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To: Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov
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Subject: Spotlighting: Aiken | Outer Banks | Charleston | Asheville | Stagville

February 12, 2015

Below: Horses, houses, history, 12-mile reach, Downton in America, tell me a story, behind the big house, try a little Tolerance

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Take a Road Trip to Aiken

There aren't many small towns with the charms of Aiken. History, opulence, grandeur, recreation, inner city forest, equestrian excellence, and arts and culture for all.

It's easy to reach, but hard to leave. Come join us for a great road trip that may leave you breathless for a full-blown vacation, and perhaps a more permanent connection.

[Read more.](#)

Where in the Carolina World are You?

Guarding all vessels

Some folks have memorized the distinctive markings which appear on all North Carolina lighthouses. The diamonds on this historic icon invite landlubbers to come aboard and climb up toward heaven (in Summer). The views of land and sea are breathtaking.

For those up to 12 miles out to sea, that flashing light is a thing of beauty and comfort.

Where are you?

Downton Abbey at Biltmore

New Exhibit brings Visitors Up Close to Life in the Day

Biltmore House becomes the canvas for an exhibition of more than 40 elaborate costumes from the PBS Masterpiece series “Downton Abbey.” Open now and continuing through Memorial Day, May 25, the “Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times” exhibition juxtaposes elements of the fictional TV series and the real lives of the Vanderbilts who lived in Biltmore House during the same early 20th century era. Admission to the exhibition is included in the price of regular estate ticket purchases.

Themes explored include; the evolution of fashion, nuances of etiquette, changing roles of women, and the life of service staff.

Biltmore bears striking resemblance to the series' setting and the way of life at Highclere Castle, making it easy for visitors to blur storylines and experience for themselves a bit of life a hundred years ago. "The day-to-day running of Biltmore House was surprisingly similar to what's depicted on 'Downton Abbey,'" says

Biltmore's Director of Museum Services Ellen Rickman. "Just like Downton has Mr. Carson and Mrs. Hughes, Biltmore had its own cast of fascinating characters. Displaying these fabulous costumes from the show gives us an unparalleled opportunity to delve into Biltmore's stories."

Complementing the exhibition, visitors can take advantage of the following estate-wide special offerings:

New Biltmore historic audio and printed guides

Behind-the-scenes guided "Upstairs – Downstairs Tour"

Themed dining and a rooftop reception

"Dressing Downton" hotel package | The Inn on Biltmore Estate

About Biltmore. Located in Asheville, North Carolina, Biltmore was the vision of George W. Vanderbilt. Designed by Richard Morris Hunt, America's largest home is a 250-room French Renaissance chateau, exhibiting the Vanderbilt family's original collection of furnishings, art and antiques. To learn more about Biltmore, go to Biltmore.com or call 877-BILTMORE.

Top image: Downton Abbey (PBS) Season 1, 2010. Shown from left: Hugh Bonneville, Elizabeth McGovern. ©Carnival Films

Bottom image: Two curators from Biltmore's Museum Services Department move a green dress worn by actress Maggie Smith, Violet Crawley, Dowager Countess of Grantham. Courtesy: The Biltmore Company

Good times ahead

Hello Tony,

We're sharing Carolinas' best for the month of February. Winter-friendly getaways for all tastes, including history, culture, year-round outdoor fun, and that's just for starters!

Bookmark recommended restaurants, inns, shops, special events and historic homes to amuse and enlighten.

And there's more:

A road trip to Aiken, the quintessential small town with big amenities;

Beautiful winter blooms to lift your chill-weary spirits;

The art of the story – the world's best will delight and entertain you;

Carolina Home Grown

No Regrets

by Robert F. Polomski, Ph.D.
Horticulturist/Lecturer • Clemson University

A bit of England's hugely popular export here, across the pond;

One of the South's largest plantations – open and eager to see you;

A hot toddy for your body – Charleston's new distillery delivers!

