

June 2018

# Southern Living®

FORGOTTEN  
**Fruit  
Desserts**

Sonker! Buckle!  
Pandowdy!  
p. 82

## THE BEST OF SUMMER

HOW TO KICK BACK, RELAX & SAVOR THE SEASON

A Greek  
Revival  
in Sparta,  
Georgia

JUNE 2018

SECRETS OF  
GEORGIA'S  
GOLDEN ISLES

FAST AND  
FRESH TOMATO  
RECIPES

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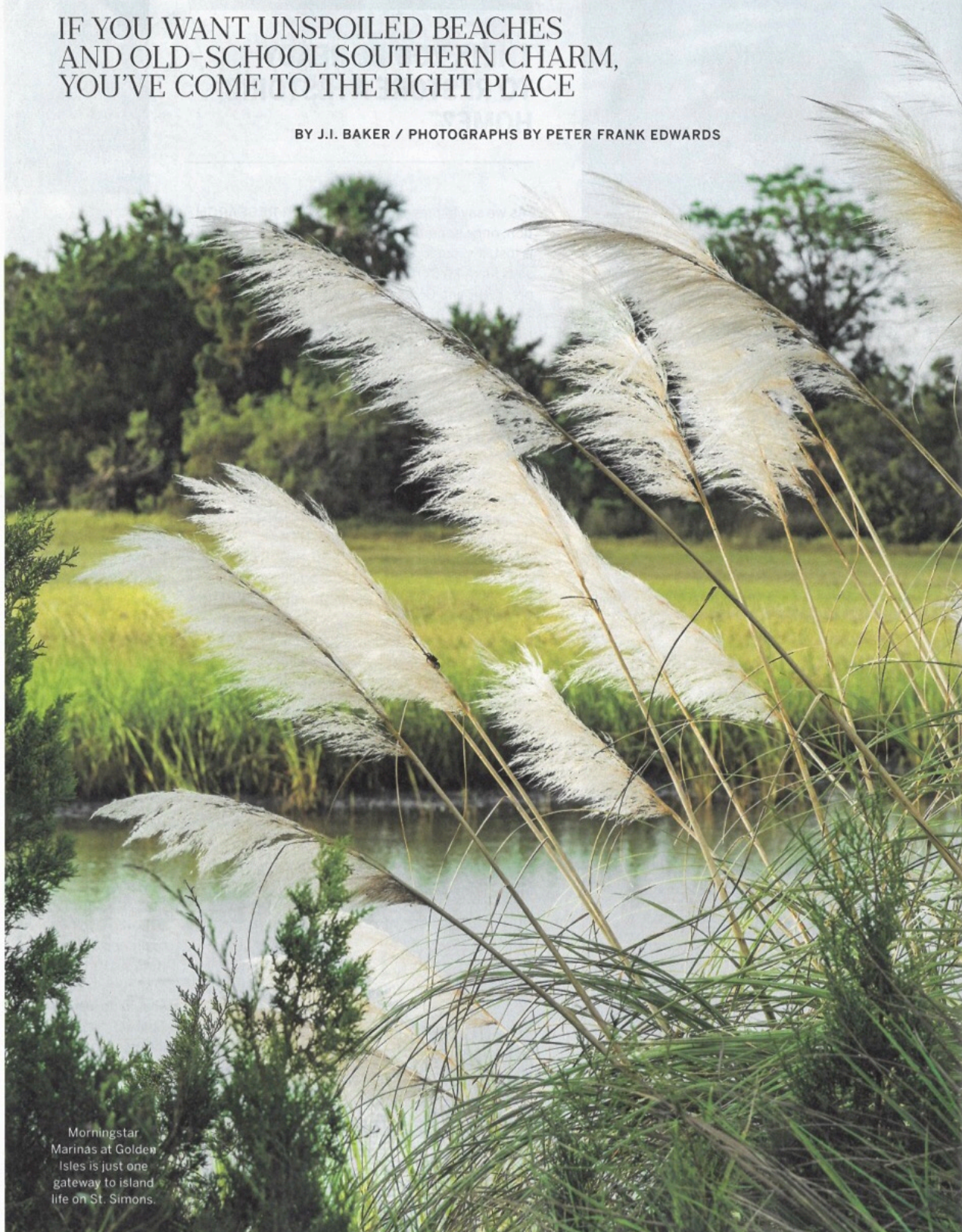
Circulation: 2,819,917



# GEORGIA'S

IF YOU WANT UNSPOILED BEACHES  
AND OLD-SCHOOL SOUTHERN CHARM,  
YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE

BY J.I. BAKER / PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS



Morningstar  
Marinas at Golden  
Isles is just one  
gateway to island  
life on St. Simons.





