

Living on Tybee Time

Slow down and enjoy an old-fashioned beach getaway.

By Cassandra M. Vanhooser

Southern Living, July 2002, pgs. 44-46

This little strip of land just 18 miles east of Savannah boasts natural charm that few beaches have preserved. As soon as you cross the Lazaretto Creek Bridge leading to Tybee Island, you'll feel your cares slip away and your spirits rise.

Fun on Friday

You have to pass through Savannah to get to Tybee Island, and you may be tempted to succumb to the city's siren call. Resist. You're just a 20-minute ride from the beach.

Head for the shore to swim, surf, or bask in the sun. To be on the safe side, don't swim at dusk. Several species of sharks live off the coast of Tybee. Also, pay close attention to your parking meter. Ticket givers vigorously enforce the law. (I know from experience.) The city maintains two public parking lots where parking costs \$7 per day.

Dolphins enchant humans like no other sea creature. For a closeup view, schedule a dolphin tour. Several charter companies offer marshland tours and fishing guide services, but Captain Mike is one of the only outfitters on the island leading dolphin tours. To buy a ticket (\$12 adults, \$5 ages 12 and under), you walk right up to the office in the white house below the bridge at Lazaretto Creek and ring the bell. The good Captain Mike is not very talkative, but he knows where the dolphins congregate, and he takes you there.

Dust off the sand, dress up a bit, and head to dinner at Georges' of Tybee. This cozy little restaurant resembles a trendy beach cottage with hardwood floors and wood-plank ceilings. Owners George Spriggs and George Jackson (the two Georges, also owners of North Beach Grill) offer what they call "American fusion" cuisine, food that combines Asian, Middle Eastern, French, and Southern influences. Reservations are recommended. For a taste of Tybee's nightlife, head to Doc's Bar or Fannie's on the Beach.

Settle in for the night. Magnolia Place Inn in Savannah (1-800-238-7674) offers a spacious home a block from the beach for \$1,800 a week or \$400 a day. You can also call the Savannah Area Convention & Visitors Bureau for a list of companies that handle rentals. The Ocean Plaza Beach Resort also has spacious rooms (912-786-7777 or 1-800-215-6370; weekend rates range \$115-\$180). Book well in advance. Summer is peak season on the island.

Explore and Shop on Saturday

Stop by the Tybee Market IGA, and stock up on breakfast favorites. Or head to Sunrise Restaurant for an omelet and the chef's signature hash browns.

Fort Pulaski National Monument, a five-sided brick building, played a pivotal role in American history; it also sits on one of the most picturesque spots on the coast. The fort is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. The island's most recognizable landmark is the Tybee Island Light Station. Make the climb to the top for a spectacular view of the island community and the Atlantic. The lighthouse and the museum are open 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Wednesday-Monday.

When you get hungry, stroll across the road to North Beach Grill. Check the chalkboard for specials, then sit on the patio overlooking the beach. The dinner menu is adventuresome (entrées range \$12.95-\$17.95), but for lunch try the jerk chicken or crab cake sandwiches (\$5.95).

Like a true Tybee Islander, you may grow so fond of your seaside paradise that you're loath to leave. If that's the case, go back and enjoy the beach. If not, head to Savannah for some shopping. The city boasts enough shops to occupy you for several days, but you'll only have time for a sampling. Indulge your senses at Savannah Fine Linens on Whitaker Street, where you'll find exquisite bedding, embroidered napkins, and Waterford crystal lamps. At The Tea Room on Broughton Street, choose your favorite loose-leaf teas imported from the Orient, as well as pots and accessories. You'll find a number of galleries featuring local artists at City Market. For big ticket items, visit Arthur Smith Antiques on Bull Street or Capra Capra Antiques on Abercorn Street.

If you choose to dine in Savannah, make early reservations at Il Pasticcio, and order the gorgonzola-encrusted filet (\$28) or one of the handmade pastas. On Tybee, try The Grill Beachside. The pan-seared scallops with Champagne beurre blanc sauce (\$19.25) are heavenly.

A Sunday for Simple Pleasures

Rise early and walk on the beach. But don't linger much later than 7 a.m. or you'll find yourself in line outside The Breakfast Club. Chef/owner Jodee Sadowsky incorporates fresh seafood into the menu with items such as the Lowcountry Omelet (\$9.95), but we're partial to the eggs Benedict (\$8.95), served only on Sunday.

You'll need lots of energy for your next adventure--kayaking. Alakai Outfitters offers introductory kayak trips at 8 a.m., 11 a.m., 2 p.m., and 5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday (depending on the tides). Guided tours are \$35 adults, \$17.50 ages 12 and under. Sea Kayak Georgia also offers a three-hour tour of Little Tybee and Lazaretto Creek for \$55.

Stop for lunch at The Crab Shack. The sign out front reads, "Where the elite eat in their bare feet." Order the Lowcountry Boil (\$11.99), and you'll get mounds of boiled shrimp, corn on the cob, new potatoes, and sausage. Yum!

For more information: Savannah Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, P.O. Box 1628, Savannah, GA 31402-1628; toll free 1-877-728-2662 or www.savannahvisit.com. On the island: The Tybee Island Visitor Information Center, located on U.S. 80 at the corner of Campbell Avenue, is open 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. daily.

This article is from the July 2002 issue of Southern Living. Because prices, dates, and other specifics are subject to change, please check all information to make sure it's still current before making your travel plans.