



VISIT SEABROOK ISLAND

The Post and Courier

Holy City displaces San Francisco as No. 1 on Conde Nast list



Charleston named top tourist destination

By [Warren Wise](#)

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File Photo

The Battery, downtown Charleston.

Was it Charleston's friendliness that earned it the No. 1 tourist destination in America on Monday from readers of the widely read Conde Nast Traveler?

Or was it the bounty of outstanding restaurants, top-notch hotels, rich history, quaint shops and overall ambience that catapulted the Holy City to the top, displacing perennial winner San Francisco, which held the title for 18 years?

Top 10

- 1) Charleston
- 2) San Francisco
- 3) Santa Fe, N.M.
- 4) Chicago
- 5) Honolulu

- 6) New York
- 7) Savannah
- 8) Carmel, Calif.
- 9) Seattle
- 10) Boston

Apparently, it was all of it.

"It's like winning the Academy Award for tourism," an ecstatic Helen Hill, executive director of the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, said by phone from New York City, where she accepted the honor from Emmy Award-winning comedy writer and fellow Charlestonian Stephen Colbert.

Charleston made its debut on the magazine's Readers' Choice Awards list of "Top 10 U.S. Destinations" in 1993, coming in at No. 6. The charming city went on to earn a top 10 ranking for 16 more years, holding its own alongside major powerhouse metropolitan areas, such as San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Boston.

For the past three years, Charleston ranked No. 2.

Mayor Joe Riley was pleased the city he's helmed since 1975 is now the No. 1 tourist destination in America.

"We love to share our extensive heritage and tradition of hospitality," Riley said in a prepared statement. "It is thrilling to see that the visitors who come here not only enjoy what they see and experience, they also find an open welcome from the city. Great food and lovely hotels add much to the enjoyment of our guests who come either for a day or a week. We look forward to the opportunity to show visitors what makes Charleston a great place to visit."

Voters annually evaluate cities based on six categories: atmosphere/ambiance, culture/sites, friendliness, lodging, restaurants and shopping. The city with the highest composite appeal wins top honors.

To help sell the city, the CVB is launching a website at charlestonly.com, a nod to the term coined to describe the one-of-a-kind characteristics that define the Charleston experience.

The website includes highlights of recent national media coverage, a video featuring local personalities saying thank you and a listing of special packages offered by the Charleston area's eight 2011 Readers' Choice Award-winning resorts and hotels.

Also honored at the gala event was Kiawah Island Golf Resort, which was ranked No. 3 on the list of Top U.S. Islands and No. 3 on the list of Top Mainland U.S. Resorts.

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