Crane Cottage at the Jekyll Island Club Resort was once a private getaway.

# GOLDEN ISLES



T

here's something special about a beach with a true sense of history, not to mention a lack of crowds. The Georgia coast is rich with such pockets of sand. Once the playground of Rockefellers and Pulit-zers, these four barrier islands still feel like a private retreat, with ancient trees, quiet bike paths, and wild stretches of coastline. Here's a little tour of one of the South's best-kept secrets.

## LITTLE ST. SIMONS ISLAND

It all started with pencils—well, sort of. In 1908, Eagle Pencil Company bought Little St. Simons Island, hoping to use its plentiful cedar trees to produce its product. Though the wood ultimately proved unsuitable, it hardly mattered: Having fallen in love with the island, Eagle Pencil owner Philip Berolzheimer purchased the Georgia property from the company and turned it into a family resort that's still privately owned.

First opened to the public in 1979, Little St. Simons Island offers 11,000 acres of secluded land—including a 7-mile beach, a lodge, and six cottages. At any given time, only 32 guests are allowed on the property, which can be reached by a ferry that runs twice a day across the Hampton River. If you

are looking for poolside cabanas or pillow menus, this place is certainly not for you. But if your idea of heaven on earth involves sea turtle sightings at sunset, kayaking expeditions, alligator walks, and shark fishing—all facilitated by a team of naturalists—you've found your terrestrial paradise.

Much of Little St. Simons Island is for the birds—literally. More than 330 species, both resident and migratory—including roseate spoonbills, bald eagles, painted buntings, and wood storks—feather their nests here. From the observation tower over Norm's Pond, for instance, you'll find a busy rookery of egrets, anhingas, and herons (just to name a few). The avian drama is so varied and dynamic that one of the island's naturalists compares it to a Shakespearean play.

Even if bird-watching isn't quite "as you like it," there is so much to do on

Little St. Simons that you'd probably lose track of time if it weren't for the bell that routinely summons guests to breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Served family style in the main lodge, the hearty homemade meals are carefully crafted from ingredients sourced from area farms—often incorporating herbs, fruits, vegetables, and edible flowers from the island's own garden.

You'll feast on the likes of buttered biscuits dipped in potlikker, pasta made with fresh pesto, and crisp fried chicken that may actually be better than your mama's. After each meal, a naturalist will announce the day's activities, but if you have something else in mind, the accommodating staff will happily make it happen.

In the end, the highlight of your trip probably won't be bird-watching or boating but the quality time you spend with your hosts and fellow guests. No matter how shy you are, the strangers you meet at the start of your stay will likely be your friends by the time you say goodbye. In fact, taking the ferry back to the mainland can be quite a melancholy experience—or maybe we should say a "sweet sorrow."



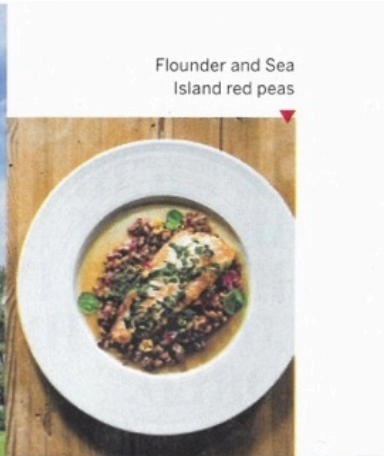




Visitors can pedal their way through the Jekyll Island Club Resort.



Jekyll Island Club Resort



Flounder and Sea Island red peas



The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island has great food (above right) and cozy cabin stays.



