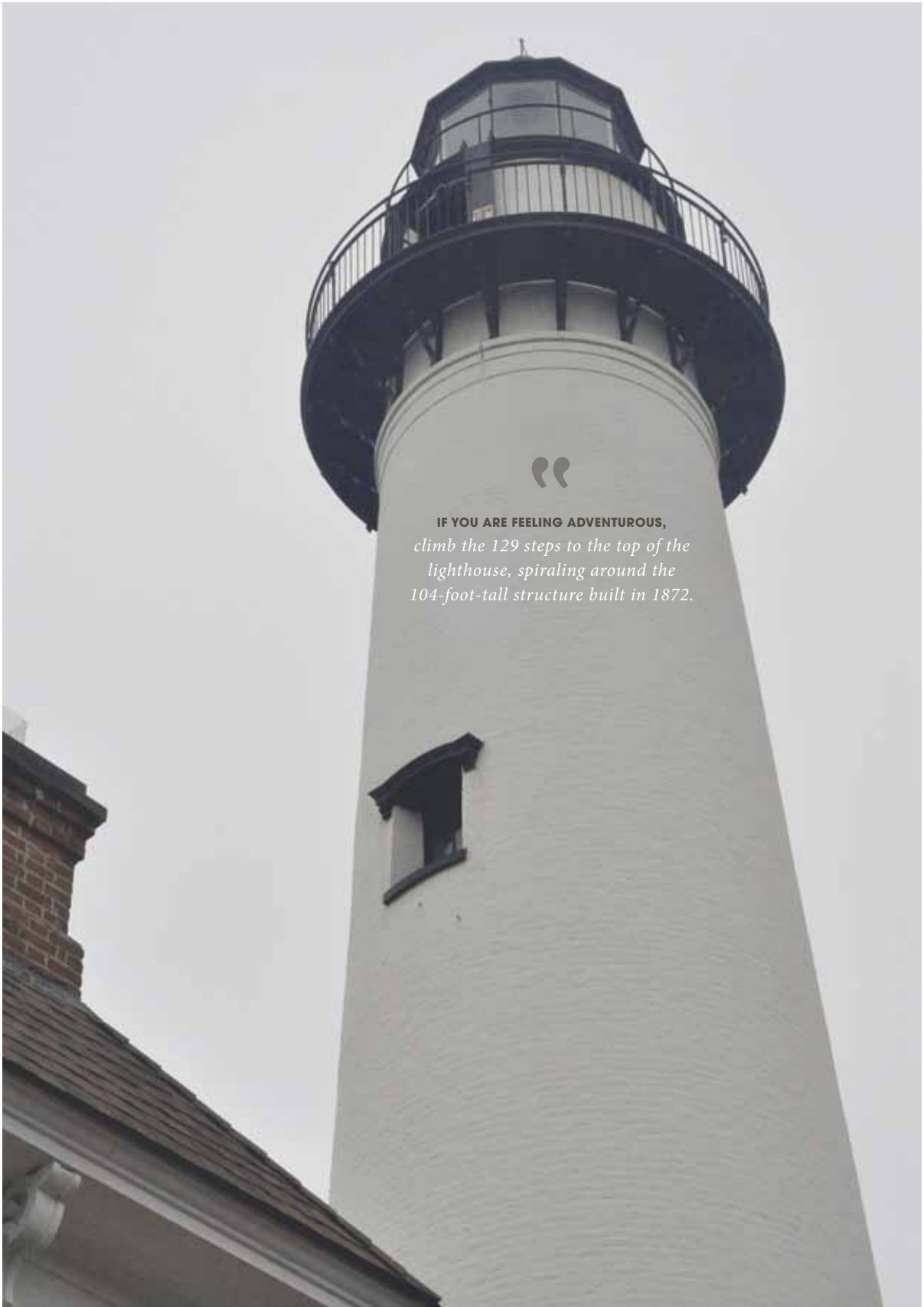


A BIT OF HISTORY

A short jump back on the bike, and the Lighthouse Museum beckons visitors to learn the history of St. Simons Island. If you are feeling adventurous, climb the 129 steps to the top of the lighthouse, spiraling around the 104-foot-tall structure built in 1872. A view of the island is your reward, along with your cardio for the day. You can also see how the lighthouse keeper lived, and read the history of James Gould, the first lightkeeper of the original lighthouse, who held this position at an annual salary of \$400 until his 1837 retirement. The keeper's second-floor quarters contain a parlor, kitchen, and two bedrooms furnished with period pieces, including beds with rope mattress suspension. In the summertime, the gazebo and oceanfront lawn serve as the setting for a series of outdoor music concerts.

BEACH EATS

Beachcomber BBQ, right around the corner from the King and Prince, is a shack-like joint with a relaxed, beach-bum vibe. You order at a window, and pick up your food when they call your name. Grab a seat at the picnic table, and enjoy the flip-flop-friendly atmosphere. Standouts include pulled pork sandwiches, ribs, and



Brunswick stew. They've been enjoying extra attention since Alton Brown introduced television audiences to their pulled pork in the Food Network show, *The Best Thing I Ever Ate*.

LET'S GO SHRIMPING

If you're blessed with clear skies, head out to sea aboard the *Lady Jane*, a United States Coast Guard-certified passenger steel shrimping vessel. The knowledgeable crew sifts through hauls of sea creatures brought up by shrimp nets. You might see horseshoe crabs, stingrays, baby sharks, and loggerhead turtles. The boat stays in the calm waters of St. Simons Sound, so put aside worries of motion sickness, and enjoy the boiled shrimp fest prepared by the crew halfway through the cruise.

SEA TURTLES

For another marine experience, take a drive to Jekyll Island, and visit the sea turtles at the Georgia Sea Turtle Center. This hospital for ill and injured sea turtles is the only one of its kind in the state of Georgia. The exhibits are interactive and informative, and a great way to educate yourself on the life cycle,

environment, basic needs, and dangers facing these sea creatures. After you've made your way through the hands-on Exhibit Gallery, walk back to the Rehabilitation Pavilion where recovering sea turtle patients can be seen from an elevated walkway. The staff periodically gives presentations, explaining the injuries and recovery process. Visitors may also catch a feeding, which comes in different forms depending on the extent of injuries. Healthier patients will sometimes receive their evening meal frozen inside a block of ice. Patients have to pursue the ice block as it floats around their tank, gaining exercise in the process. The ice also helps to maintain a healthy beak, which is made of keratin, just like human fingernails.

The best thing about St. Simons Island is the freedom to do every activity or no activity at all. Stroll along the sand, breathe the saltwater air, and revel in this year-round vacation spot. Play a round of tennis at the King and Prince, or smooth away your worries with a trip to the spa. And whatever you do, don't miss the grits!

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