

kind of creepy-looking only because of, you know, the history of the whole thing. But it's really beautiful. All of the houses down in that area, if you're into architecture, are really fantastic. There are a lot of different architectural influences: Italianate, classical, Greek Revival. It's a real mix. You think there are going to be these sort of antebellum mansions there, and they're really not.

For breakfast, I understand, it's Clary's Café, where John Berendt found so many great characters. Clary's is, like, the oldest joint there. It's not just breakfast. You can also get dinner. But it's kind of known for its breakfast. My wife said she had the best Georgia-pecan pancakes she ever had in her entire life there. They also do real traditional stuff. I'm not a biscuits-and-gravy kind of guy, but that is where I sampled biscuits and gravy, and it can make a believer out of you.

What's one main attraction of Savannah? Well, Bonaventure Cemetery is the place that housed the statue the *Bird Girl*, which is a very famous, if not slightly disturbing, statue [now housed in the Telfair Museum of Art]. It was originally photographed by Jack Leigh, who has a gallery there. I've been to the gallery. It's a really kind of famous place to go. They have really good art for sale.

So what did you do in the cemetery? Or what did you see? They have, I think, 60, maybe 70 ghost tours down in Savannah. If that's what floats your boat, you've hit the jackpot in terms of the spirit world. I don't think there are as many ghosts in the world as they have these tours for them. It's a big business. They will definitely take you around these various cemeteries and give you the history. But people are spotting the paranormal activity going on pretty much in every corner of the city.

I've heard there are haunting tours, Old Town trolleys, Savannah spirits, a pub crawl ... Every kind of creepy, paranormal, freaky, spooky experience you'd want to have is available. For a price. The cemetery I remember best is Colonial Park. The history there is amazing because it's not like Los Angeles, where

you see, you know, here lies so-and-so from 1935 to '74. This is all, like, eighteenth-century stuff. The weird thing is that a lot of the locals in the evening hour will show up there in the park with their dogs and allow the dogs to run free and kind of get their evening exercise — and the locals will pop open a canteen of their favorite evening cocktail. They are very, very nice people, and they all sit around and have a cocktail and watch the dogs running around in the cemetery. It's one of the more surreal dog parks in the country, if not the world. My dog, actually, was not used to gravestones in the parks that he plays in and ran headfirst into a gravestone at about 20 miles an hour. We had to take him to a local vet with the help of some friendly Savannah citizens.

Do you think he was chasing a ghost or something? Could have been. You never know with my dog. He's been seeing ghosts ever since he was born.

Okay, that's enough about ghosts. Is there any shopping in Savannah that you'd like to speak about? They've really got incredible antiques, and the art scene is very, very cool. There's SCAD, which is the Savannah College of Art and Design. So they have always got pieces by young up-and-coming artists on display throughout the downtown area. In fact, I bought a painting there. I saw a painting called *The Horrible Dog* that I really liked and decided to buy it the next day. It was just a freaky-looking hound. I did one of those things where I said, "Yeah, I'll wait until tomorrow." I showed up the next day, and it had the dreaded red dot on it. It had been purchased. I was, like, "You're kidding me. Who bought this?!" And the woman said, "Well, I believe it was Keanu Reeves," who was doing *The Gift* as well. He had come in that morning, just totally coincidentally, and bought it. So, of course, I was sad. I was bemoaning the fact that he had stolen this incredible painting, *The Horrible Dog*, right out from underneath me. But on the last day of shooting, wrapped up in my trailer with a little bow on it was *The Horrible Dog*. Just to give you some indication of what a decent fellow Mr. Reeves is.

Sapphire Grill



He Said...