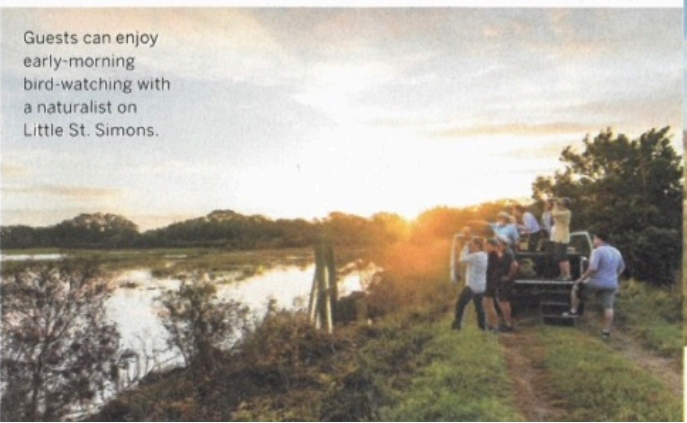
Georgia Sea Turtle Center



The kitchen garden at Little St. Simons.



The Wharf, Jekyll Island Club Resort



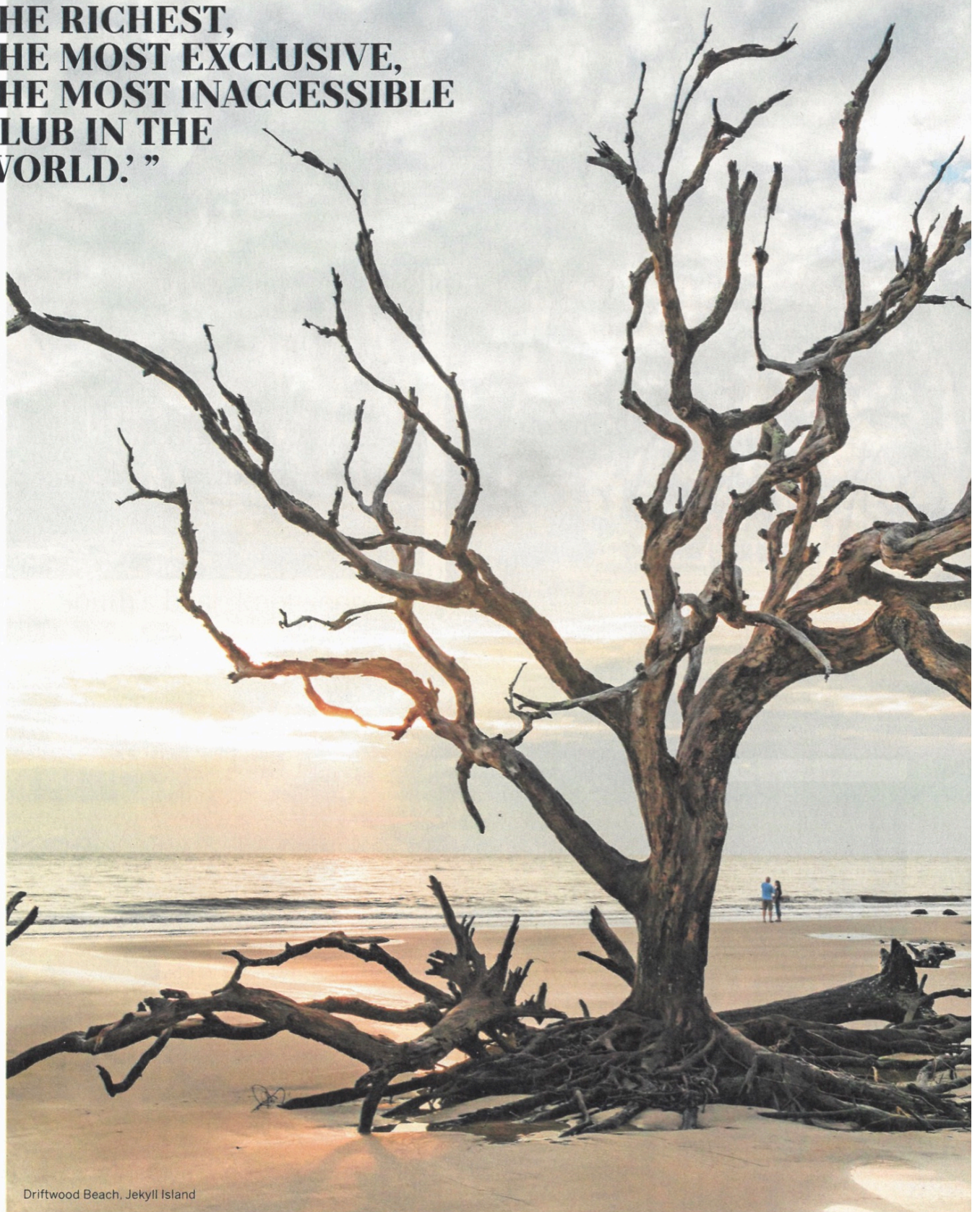
Guests can enjoy early-morning bird-watching with a naturalist on Little St. Simons.