Now's the perfect time to make plans, because affordable getaways beckon and we're out having fun. The festivals are already rolling and the glorious Carolinas weather will entice us all to spend more time outdoors.

Yes to tax incentives, real estate bonanzas -- they sweeten the idea that maybe, with job listings abundant, it's your time to relocate, retire or acquire that Carolina vacation investment deal. Click here for links to [Retirement Living](#) & [Real Estate Tips](#). Good times!

Then, there's always [CarolinaLiving.com](#) showcasing 90 town profiles & [Tax Facts](#) but don't leave without checking out 43 [Carolina Road Trips](#), and 63 [Carolina Adventures](#).

All the Best,

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

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

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The New Guide is Here.

Continuing last month's conversation about Winter, I'm always happier when I see winter blooms and these are certainly worth consideration.

One of my favorite winter-flowering shrubs is winter daphne (*Daphne odora*). This tight-mounding evergreen shrub typically grows up to four feet with a wider spread. The glossy leaves make winter daphne attractive year-round, especially variegated cultivars such as 'Aureomarginata' and 'Variegata.'

This plant is absolutely breathtaking from February to March when it blooms. The white trumpet-shaped flowers with purple exteriors appear in clusters at ends of its branches and produce an intoxicating scent that permeates the surroundings. Sprigs can be cut and enjoyed indoors.

Despite these outstanding attributes, many critics contend that winter daphne is a temperamental plant with a questionable longevity in the landscape. I agree that it dislikes transplanting, so select a permanent spot in the garden because she doesn't like to be moved. It should be a well-drained location that's sheltered from afternoon sun. As to its longevity, I agree that in some cases it's not a longlived plant. Out of eight plants, only six lived for eight years (longer than most celebrity marriages). But trust me, they were eight fabulous years--and I have no regrets.

Learn more about Carolina gardening from Dr. Polomski's new book, [Carolinas Month by Month Gardening](#). Available wherever books are sold.

Tell Us a Story

"To be a person is to have a story to tell." – Isak Dinesen

Love a good story? We do, too, and you'll hear some of the world's best at Charleston Tells Storytelling Festival. Act now to take advantage of the Early Bird Discount for the upcoming *Charleston Tells Storytelling Festival*, March 13-14, 2015 in Wragg Square, downtown Charleston.

You'll enjoy a weekend of awesome performances from some of the best international, national and regional storytellers with tales that reminisce about childhood, tickle your funny bone and transport you to another place and time.

More than 40 performances are set for the two days. Children under 12 are free when accompanied by an adult.
[Charleston Tells.](#)

Carolina Cuisine

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

We ♥ Valentine's
Day Cards, flowers,
chocolates, jewelry?
Her favorite movie, his favorite meal?

How do you make your Valentine feel special? Share your g-rated stories on [Facebook](#).

Let's have a Little Tolerance!

Sometimes, a hot toddy is the perfect antidote to braving our 50 degree winters (well, it's cold to us!). When we heard about the new ginger-cinnamon liqueur from Charleston Distilling Company, we had to give it a try. It delivered. It tastes good, and feels better going down. This spice is nice!

So put [Tolerance Cider](#) in your home bartending repertoire. For now, you'll have to visit South Carolina to find it. But that's not a bad thing, now is it?

Celebrating Black History Month

The Back Story at Historic Stagville

Located in Durham, Historic Stagville comprises the remnants of one of the largest plantations of the pre-Civil War South.

The plantations belonged to the Bennehan-Cameron family, whose combined holdings totaled

approximately 900 slaves and almost 30,000 acres of land by 1860.

Stagville offers a view of the past, especially that of its African American community, by allowing visitors to guide themselves around its extensive grounds. In addition, Stagville offers the public many learning opportunities.

There is no charge to visit, but visit the [website](#) and check ahead for tour times and special events.

Photo from www.stagville.org; courtesy of Reed Lovick of WRL Photography

Heading your way twice a month

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