Where Savannah's spirits took Greg Kinnear

DINING

Clary's Café, American, inexpensive, (912) 351-0302

Il Pasticcio Restaurant and Wine Bar, Italian, expensive, (912) 231-8888

Sapphire Grill, American, expensive, (912) 443-9962

SIGHTS

Bonaventure Cemetery, 330 Bonaventure Road, (912) 651-6843

City Market, (912) 232-4903, www.savannahcitymarket.com

Colonial Park Cemetery, Abercorn Street and Oglethorpe Avenue

Forsyth Park, (912) 351-3837

Jack Leigh Gallery, (912) 234-6449

Mercer Williams House, (877) 430-6352

River Street, (912) 234-0295, www.riverstreet.savannah.com

Savannah College of Art and Design, (912) 525-5000

Tidholm (the Big Chill house), 1 Laurens Street, Beaufort, South Carolina

Tybee Island Light Station, (912) 786-5801, www.tybeelighthouse.org

GHOST TOURS

Hauntings Tour, (912) 234-3571

Savannah Spirits Pub Crawl, (912) 604-3007

GOLF

Harbour Town Golf Links at Sea Pines Resort, (888) 807-6873

NIGHTLIFE

Moon River Brewing Company, brewpub, (912) 447-0943

We Said... Where Savannah's spirits took us

LODGING

Azalea Inn & Gardens, moderate, (912) 236-2707. Gardens are synonymous with Savannah, and the lush landscaping at this circa-1889 Italianate inn does not disappoint. Neither do any of its 10 well-appointed rooms, some with two-person tubs, private patios overlooking the pool, gas fireplaces, and more. Ask about their special biz rates.

Thunderbird Inn, inexpensive, (912) 232-2661. The name, and even the sign, suggests one of the roadside motels Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman might have stayed in on their cross-country *Rain Man* trek. But the Thunderbird has been reworked for the aughts and now features chic all-white liners on its pillow-top beds, free in-room Internet access, and the like.

DINING

Queen's to Go-Go, inexpensive to moderate, (912) 443-0888. We're sold on soul food, particularly Queen's owner John H. Baker III's flavorful fare, from the fried green tomatoes with goat cheese and roasted red-pepper sauce to the shrimp and grits with ham gravy. But don't let the name fool you; there's both indoor and outdoor seating at this former filling station.

Soho South Café, inexpensive, (912) 233-1633. At the pace a meal moves here, you might think Savannah was on an island in the Caribbean, but we prefer to think of it as having plenty of time to savor Soho's yummy menu items, like the tomato-basil bisque, meat-

loaf sandwich, and banana pudding. Located inside the Savannah Fine Arts Gallery, Soho South lives up to its claim, "Where food is an art."

SHOPPING

ShopSCAD, (912) 525-5180. Kinnear mentioned the Savannah College of Art and Design, which comprises more than 50 buildings scattered throughout the historic district, but we love its fabulous boutique — featuring the work of SCAD students, faculty, and alumni — so much that we thought it was worth singling out. (FYI: Can't make it to campus? Check them out online at www.shopscadonline.com.)

ATTRACTIONS

Skidaway Island Institute of Oceanography, (912) 598-2400. Just 16 miles south of downtown is an area of estuaries, marshes, and barrier islands that house this leading research institute. Tours of SkIO's laboratories and, when it's in port, its 92-foot research vessel, are offered on the last Friday of most months.

OUTDOORS

McQueen's Island Historic Trail, (912) 652-6780. Lace up your jogging shoes or strap on your bike helmet for a trip along this scenic six-mile pathway, which happens to have been Georgia's first rails-to-trails conversion.

Where can you find the spirit of the city? A cool area downtown is called City Market, right on the river. It used to be a bunch of warehouses, kind of cotton mills and stuff, which they essentially transformed into these little studios and galleries, shops, restaurants, some nightclubs. It's a big area. They have a great Sunday market that's mostly local vendors who have great little arts and crafts, things like that. River Street, that's another kind of thing. They have something called First Saturday, which is kind of like a bazaar of local people who sell different things. It's a great way to burn off a Saturday morning with a cup of coffee. And if you have a hangover, that's okay too.

Where did you eat? There are a couple of great places. Il Pasticcio, which is on Broughton Street, is a great Italian spot. It's very loved down there now, but I was there when it had kind of just opened. I'd like to point out to the jury that I was loving it way before the food critics jumped on board and said they were loving it. Everything is very fresh, and it's very contemporary Italian. They were

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always playing around with dishes that were just a little ahead of a conventional Italian restaurant. Sapphire Grill — that's a great place to get a drink, and also it has very good food. Sapphire Grill is darker; it has a really cool atmosphere, great music, and American cuisine.

Savannah is legendary for its carefree spirit. Did you discover any great bars or taverns? Moon River Brewing Company. They brew their own beer. I think it's one of the biggest breweries in the South. Just a real eclectic mix of great beer and ale, if you're into that, which I kind of am. That was a spot we would frequent.


