

# GO

KIAWAH ISLAND • JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE

BY KIM-MARIE EVANS



The light, the sand, even the air, is softer in Kiawah.

## KIAWAH BY THE NUMBERS

- 10 miles of sweeping beaches
- 5,000 acres of marshland
- 305 acres of lakes and ponds
- 123 acres of parks and preserves
- 5 championship golf courses open to the public
- 24 tennis courts
- 6 pools

What makes a perfect island? Warm tropical water ideal for hours of surfing? Check. Towering palm trees, frolicking dolphins and uncrowded beaches where you can wander for miles without seeing another soul? Check. Check. And check. How about a quick ninety-minute flight from JFK? No, we're not talking about Bermuda. We're talking about what's been—up until not too long ago—the best-kept secret of the South. Kiawah Island.

This little gem has managed the nearly impossible; it's become a world-class beach attraction without falling into the tourist trap of cheesy T-shirt shops and souvenir penny squishers. Kiawah is a private island resort, meaning only those who own homes or are staying at the resort have

# Kiawah State of Mind

The writer Pat Conroy famously wrote, "South Carolina is not a state; it is a cult." We couldn't agree more. Its charm takes hold and never lets go

access. It is located just twenty-one miles from the darling of the South, Charleston.

With seven golf courses (five public, two private) on less than ten square miles, Kiawah has become a go-to for the golf set and in 2012 played host to the PGA championships. But if hitting the links isn't your thing, no worries. You can paddleboard with dolphins in the morning, then enjoy a sun-soaked bike ride down the ten-mile beach and settle in for a proper Southern meal by the marsh, where the roasted oysters are delivered by the shovelful and the sweet tea is endless. Here is our beginner's guide to a Southern getaway you won't forget.



The Ocean Course offers golfing with a spectacular view.

## WHERE TO STAY

There is only one hotel on the island, and not surprisingly, it's an award-winner. **The Sanctuary Hotel** is the perfect mix of Southern gentility and beachfront casual. Those looking for more space can rent anything from a one-bedroom condo to a sprawling oceanfront mansion located throughout the resort island. Access to many amenities, including the wildly popular family pools with waterslides and splash zones, is only granted to guests who book through the resort, so keep this in mind when looking at VRBO rentals.

## WHAT TO DO

### H2-OH!

Take a kayak or paddleboard for a leisurely ride through the fragrant salt marshes and out to the **Kiawah River**. The river is tidal and at low tide it's easy to watch the dolphins

strand feed, which means they work as a team to push the fish onto the beach for a fresh lunch. Dolphins can also be seen during any of the motorboat excursions and sunset cruises that depart from the Nature Center.

### GET SPORTY

Though golf may get all the glory, tennis on Kiawah is no forgotten stepsister. **The tennis program has been rated No. 1 in the world for many years running and offers everything from an afternoon lesson to weekend-long tennis camps for women.** Rent a bike and take a ride on the beach or along the more than thirty miles of bike trails that meander through the island.

### HANG TEN

The combination of gentle waves and warm water make this an ideal place to learn to surf. Book a private lesson through **Carolina Salt Surf Lessons** and former pro



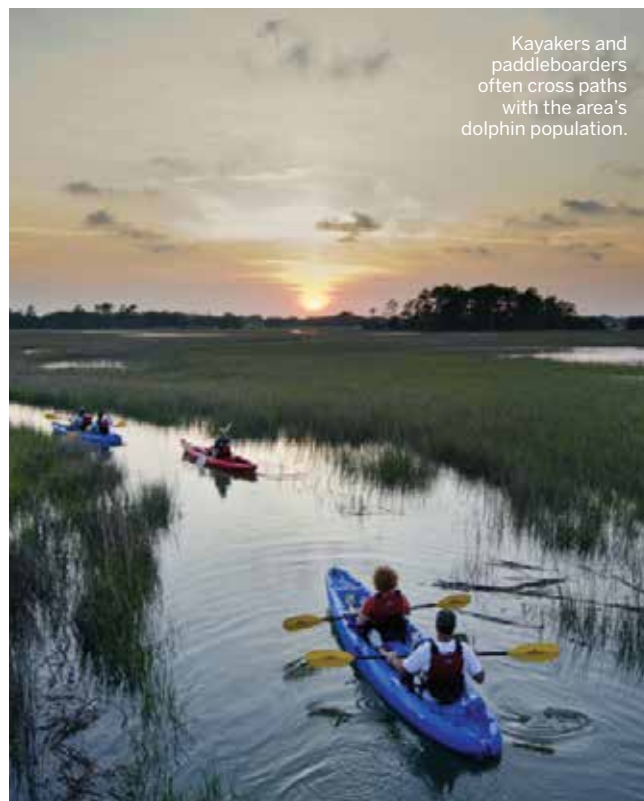
Kids hit the docks at Bohicket Marina for the weekly fishing contest.

