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## Edisto Beach — “Heaven indeed is a little bit closer at the beach”

Spring has sprung, but summer is just on the horizon, and with that comes the inevitable decision of where to spend summer vacation. Summer vacations at the beach invite the feeling of sandy toes daintily dipped in cool white-capped waves, breathing in the salty air mixed with sea spray as pelicans and seagulls soar overhead, and faint aromas of nearby seafood restaurants offering traditional low-country cuisine dishes for hungry sunburned patrons.

Edisto Beach has retained what many neighboring beaches in the state have lost. The relaxed lifestyle combined with local charm creates an ideal family retreat that harkens to a simpler place and time and a slower pace of life – what the locals affectionately describe as “island time.” Edisto has long since been a family favorite destination throughout the years and all the more special as my family and I celebrated my older brother’s 27th birthday there this past February.

We stayed at the Edisto Beach State Park cabins located only a few minutes from the beach and local amenities. Each of our stays has been memorable, but this trip invited a few unexpected surprises along the way. We arrived in Edisto with our mini-van saddled by the green 17-foot Old Town canoe that was no worse for the wear after a trip from our home in up-state South Carolina. The plan was to canoe across the marsh that adjoined our cabin and arrive at a nearby



restaurant, which is a popular place both for locals and out-of-state visitors alike. Our sense of adventure and thrill of setting sail on unknown territory was just the beginning. Looking past the skepticism surrounding whether this far-fetched plan would work, we forged ahead, gripping paddles that powered through the water as we accelerated toward visions of savory po’boy sandwiches laden with fresh baby pink shrimp piled high on warm hoagie rolls lathered in tartar sauce and crispy hush puppies within arm’s reach. The trick was

getting there without overturning the canoe and getting drenched in the process, something that seems relatively simple until it’s actually attempted.

We were off to a beautiful start as we glided effortlessly across the marsh and watched as our cabin faded into the distance. The canoe drifted lazily ahead, entering endless marshland carved by shallow inlets teeming with fish and lone egrets pausing to gaze as our canoe slipped silently passed

HEAVEN (continued on page 29)





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**HEAVEN** (continued from page 20) them on its voyage. On several occasions, our canoe drifted into shallow tidewaters that prevented us from advancing any further, but we labored onward until the welcome sight of our destination appeared. Heartened by our fortune of actually locating it, we paddled all the more vigorously toward it and pulled ashore and were pleasantly greeted by seafood aromas wafting through the air. After a hearty lunch, we returned to the cabin aboard our canoe and lazily relaxed on the porch, reveling in our successful venture.

That night, we took the canoe out one last time before high tide arrived and silently glided on a river of stars. The moon had not risen yet, but in its place the stars shone brilliantly against a black velvet sky that rippled with light from shooting stars streaking across the heavens. Our canoe remained stationary as the high tide had not begun receding. Alone on the river we gazed upwards and identified the familiar constellations. There was the Big Dipper, the North Star, and Orion followed by his faithful dog Sirius. In the dis-

tance rose the shadow of the wooden pier jutting into the murky water. One might assume the pier had suddenly doubled its height, but its reflection in the water distorted the image making it appear as if it was 20 feet taller than its actual height. What resulted was a spectacle that was nothing more than a frighteningly eerie optical illusion.

The faint roar of the waves was audible half a mile away, and no wind stirred. If alligators lurked in the darkness, we had no knowledge of this and were thankful we were spared of being greeted by penetrating dark eyes reflecting against our flashlights that canvassed the surround shore. Reluctantly, we paddled toward our cabin and glanced at the mirror of stars stretching before us. Our voyage may have ended, but the memories we created have remained indelible. The hearty laughter and smiles as we secretly admired our newfound maritime skills aboard our canoe were priceless. With both our appetites and our sense of adventure equally satisfied, our love for Edisto deepened, for we had discovered "island time" and that heaven indeed is a little closer at the beach. ■

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