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To: Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov
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Subject: Spotighting: Asheville, Blowing Rock, Hilton Head Island, Hillsboro, Charleston

February 3, 2015

Below: Zoom around one of America's favorite towns, Try Tibetan Peach Pie, Eat and play golf, go Gullah, forged with steel, best towns, great bread.

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LaZoom Tours | Asheville, NC

Wacky and Wonderful

OK, the purple bus is the first clue that this is not your grandmother's town tour. It's a bit quirky, for sure, but even locals rave about learning new tidbits about Asheville. LaZoom Tours has recently received Trip Advisor's certificate of excellence, and garnered great reviews as well.

The tour guides are informed entertainers who showcase the considerable charms of Asheville, recently named, "Quirkiest City in America" by *Travel + Leisure* magazine. Jen and Jim Lauzon are the owners of La Zoom, and share their love for the city with every tour.

These adventures are interactive, with surprise guests along the way. Folks on the tour will learn a bit of history, a bit of culture, and enjoy a lot of laughter, with crazy comedy and

more.

The city tour isn't the only offering from this innovative group of entertainer/historians. In the evening, LaZoom offers a Haunted Comedy Bus Tour. Guides Helena Handbasket and Ghoulish Gary share local tales of scandals, deceit, murder and ghosts – plus a bit of bawdy humor.

In November and December, La Zoom offers a special holiday tour, providing a seasonal spin through the city, welcoming visitors such as little Lonesome Pine Tree and a traveling Gingerbread Man. They have quite the cast of characters available and they're not afraid to share them with lucky tour participants.

WOW Factor: Ever been on a tour that allows you to bring your own adult beverages? We haven't, but must admit we're intrigued at the prospect of hopping on the bus with a tiny cooler – reminiscent of time spent at a comedy theatre. There's even a thoughtful rest stop – at a local brewery. Read the reviews. You'll see the word "laughter" repeated a dozen times.

Hint: The staid and world-weary probably won't enjoy the tour as much as others who can let their inner child out to play occasionally. Cost is reasonable (\$19-\$24, plus tax), and you must be 13 or older to ride. Take your camera and your sense of humor.

Call 828.225.6932. | www.lazoomtours.com

The Most Dangerous Writer in the World*

Tom Robbins

Born July 22, 1932

You know you want to read *Tibetan Peach Pie*, Tom Robbins memoir of a life most interestingly lived and being lived, still.

The acclaimed author developed almost a cult following publication of his first book at age 39, *Another Roadside Attraction*. After that came *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, *Still Life with Woodpecker* and *Jitterbug Perfume*. If you weren't familiar with his work during the 70s and 80s, you missed an important voice that helped shape a generation – my generation.

He was born in Blowing Rock, NC. Both grandfathers were Baptist preachers. He called himself a hillbilly, even though he spent most of his formative years in Richmond Virginia. He attended Hargrave Military Academy, then Washington and Lee University, majoring in journalism.

Discoveries for 2015

Hello Gerry,

Winter's winding down here in the Carolinas, and with Spring only weeks away, it's time to make plans for adventure.

We've got recommended restaurants, inns, shops, festivals, special events and quirky ideas to amuse and intrigue you, including:

A rollicking tour in one of America's favorite towns;

The North Carolina author whose name is synonymous with the 70s;

A month-long Gullah Celebration in Hilton Head;

Useful knives, elevated to art, coming to you from Hillsboro;

Golf and great cuisine – what bliss

Top towns from CarolinaLiving.com readers.

Now's the perfect time to make plans.

For those of you hip-deep in snow, we're already checking out the seed catalogues for heirloom tomatoes and organic lettuce.

Of course, more tax incentives as well as real estate bonanzas sweeten the idea that maybe, with construction on the rise and job listings on the upswing, it's your time to relocate, retire or acquire that Carolina vacation investment deal. Click here for links to [Retirement Living & Real Estate Tips](#), but don't leave without checking out our 43 Carolina Road Trips in the mountains, along the coast, in our rolling heartlands. Good times!

Then, there's always [CarolinaLiving.com](#) showcasing 90 town

He left the university after his sophomore year, enlisted in the Air Force, spent a year in Korea, then after two more years in Nebraska, left the military and eventually found his way to what is known today as VCU. He clearly found himself, because he graduated with honors.

Then followed adventures – hitchhiking, moving to Seattle, hosting a radio show, working as art critic, and eventually finding his literary voice. He published articles in *Esquire* and *Playboy* as well as novels that some called wickedly

funny.

In 2000, he was named one of the 100 Best Writers of the 20th Century. An interview on AuthorsRoad.com offers this gem of a quote from the man:

“My goal has been to twine ideas and images into big subversive pretzels of life, death and goofiness on the chance they might help keep the world lively and give it the flexibility to endure.”

Google him and you'll find no website, but you will find blog after blog where writers speak nostalgically of reading his books for the first time.

