



HISTORICAL TRAVEL

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Spanish moss is everywhere in Savannah.

It's the [Spanish moss](#) you notice first. Draped over the live oak trees which fill the many squares in [Savannah, Georgia](#), it hangs in ragged festoons from each of the branches. It creates a mood. A relaxed, sultry, southern mood. A Savannah mood. A pleasant mood that you can enjoy for your entire stay.

Savannah is the largest city in Chatham County, Georgia but still feels like a small, sleepy Southern town – and the hospitality of its residents reinforces this feeling. In

fact, one of Savannah's nicknames is "The Hostess City of the South". Built in 1733, the city of Savannah was the first state capital of Georgia and today Savannah is an industrial center and an important Atlantic seaport.

We had made the jaunt over to Savannah from Tybee Island where we were staying for the week and planned to spend a day exploring this lovely city. Deciding the best way to see the entire city before we set out to explore areas of particular interest, we booked a tour with [Oglethorpe Tours](#).

Since Savannah is perched on the banks of the Savannah River, it seemed only logical to see it from land and water, so we decided on the [Land and Sea package](#) which would include a bus tour of the city as well as a river boat tour. I recommend this choice, as it gave us two completely different views of the city. Many of the tour companies also offer haunted tours of Savannah, a very popular option.



One of the many lovely homes in Savannah.

As we climbed onboard the open-air, blue trolley to begin our tour, the employees suggested we sit on the passenger side for the best view. Unfortunately, they had also made this suggestion to everyone else boarding the trolley, so the passenger side was full. It really did make a difference as far as what you could see of the lovely historical homes and scenic streets, so get onboard first and sit on the passenger side!

Savannah has a humid, subtropical climate and this day in mid-July was no exception – it was really hot and very muggy! But the open-air trolley was very comfortable with a light breeze blowing through and most of the tour took place in areas shaded by the many huge trees so the weather was not really a problem.

There are more than 100 distinct neighborhoods in Savannah but our tour took place in the

Downtown area, which included the Landmark Historic District and Victorian District. Savannah's historic district has 22 squares, which are basically lovely little parks surrounded by gorgeous homes. Each square is different and varies in size, personality and formality.

We drove by the [First African Baptist Church](#), [Juliette Gordon Lowe's](#) birthplace, and many other gorgeous, historic homes, some of which offer tours of their beautifully decorated interiors.

After our tour, the trolley dropped us off at [Savannah's City Market](#). Filled with shops and restaurants, City Market is a great place to stroll around but we were most interested in a restaurant – preferably one with a breezy terrace where we could people-watch and drink a very large glass of sweet Southern iced tea. We found the perfect place when we spotted Belford's.



A cool oasis on a hot day in Savannah.

With a large, shady terrace and a mouth-watering menu, we settled in for a relaxing lunch. Once our food arrived, we realized we could not have possibly made a better choice of a place to eat. My [shrimp po-boy](#), a classic Southern sandwich I have eaten at many a Southern restaurant, was perfect. Fresh bread, lightly breaded shrimp and a delicately seasoned remoulade – it was heaven!

We were tempted by the fabulous desserts on the menu, but we had already spotted a very interesting looking store across the way called [Savannah's Candy Kitchen](#) and what were pretty sure was a sign that said they were offering free praline samples. So we had the perfect Southern dessert – pecan pralines! We tasted, we shopped, and we left with big boxes of pecan pralines and chocolate pecan pralines.



Free pecan praline samples!

My only regret is that I didn't buy a whole lot more to bring home.

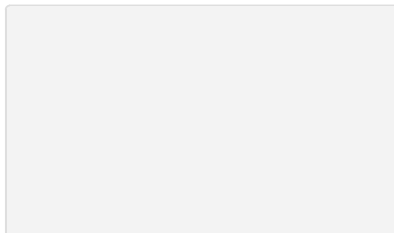
After browsing and shopping a little at City Market, we called Oglethorpe Tours, who had promised to pick us up whenever we called and take us to [River Street](#), where we were going to catch the river boat for the second half of our tour.

True to their word, a little blue trolley showed up quickly and deposited us at River Street, one of the most interesting areas of Savannah. Lined with shops and

restaurants converted from the old cotton warehouses that once provided a livelihood for Savannah residents, the old facades of most of the buildings remain and provide a beautiful and charming area to shop and eat. Wear comfortable walking shoes for River Street because many of the side streets are comprised of [ballast stones](#). Transported in cargo ships as ballast, the stones were then discarded so the ships could fill up with valuable cargo. The enterprising colonists took the stones and built roads and buildings out of them.

After another bout of browsing and shopping, we boarded our river boat for a cruise up and down the Savannah River.

The river boat was large and comfortable with a large viewing area on the top and a nice, air-conditioned area on the main deck – you could take your pick or you could wander back and forth. The cruise itself is not terribly exciting as the Savannah River is a working, industrial river with lots of industry along the banks and tankers making their way out to sea. But it's pleasant and relaxing with



the Captain narrating what you are seeing and telling a little of the history of Savannah.

When the cruise was over, it was time to eat again so we decided to pay a visit to [The Pirate House](#) for dinner. The Pirate House was actually recommended to us by several people as a great place to have lunch as they apparently have a quite fabulous lunch buffet. Dinner worked better for our schedule and ended up being a wise decision as everything we ate was absolutely delicious. We met the rest of our group at the restaurant and my five-year old grandson really enjoyed the whole pirate theme of the place. Provided with his own personal pirate hat, he marveled at the old entrance to a tunnel which ran from the restaurant down to the river. When the restaurant was first established in the early 1700's as an inn for sailors, many an unfortunate grog-drinker found themselves knocked out, dragged through the tunnel, and shanghaied into service on one of the many sailing ships in the harbor.

Now we had seen beautiful Savannah from the land on a trolley and from the river on a riverboat. We had shopped and eaten and spent time marveling at this lovely, Spanish moss festooned city with her truly Southern architecture and hospitality. What a perfect day! But not nearly enough time to see everything.

I think this means, like most other visitors to this charming place, we will just have to pay it another visit. A visit where we have time to truly enjoy her Southern hospitality.



River Street in Savannah.

