

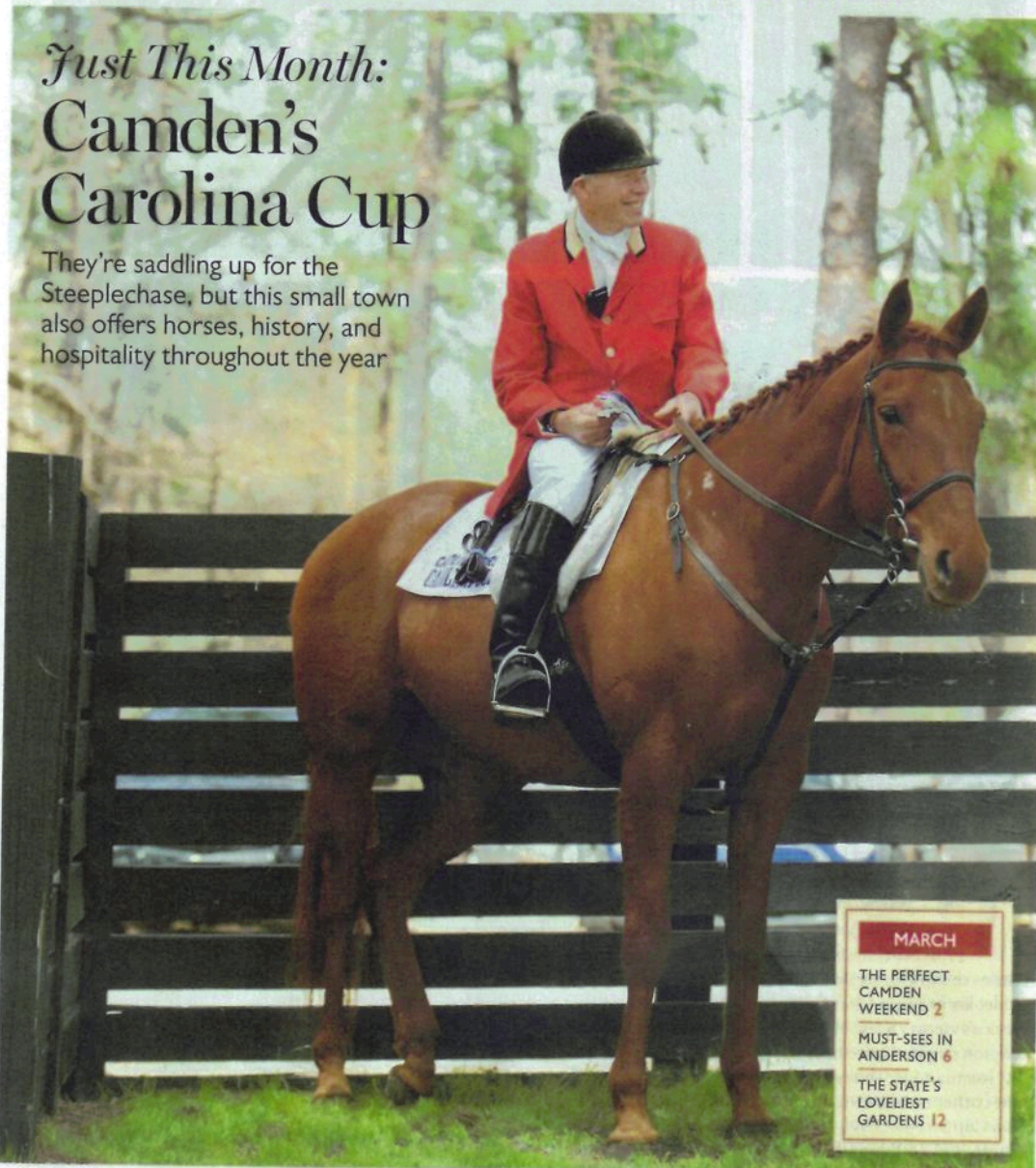
South Carolina

# People & Places™

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO EXPLORING THE PALMETTO STATE

## *Just This Month:* Camden's Carolina Cup

They're saddling up for the Steeplechase, but this small town also offers horses, history, and hospitality throughout the year



### MARCH

THE PERFECT  
CAMDEN  
WEEKEND 2

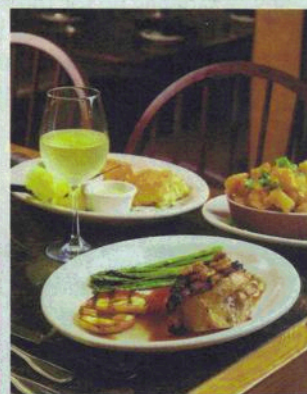
MUST-SEES IN  
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THE STATE'S  
LOVELIEST  
GARDENS 12





SOUTH CAROLINA  
PEOPLE & PLACES



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Silver gleams at the Camden Antiques Market; fans cheer on a hurdling horse during the Carolina Cup; dinner is served at Sam Kendall's restaurant; azaleas fill the Bloomsbury Inn's front yard.