Fishing at Little St. Simons



**“ONE MAGAZINE  
DESCRIBED IT AS  
‘THE RICHEST,  
THE MOST EXCLUSIVE,  
THE MOST INACCESSIBLE  
CLUB IN THE  
WORLD.’ ”**



Driftwood Beach, Jekyll Island



## JEKYLL ISLAND

In the late 19th century, Jekyll—the southernmost Golden Isle—became an exclusive winter sporting retreat for the likes of J.P. Morgan, Joseph Pulitzer, and William Rockefeller. When the island was purchased by the Jekyll Island Club in 1886, one magazine described it as “the richest, the most exclusive, the most inaccessible club in the world.” The 60-chamber Jekyll Island Club opened in 1888. The prices lowered when the structure became a hotel in the 1980s, but the luxury at what is now Jekyll Island Club Resort endures—particularly at Crane Cottage, built in 1917 by Richard Teller Crane Jr., who made a fortune by putting his good name on America’s toilets. (Other properties include Sans Souci, one of the first condominium buildings in the U.S., and Cherokee cottage.)

In addition to the club, the magnates built mansions that still stand in the island’s historic center, where their service buildings on Pier Road are now quaint stores selling knickknacks to tourists. Other attractions include the Summer Waves Water Park, three 18-hole golf courses, and the Georgia Sea Turtle Center.

Explore Jekyll Island’s over-20-mile network of scenic bike paths. The North Loop winds past the ruins of Horton House plantation and the tangled trees of atmospheric Driftwood Beach. On Beachview Drive, find Driftwood Bistro, serving classic Lowcountry dinners, and Tortuga Jack’s, a seaside Mexican joint. Watch the sunset while sipping a Georgia Peach Margarita.

Other local culinary picks include The Wharf, which reopened on the pier in 2017; Zachry’s Riverhouse on the marina; and Jekyll Island Seafood Company, newly established in Beach Village. The island’s most storied restaurant is the Jekyll Island Club’s Grand Dining Room (seasonal dishes like Veal Chop Oscar are superb), but



Outdoor lunch at Little St. Simons



East Beach on St. Simons Island is the perfect spot to chill in a chair or play in the surf.

its cuisine is rivaled by the casual fare at Corsair Kitchen & Bar at the Jekyll Ocean Club, the resort’s 40-room beachfront property that opened in the summer of 2017. Try the Lump Crab Stuffed Shrimp, one of the wood-fired pizzas, or the GA Shrimp with speckled grits and sweetly smoked tasso ham. Thirsty? Sample craft cocktails created by resident mixologist Chris Gantt.

## ST. SIMONS ISLAND

The largest of Georgia’s Golden Isles, St. Simons Island lies just across the Marshes of Glynn, made famous by poet Sidney Lanier, who called them “a world of marsh that borders a world

of sea.” These days, it’s also a world of commerce, with plenty of diversions and a wide variety of excellent cuisine. But, hey, you came to the beach—you want seafood, right? There are so many options worth recommending here, but start with Crabdaddy’s Seafood Grill and The Crab Trap, neighboring joints on the island’s southern end. Locals argue over their relative merits, but Crabdaddy’s is our favorite, combining a casual family vibe with the slightly raucous feeling of a friendly dive bar.

