

# A kiter's guide to the Lowcountry

**THE SCENE:** With a 63-mile stretch of coast, huge pristine beaches that are perfect for launching, rigging and ground boarding, and nine barrier islands providing a variety of flying spots for any wind direction, Charleston is soaring to the top of the list as far as kiteboarding destinations go. In just a few tacks, you can go from riding waves at low-tide sandbars to kicking on choppy waters to coasting along a flat surface. Depths vary from knee-deep to over head height, making Charleston perfect for all levels.

**HOT SPOTS:** You can launch from Sullivan's Island, Isle of Palms and Folly Beach, the three main beaches in the area. Launching from Sullivan's Island is most popular because the beach is huge and less crowded than the others.

Perhaps the most extreme kiteboarding conditions are found on the three northern barrier islands just north of Isle of Palms: Dewee's, Caper's and Bull islands. Only accessible by boat, the barrier islands are somewhat of a hidden treasure, with conditions running the gamut.

**WIND & WEATHER:** In Charleston, kiting is a yearround sport. Because the coastline is angled, optimal wind directions are cross-shore Southwest (typically steady) followed by Northeast (usually gusty).

Spring boasts steady warm southerly winds averaging 15-25 knots. Summer typically brings afternoon thermals ranging 10-15 knots. Fall and winter offer 15-25 knots but from often gusty north-east fronts.

Offshore hurricanes in late summer and early fall can bring great swells to local beaches, typically providing epic wave-riding conditions, according to The Air Company in Mount Pleasant. However, they can also back off thermals and create some of the worst wind conditions. Charleston kites must depend on strong fronts to generate sustainable winds. Several weeks without good wind is typical late August to early November.

Water temperatures peak in the summer at 27 C/80 F and drop to 10 C/50 F in the winter.

**EXTRACURRICULARS:** In between wave sessions on Sullivan's Island, grab a burger and a cold beer under the sidewalk umbrellas at Poe's Tavern. The local hangout is devoted to the spirit of Edgar Allan Poe, who was stationed on the island while serving in the Army more than 180 years ago. Be sure to check out Fort Moultrie, an active fort during the Revolutionary War.

If you ride north from Sullivan's Island, you'll reach Isle of Palms. Stop by The Windjammer for live music most nights and beach volleyball during the day.

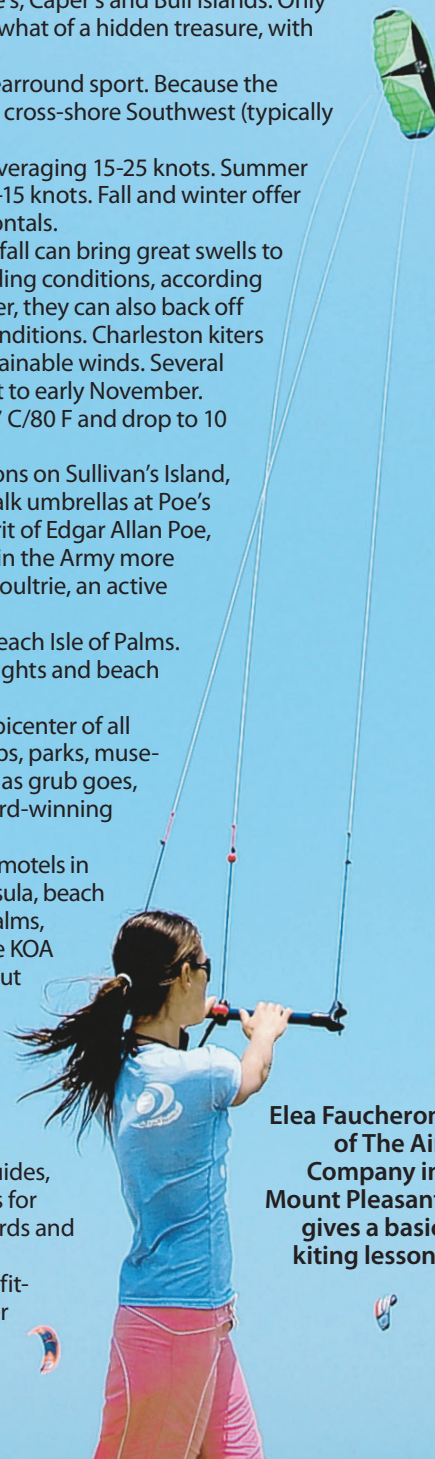
And of course, downtown Charleston is the epicenter of all land activity, with a plethora of shops, bars, clubs, parks, museums, live music, carriage tours and more. As far as grub goes, this city by the sea boasts everything from award-winning cuisine to hole-in-the-wall pubs.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** The options are endless: motels in Mount Pleasant, hotels on the Charleston peninsula, beach homes, condos, villas and cabins on the Isle of Palms, Sullivan's Island or Folly Beach, or camping at the KOA campground. Nightly prices can range from about \$20 for tent camping to more than \$500 for the swankiest bed and breakfast downtown.

**GUIDES & GEAR:** Two local shops carry kiteboarding gear: The Air Company ([www.catchsomeair.us](http://www.catchsomeair.us)) and Half-Moon Outfitters ([www.halfmoonoutfitters.com](http://www.halfmoonoutfitters.com)).

Air is devoted to sport kiting, offering gear, guides, lessons and more, including specialized lessons for women and girls. The store also carries surfboards and its own line of apparel.

Along with kiteboarding gear, Half-Moon Outfitters has you covered if you want to do any other outdoor activities while you're in the area, like kayak, camp, bike or surf.



Elea Faucheron of The Air Company in Mount Pleasant gives a basic kiting lesson.