**Kyle will meet you at the spot of your choice and bring a soft board and photographer.** He guarantees you'll stand up on the board or your money back. **Take the kids to nearby Eden Wind Farm for a morning of "horse buddies."** For \$85 your budding horseman will learn to groom, tack and ride a friendly school horse.

### HERE, FISHY FISHY

Channel your inner Quint (for all you *Jaws* junkies) and

head out on a shark fishing expedition (safe for kids, we promise). Join a crabbing excursion or just go the DIY route and drop a chicken leg tied to some string in one of the many ponds where crabbing is not only allowed, but a rite of passage. **There is a kids' fishing tournament every Wednesday during the summer months at nearby Bohicket Marina. For \$5 you get a line, some bait and a chance to win free ice cream.**

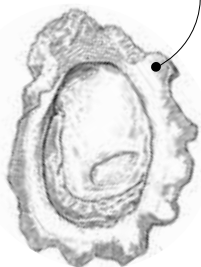


Kayakers and paddleboarders often cross paths with the area's dolphin population.

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STATE OF MIND

Oyster season in South Carolina runs from September through April.



## DON'T MISS

### Mingo Point

**Oyster Roast:** Every Monday night this Southern barbecue spot serves up **fire-roasted oysters, ribs, collard greens, pecan pie and more.** Live music and a view of the river complete the vibe. A little advice: Skip lunch that day because you'll want to eat it all. **Movie**

**Under the Stars:** On Thursday nights The Sanctuary Hotel sets up an outdoor movie screen and projects a family-friendly movie complete with popcorn and snowcones.

**Nonhotel guests are welcome and there is a full bar. Bagger Vance Photo Opp:**

Even if you don't play golf, the Ocean Course is not to be missed. It boasts the most oceanfront holes of any course in the Northern Hemisphere and **was the site for the movie *Bagger Vance*.** As the sun sets, families in seersucker and shorts gather on the porch to enjoy ice-cold drinks with a view of the putting green and ocean.



# Tough Beauty

Jeep's Grand Cherokee has some serious polish

### JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE

**Base price:** \$39,585

**As tested:** \$46,415

**Drivetrain:** 295-hp, 3.6-liter V6 w/four-wheel drive

**EPA Mileage Ratings:** 18/25 mpg

The fortunes of the Jeep brand continue to rise. About half a million Jeeps are sold annually now, and the upgrades have been poured on like liquid silver. The upper-crust Grand Cherokee Limited model we tested could easily be parked at the most sniffling of country clubs, and yet it wouldn't be out of place in the rougher part of the forest or the city.

Whereas its crosstown rival, the Ford Explorer, is now going heartily toward a more sumptuous manner, the Grand Cherokee has a slightly firmer feel. The four-wheel-drive system is both capable and unobtrusive. It tracks well in the curvy stuff and has a direct sort of responsiveness. One interesting option is the Quadra-Lift air suspension, with which your Jeep rises higher out in the brambles, then squats lower for curbside loading or highway cruising.

The normal V6 engine—aided by an eight-speed automatic—averages 23 mpg, good enough so that customers are bypassing the thrifty diesel option. If towing was part of the plan, one would

go for the burly Hemi engine. If lightning-strike acceleration was the desire, then put in an order for the outrageous, 707-horsepower Hellcat version. And keep your lawyer's card handy.

The stitched-leather interiors far exceed the cabins of Jeeps from a decade ago and can be had in cool color schemes, like the striking black-and-dark-sienna-brown combo. You get two rows of seating and a lot of luggage space. Three-row models will not be available until the planned-for return of the Wagoneer.

Speaking of Jeep models, the funky-clunky, more elemental Wrangler model is still a huge, sentimental favorite these days. "Fifty percent of the Wranglers I've sold have gone to Wall Street guys," says Josh Summers, sales rep at SCAP Jeep in Fairfield. Yet for all the entertaining, return-to-youth vigor of a Wrangler, our money would be on the glistening Grand Cherokee. Against its European competitors, it might actually be less money, too, which makes it all the more beautiful. —Chris Hodenfield