Around the corner, you’ll find an actual dive bar in Beachcomber BBQ & Grill. Just don’t ask barkeep George what kind of wine he serves or if they offer beer on tap (no). “What did you expect?” he’ll say. “It’s a barbecue joint.” Here, locals drink Heineken, play keno,



and feast on ribs that rival those of Southern Soul Barbecue, Beachcomber's more famous counterpart. Some say Beachcomber is the better of the two. If you have a bone (or a whole plate of them) to pick with this hog heresy, consider that one of Southern Soul's co-owners has been rumored to eat at Beachcomber.

Had your fill of ribs? Try the pies at Sal's Neighborhood Pizzeria; the doughnuts and freshly ground beef patties at Certified Burgers & Beverage; or more upscale options at Halyards, Tramici Neighborhood Italian, Delaney's Bistro, and Georgia Sea Grill. If you're craving red meat, head to Bennie's Red Barn, the island's oldest restaurant. Located in (you guessed it) a red barn, Bennie's is the place for steak, but save room for the signature Raccoon Frozen Cocktail, a dessert drink with spiked chocolate ice cream. Breakfast is the specialty at Palmer's Village Cafe, offering Buddy's Banana Pudding Pancakes and a Chix Pot Pie omelet stuffed with crumbled biscuits. Sweet Mama's serves pastries, cakes, and the Pork Pop (a mini biscuit with bacon, cheese, and sausage that's a local favorite—and a bargain at 65 cents each). Go early. They sell out fast.

You'll find many lodging options on St. Simons, but The King and Prince Beach & Golf Resort, a member of the *Southern Living* Hotel Collection, is one of the only oceanfront hotels. Perched on East Beach, a stretch of the island's finest waterfront, the elegant, over-80-year-old venue is also near Mallery Street, one of the area's two main drags (the other is Redfern Village). From there, visit the famed St. Simons Lighthouse Museum or catch a trolley tour of the island's historic highlights. You'll stop at sites like Fort Frederica National Monument; Christ Church, Frederica, where Eugenia Price (who wrote novels about the area) is buried; and Ebos Landing, where a group of Africans drowned themselves rather than be enslaved in 1803. (It's believed to be haunted.)

## SEA ISLAND

Despite its name, The Inn at Sea Island isn't actually located on Sea Island but rather on St. Simons Island. It is, though, still a part of the Sea Island resort, a privately owned collection of luxurious accommodations that include The Cloister, cottages, and The Lodge—the latter of which is also located on St. Simons Island. (Confused? We get it.)

The Inn is the most economical option of the resort's properties, but with certain packages, you can have access to many amenities provided at The Lodge and The Cloister as well as a shuttle service. A 43-room English-style manor overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, The Lodge provides guests with three championship golf courses, 24-hour butler service, and rose-petal baths. Reached by the causeway from St. Simons, Sea Island's Cloister and rental cottages are lavish lodgings in a complex that includes a beach club, three outdoor swimming pools, a yacht club, and an award-winning spa and fitness center.

Of course, you will find plenty of dining and drinking options too. The Cloister features Southern Tide, a casual seafood joint; Tavola, an Italian bistro; and Wonderland, an ice-cream parlor where beachgoers gorge on the Gold Brick Sundae, a frozen treat with chocolate sauce that hardens as it cools. At the Georgian Room, the state's only Forbes Five-Star restaurant, dine on the likes of Hokkaido Diver Scallops and Foie Gras Gâteau. Unlike the resort's other restaurants, this room is open to the general public, but reservations are required.

Sea Island's history of exclusivity began when Howard Coffin, a founder of the Hudson Motor Company, opened The Cloister in 1928. Over the years, the resort has hosted many Presidents (George and Barbara Bush spent their honeymoon here) as well as the 2004 G8 Summit. It also thrives on such