**F**ounded in 1732 as the first inland town in South Carolina, Camden has had plenty of experience with welcomed (and unwelcomed) guests. "When people bring up our antebellum past, I ask, 'Which war do you mean?'" says Joanna Craig, director of the Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site, which commemorates two battles the town's settlers fought against the British in 1780 and 1781. The Redcoats prevailed, but the fighting helped turn the tide of war and led to America's victory a few months later. So in 1791 a grateful George Washington stopped by to offer his thanks. "We like to say he was our first tourist," Joanna adds. Today the town about 35 miles east of Columbia welcomes other tourists with exciting equestrian events (including the Carolina Cup Steeplechase, March 31) and a host of locally owned shops, restaurants, and B&B inns. Here's how to spend a day, and a night, in Camden.

#### HORSE AROUND

Any Camden visit has to include horses, because equestrian passion runs deep in this part of South Carolina. Many trace it to the well-heeled Northerners who came by train in the late 1800s to enjoy the mild climate and equine diversions such as polo. In addition to the "sport of kings," the horse-riding visitors also introduced the sport of steeplechase racing. So since 1930 (and once again this month),





jockeys in jewel-toned silks and their well-trained steeds have jumped over hurdles at the Springdale Race Course during the annual **Carolina Cup Steeplechase** ([carolina-cup.org](http://carolina-cup.org) or 803/432-6513). The city's Fine Arts Center of Kershaw County also hosts the **Camden Cup Polo Weekend**, one of the country's top polo events, May 4-6 ([fineartscenter.org](http://fineartscenter.org) or 803/425-7676), while another steeplechase classic, the Colonial Cup, takes place at the Springdale course in November.

Between the steeplechases and polo matches, equestrian enthusiasts should take time out to visit the **South Carolina Equine Park**, located on I-20 east of downtown Camden. The 50-acre complex features a variety of events ([sceequinepark.com](http://sceequinepark.com) or 803/713-3434) and the **National Steeplechase Museum**, where visitors can check out trophies and memorabilia and get a taste of what it's like to compete in a steeplechase race—while holding on for dear life—on a simulator that's known as the "Equisizer" ([steeplechasemuseum.org](http://steeplechasemuseum.org) or 803/432-6513).



Sam Kendall's

#### EXPLORE

In addition to horses, Camden is also filled with history, especially in its oak tree-lined downtown—where you'll find centuries-old structures such as the 1812 **Bonds Conway House**, now headquarters of the Kershaw County Historical Society. If you like exploring, pick up a driving tour guide book (\$5) from the Kershaw County Chamber of Commerce's Visitors Center (607 South Broad Street). Or you can just sit back and let Joy Breckenridge Gensler introduce you to her hometown during one of her **Camden Carriage Company's horse-drawn tours** ([camden carriage.com](http://camden carriage.com) or 803/425-5737).

#### SHOP

Follow sightseeing with shopping on Broad Street at spots such as the **Camden Antiques Market** (803/432-0818), where some 30 antiques dealers from around the area offer furniture, home decor items, and artwork. Just down the street, **Boykin Furniture** (803/432-4386) sells pieces that are handcrafted on the premises by Joe Mazurek, who says, "I make tomorrow's antiques today."

Beverly Steinman, board chairman of the Carolina Cup Racing Association



#### EAT

When lunchtime rolls around, stop by **Salud Mexican Kitchen and Tequila Lounge** (803/425-4850) for mango salsa (\$4.50) and a couple of fish tacos (\$9.50) washed down by a selection from the restaurant's collection of top-shelf tequilas. For dinner, join the locals downtown at **Sam Kendall's** ([samkendalls.com](http://samkendalls.com) or 803/424-2005). Order a cup of Tomato Basil Crab Bisque (\$5) and a slab of Baby Back Ribs (\$20) while you peruse one of the state's most impressive wine lists.

#### STAY

End the day surrounded by history and hospitality at a comfortable B&B such as the **Bloomsbury Inn** (rates start at \$159; [bloomsburyinn.com](http://bloomsburyinn.com) or 803/432-5858) or the **Camden House** (rates start at \$109; [camdenhouse.us](http://camdenhouse.us) or 803/713-1013). The spacious Bloomsbury Inn invites its guests to gather in the evening over a glass of wine and some friendly conversation—just the way Camden has been welcoming visitors for more than 200 years. 