Is there a place to get near the water outside of town? I almost took a house at a place called Tybee Island, this fantastic island that is out on the coast. There's a great lighthouse there, Tybee Island Light Station — historic, one of the oldest in the country. It's beautiful, and you can tour it. Not to get "Henry historical" here, but when they settled the place, they almost were going to make that the first part of the settlement. But it's all very marshy and wet, so that's why they came in on the river about 15 miles and settled Savannah where it is now. But Tybee Island has these incredible chalk-white beaches and great old houses. I mean, they are just absolutely beautiful. You can jet-ski, you can fish. I'm into kayaking a little bit, and there are a few great rental spots where you can get kayaks and shoot out any which way. You have to be a little careful.

Where else do you like to go outside of Savannah? Another great day trip from Savannah is to Beaufort, South Carolina, where they filmed *The Big Chill*. I went to the house where the movie was filmed, because I love that movie, and the house sits right on a big bluff. That's a beautiful little town, probably only 35 minutes up the road. We had lunch overlooking the water. Then we went on to do what was really important — golf — which was another 10-minute drive onto Hilton Head Island. They have a huge PGA event there, the Harbour Town Golf Links at Sea Pines Resort — an unbelievable course set up on the inland coast. If you're a golfer, Hilton Head Island is one of the top golf destinations in the country. I don't know how many courses there are, but they

are all pretty staggering. Mostly par-fours. If you don't have a decent 56-degree wedge in your bag, do not stop at this course. It's not tremendously long, but it demands real skill. Which is why I hate it.

Anything else? They have fantastic deep-sea fishing off the coast. In less than 15 minutes, you can be in some very active water.

Did you do it? Oh yeah. And I caught a 385-pound tuna.

Did you really? No, but it would be a great story. 

www.americanwaymag.com

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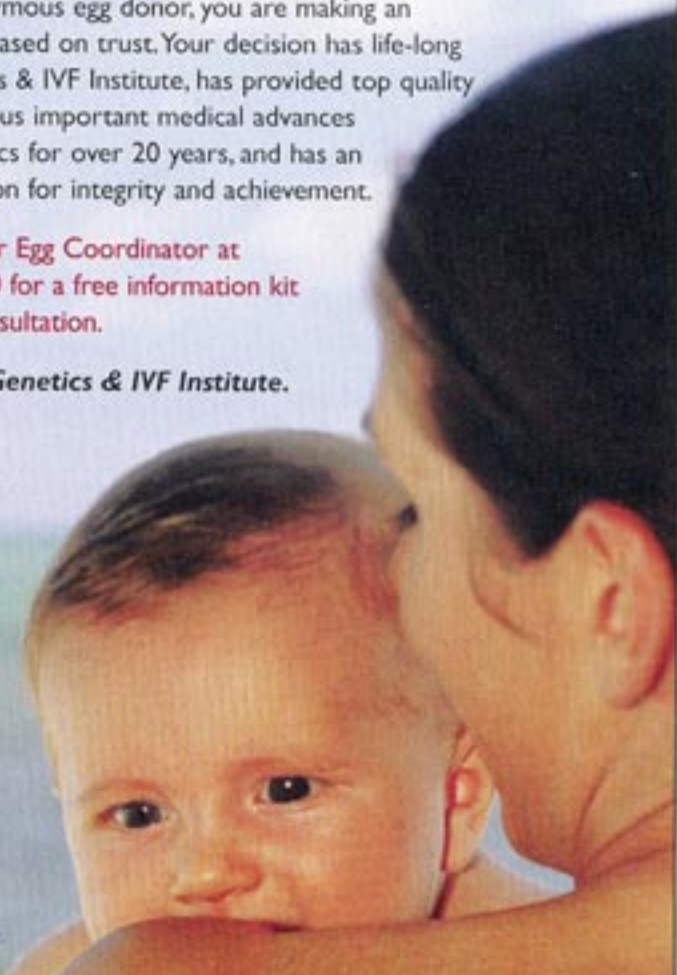
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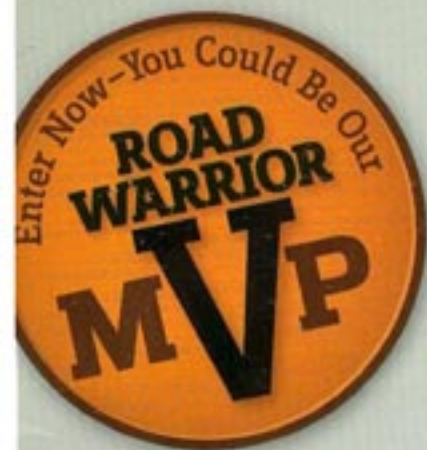


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TRENDS FOR THE MODERN TRAVELER



Southern Exposure

Greg Kinnear
Discovers the
Spirit(s) of
Savannah



Greg Kinnear found Savannah, that legendary Georgia city spared by General William Sherman and later immortalized in a novel, like most people find Savannah: by chance and good luck.