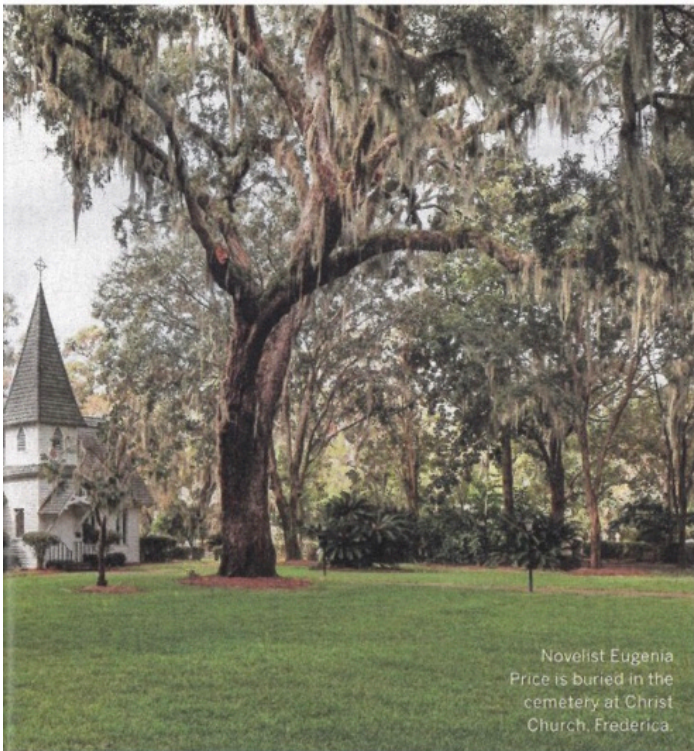
traditions as live oaks planted to honor special guests; a bagpiper who plays on the Plantation golf course at sunset; and a legendary bingo game that's part upscale social event, part children's party, and part congenial competition.

It all contributes to the mystique of this place, steeped in history but ready to welcome new visitors coming to experience Georgia's Atlantic shores. **SL**



Georgia Sea Grill,  
St. Simons Island





Novelist Eugenia Price is buried in the cemetery at Christ Church, Frederica.



Apple Strudel from the Georgian Room



St. Simons Lighthouse Museum



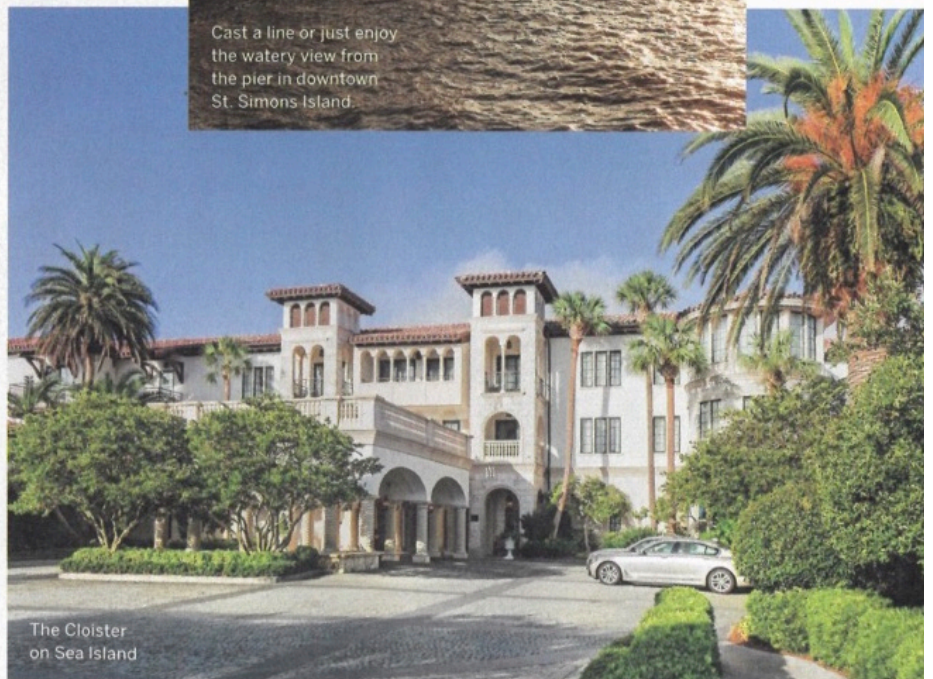
Set sail at Sea Island.



Cast a line or just enjoy the watery view from the pier in downtown St. Simons Island.



The Cloister's elegant lobby



The Cloister on Sea Island