

## Smart Traveler

### [Checking In] Don George

Lonely Planet's travel editor has compiled an anthology of true stories of on-the-road friendliness in *The Kindness of Strangers*.

» **Why stories about being nice?** Kindness is easier to see when you're removed from your everyday context. Travel forces us to rely more on others, and the truth we learn is that **our planet is a friendly place**. People want to be good to one another—regardless of their background, religion, or culture.

» **Which stories are your favorites?** Naturally, I think they're all good. Jan Morris writes about being **rescued from a muddy pothole in St. Petersburg**. Pico Iyer befriends a philosophical trishaw driver in Mandalay. Simon Winchester enters a "state of grace" thanks to a spirited vicar on remote Ascension Island.

» **Are some places kinder than other places?** Destinations are not kind to strangers; people are. Some cultures may cultivate warmer interaction, but **kindness itself transcends place and culture**.

» **Where have you experienced this?** Locals have gone out of their way to help me in each of the 70-plus countries I've been to. A Greek family included my family in its Easter celebration; a Japanese trucker detoured an hour to drive me to a tiny village; a **young boy in Cairo led me by the hand** from a sinister neighborhood; a Kenyan craftsman gave me a carving he'd just made. I now find myself going out of my way to help people, in gratitude for the kindness that's been extended to me.

» **What's the lesson of your book?** We're all interconnected on life's journey, and **kindness is ours to withhold or bestow**. If we live every day with kindness, we create a more graceful world. —George W. Stone

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Source: Rankings based on advance bookings provided by Expedia, Travelocity, and Orbitz.



Southern charm: Locals pass the time at 39 Rue de Jean.

### [Neighborhood Watch]

## ChoHo, Charleston, SC

It's been almost 15 years since Hurricane Hugo sacked the Holy City. The storm decimated Charleston, but the town righted itself and returned to its gracious ways. An exception: the neighborhoods north of Calhoun Street, which remained neglected. But in the past three years things have changed. The shopping corridor has blossomed with home furnishings stores and eclectic eateries. Demure Charleston has discovered it has its own SoHo—ChoHo—in its midst.

» **Marion Square** (King and Calhoun Streets) The ten-acre city park and former parade grounds is a neighborhood favorite. On most Saturdays it hosts Charleston's Farmers Market, where locals shop for produce and view cultural performances.

» **39 Rue de Jean** (39 John St.) A flickering gas lamp marks this French bistro with belle epoque woodwork, gilded mirrors, and, charmingly, sushi. A hamburger topped with Roquefort and served with fries and a glass of the house red will run you \$15.

» **Circa Lighting** (441 King St.) Circa hawks lumina-tion inspired by the city's antebellum traditions—delicate chandeliers to wrought-iron lanterns—as well as sleekly modern lamps.

» **Gracie Mansion Café** (432 King St.) This low-key weekend brunch spot offers buttermilk biscuits and three-egg omelets dished out in neighborly fashion.

» **Fish** (442 King St.) Available: whatever's just flopped in from the docks. This restaurant is known for its simple dishes made with fresh Low Country ingredients: soft-shelled crabs, oysters, fried green tomatoes.

» **Juanita Greenberg's** (439 King St.) It seems more of a bar than a restaurant, but that doesn't stop locals, especially the neighboring College of Charleston crowd, from munching on the cheap Mexican burritos, nachos, and quesadillas.

» **Embassy Suites** (337 Meeting St.) Travelers can now bunk in the rooms that in the 19th century housed cadets of the famed military school the Citadel. The pink-plastered, crenellated castle is a local landmark that offers comfortable suites, though the windows (actually the old gun ports) are too high to see much from. Rates start at \$139. —Andrew Nelson

**Location:** The spine of the neighborhood (known formally as the Uptown Charleston District) is Upper King Street north of Calhoun Street up to Spring Street. King Street has metered parking. A pay parking lot is available at Charleston's Visitor Center, just east of King Street.



Gullah dance at the Farmers Market.