He spent much of his adult life in Seattle, where he still owns a home. (Go to [Seattletimes.com](#) and search for his delicious interview with Mary Ann Gwinn.) According to Wikipedia, he's been married to Alexa D'Avalon since 1987. His dog is named Blini Tomato Titanium. He has three sons from previous marriages, Rip, Kirk, and Fleetwood. Take it all with a grain of salt – and maybe a shot of tequila.

**According to Italian Critic Fernanda Pivano*

Golf in Charleston: You'll Eat It Up

By Larry Gavrish

Ask any east coast golfer for the top golf destination this side of the Mississippi, and he or she is likely to say Myrtle Beach or Pinehurst or, perhaps, the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail in Alabama. Charleston, one of the South's iconic cities, typically doesn't rate up there on “best of” golf lists ... until now. The International Association of Golf Tour Operators, whose name suggests a worldly bunch of golf aficionados, has named Charleston its Golf Destination of the Year for 2015 ... as “in the World!” The group announced the choice in Lake Como, Italy, at its annual meeting (nice work if you can get it).

profiles & [Tax Facts](#) ... all guaranteed to guide you straight.

Wishing you happy travels and just maybe, a new Carolina slice of heaven to call your own in 2015!

All the Best,

[Leyla & Patrick Mason](#)
Co-Founders,

PS: Register here for the new and free [CarolinaLiving.com](#) Guide!

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40 Top Towns

Chosen by 5,000 readers of [CarolinaLiving.com](#)

Large cities, small communities, towns along the coast, in the heartlands, near the mountains. Start your exploration by checking the top choices of our readers. Then branch out and find how many towns are visit-worthy.

[Top Towns.](#)

[The New Guide is Here.](#)

[Insider Tips](#) on Charleston Golf and Dining

Photo: Seabrook Island Club

Carolina Creatives

Shucking with Style

Put these babies on your wish list.

Michael Waller and Kurt Davis have been friends forever. They graduated from East Carolina University, in Greenville, NC, and worked in various arts (always metal), until they met up at an oyster roast in 2010. Both had forged personal oyster knives. Everyone loved the super cool, efficient implements. A business was born.

Fast-forward to a thriving enterprise. Their knives and other products are sold through their [website](#), retail outlets such as Southern Season, in Charleston, SC, Chapel Hill, NC and Richmond VA, and at a variety of outdoor shows.

The two have partnered with Vivian Howard, star of the award-winning *A Chef's Life* for special knives, and North Carolina's *Our State* magazine featured an oyster knife for their holiday offerings.

Seldom does a utilitarian object become a work of art. In the South, where brides-to-be often put oyster knives on their bridal registries, these beauties will be treasured gifts.

A Month-long Celebration

Updated town information, six fun new Carolina Adventures, and one heck of a good-looking water story. Order yours today.

[Click here](#) for the official hold-in-your-hand Guide to Carolina lifestyle fun and adventure trips, plus real estate tips, tax & cost-of-living advantages, retirement opportunities and town profiles.

Just share your dream goals and we'll help lead you to smart Carolina life and times.

Facebook

A Better Winter

Winter in the South.

Movies, good books, roaring fires, long walks, year-round golf, Lowcountry stews. Share your favorite ways to embrace the (relatively mild) chill in the air. And please, like us on [Facebook](#).

Heading your way twice a month

- Let's Take a Road Trip!
- Carolina Famous Faces
- Insider Attractions
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All Things Gullah

The Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration, February 1-28, showcases the rich cultural heritage of the Gullah people and their history on Hilton Head Island. Programs include a variety of events designed to attract local residents, regional, national and international travelers. The Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration has been recognized by the Southeast Tourism Society as one of the Top 20 Events in the Southeast.

Visitors have an opportunity to experience the food and music, receive firsthand, historical information and take a journey through the culture via the visual arts.

A Taste of Gullah, held February 7, features authentic Gullah dishes such as Okra Gumbo, Conch Stew, fried shrimp dusted in traditional Gullah seasonings and classic barbecue favorites like char-grilled chicken and ribs.

Entertainment includes storytellers, African dance and Gospel music. Gospel concerts feature gospel music, Negro spirituals and highlight the history of music as it developed among the Gullah people.

An Arts, Crafts & Food Expo is being held February 14-15. February on Hilton Head Island is generally mild and bustling with activity. Learn more about [Hilton Head Island](#).

www.gullahcelebration.com

Pictured above: 2015 Gullah Celebration Poster; artist Sonnal Thompson

Carolina Cuisine

The Bread of Life

For those who enjoy a bit of history with their sustenance, Carolina Rice Bread gives you both. Almost a lost art in today's culinary world, rice bread was a staple in early Carolina homes (especially the rice plantations). Wheat was exorbitantly expensive. Rice? Not so much.

Enter the creative folks at Anson Mills who have revitalized [Carolina Rice Bread](#) with great results. Let us warn you. This isn't an easy recipe. You'll need a kitchen scale and a terra cotta pot, among other items. You'll also need time and patience.

When the deed is done, you'll have a fine loaf to share with friends,
or devour on your own. Enjoy!

www.carolinalive.com phone 803.782.7466
4201 Blossom Street Columbia, SC 29205-2850

Compiled by Katherine O. Pettit • Designed by Ann Dolin

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