Kinnear and his wife were driving a rental car down to visit friends in a small Georgia town, and they had a week or two to spare. "We just went on a crazy sort of Southern road trip," he says. "And we made it through Savannah and a few other cities. That's really when I first kind of started digging Georgia in general."

He fell particularly hard for Savannah. Already rich in history, the coastal city became a global tourist destination with the publication in 1994 of John Berendt's best-selling book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*; tourism increased 46 percent and spun off *Midnight* tours, a movie, and more. Kinnear really got to know Savannah six years ago, while he was in town filming *The Gift*, and marveled at the city's beauty, spirit, and lore.

This month, the actor, who lives in Los Angeles, is a member of the ensemble cast of *Little Miss Sunshine*, which follows the

six-member Hoover family as they trek from their home in Albuquerque to enter seven-year-old Olive in the Little Miss Sunshine pageant in Redondo Beach, California. Here's the real-life trek Greg Kinnear took that led him through the most original city in the South.

So tell me what you discovered in Savannah.

Well, it has incredible history to it. And you feel that the moment you get there, particularly in the downtown area. You know, it was sort of where the old Georgia colony was established. Everything today that's downtown Savannah is sort of an offshoot of its design when the first settlers started to colonize it. This guy, General James Oglethorpe, designed it all, and there are all sorts of Oglethorpean references — monuments, streets, Oglethorpe burgers. I don't know if there's an Oglethorpe burger, but there's a lot of that kind of imagery of this guy. He

was the designer, the lead guy, when they established the town. He created that thing where they would start with a park and then build out from there. Today, there are more than 20 of those parks all over the city.

The squares of Savannah, right? And most famous is Monterey Square, home of the late Jim Williams, the main character of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. In the book, Berendt described Monterey Square as "the most elegant of Savannah's many tree-lined squares." Monterey Square is probably the most famous. There's Forsyth Park, but that's a different thing. That's sort of like, you know, Central Park for Savannahians, if there is such a term. That's really cool, and it's kind of the focal point of downtown. But branching out from all that are these little squares. Everything grows beautifully down there. But they pay for it in the summer, when it's 100 degrees with heavy humidity.

Why Savannah Looks Like Savannah

The architecture there is really unique. You can see why it captured the imagination of people when they did *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. The city has burned down a bunch of times. But back in the 1950s, I guess, they were starting to do what they're doing in beautiful little cities and towns across the country, which is to go in and blow up their old buildings and put up parking lots and condominiums. And there were these seven women who formed this group called the Historic Savannah Foundation, and they started raising money. They raised, like, \$22,000. When they were about to tear down the 1820 Isaiah Davenport House, which is a pretty famous place, the group jumped in and bought the property. Subsequently, the Davenport House was saved from the wrecking ball. They had such success with that, they didn't stop. To this day, whenever an old structure comes up for sale, rather than let it get into the hands of somebody who might rob the city of its history and architectural legacy, this group will step in and buy it and find a way to preserve it. That's why Savannah still looks like Savannah.



The Isaiah Davenport House

It's on the river, right? That's right. River Street, which does run along the river, is filled with these little cobblestone streets with little cafés and bars and restaurants. Quite frankly, that area is a little touristy, the way that some of the streets around the Eiffel Tower are touristy, but it's still kind of cool. And they still get a huge amount of people, particularly on the weekends, and these people aren't afraid to party down in the South, if you know what I'm saying.

Did you do the *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* tour, since the book put the city on the map for so many millions? Well, you know, the first thing you learn when you're in Savannah is the locals kind of roll their eyes when they hear the whole *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* thing. That [the murder at the heart of the book] was a real scandal in that town. But how it ever got unleashed into the sort of mythic proportions it did was only because there

was a really good writer behind it. But still, there are some very cool aspects of that.

Like the Mercer Williams House, home of the late antiques dealer Jim Williams, who shot his young lover, Danny Hansford. Do they do tours through that now? Sure. But I don't think they like it when you ask about "that," though. They don't like you talking about the murder or something. They get a little weird on that. I saw it from the outside. It's