

Charleston: Where Work Begets Play ...

And play begets work.

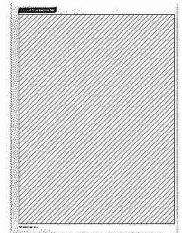
Sittin' Pretty
The *Queen Mary II*
in Charleston port.

UNLIKE A LOT OF VISITOR destinations, the Charleston area is a place where visitors can seriously envision putting down roots. Many make the move, smitten by the area's stunning coastal beauty, rich history, mild weather, exceptional dining, relatively low cost of living, and, of course, Southern style.

Ask any resident and they'll likely tell you the lifestyle is what either got them here or keeps them put. That same seductive lifestyle attracts businesses to the region. "The richness and quality of life here is a large factor," says Robert Prioleau, a founding partner of Blue Ion, a Charleston-based digital marketing agency. "You're inspired

FLYIN' HIGH
It's easy to get here. Southwest Airlines began service to Charleston International Airport (CHS) in March, with nonstop service to four cities.

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Get Creative! (From top) Blue Ion offices and a Pecha Kucha presentation.

Big business grabs the headlines, but the creative industry has become a vibrant sector of the Charleston area's economy.



just by walking down the street or heading out to the islands or the beach.”

Consider that the metro area sees 4 million visitors annually and has some of the nicest hotels and restaurants in the Southeast, not to mention a magnificent selection of well-preserved and well-presented historical attrac-

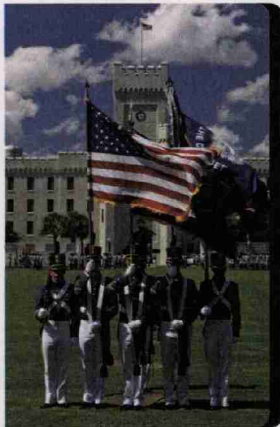
tions. Such features make for an incredibly powerful business-recruiting tool.

“When you have a vibrant community like this, it not only allows you to attract talent, but also to retain the talent,” says David Ginn, president and CEO of the Charleston Regional Development Alliance.

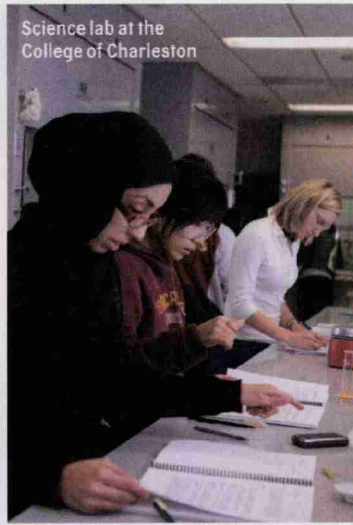
The Charleston area has been quite successful on both fronts. The list of companies that have set up major operations here in the last few years reads like a “Who’s Who” of corporate heavyweights: Boeing is scheduled to complete a \$750 million final assembly and delivery plant for the 787 Dreamliner in North Charleston this summer; Google’s presence includes a \$600 million data center in Berkeley County; and Southwest Airlines recently began service at Charleston International Airport.

Only three places in the world assemble wide-body commercial aircraft, and the Charleston region is one of them. Construction also is under way for a new wind turbine drive-train testing facility that will be the largest in

GET SCHOOLED
 Young minds and big businesses are attracted to area schools and universities, including The Art Institute of Charleston, Charleston School of Law, Charleston Southern University, The Citadel (right), College of Charleston, Lowcountry Graduate Center, Medical University of South Carolina, Springfield College School of Human Services, Strayer University Charleston, Trident Technical College Charleston, Troy University Charleston, Virginia College in Charleston, Webster University Charleston Air Force Base, and Webster University Charleston.



PHOTOGRAPHY (FROM TOP) COURTESY OF BLUE ION, TIM McMANUS, AND THE CITADEL; OPPOSITE PAGE COURTESY OF CITY OF CHARLESTON, SC



the world. "Because of Charleston's competencies in advanced materials, drivetrain and power systems, and logistics, there will continue to be increased opportunities for growth in the aerospace and wind-energy industries," Ginn says. "We envision our region becoming a global destination for aerospace and wind energy business."

The Charleston area also is making a large splash in the information-technology sector. Blackbaud, a software maker for nonprofits, has offices in London, Glasgow, and Sydney, but its headquarters are on Daniel Island. Other notable high-tech firms include Modulant (data-management solutions), CSS (exclusive consulting services for Oracle), and Benefit-focus (online benefit enrollment).

No matter the field of expertise, every company that comes to the Charleston area has its own reasons besides beauty and lifestyle. According to Ginn, they include the availability of a highly skilled workforce graduating from the region's numerous colleges and technical schools, such as the Medical University of South Carolina, the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center, and the College of

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON

Charleston, boasting an environmental sciences and policy program and a new full-time accelerated MBA program.

Another excellent attribute: the Port of Charleston. It's the eighth-largest port in the nation, handling \$5 million in cargo every hour and consistently ranking as one of the most productive ports in the world. The port's cruise-ship terminal draws 175,000 passengers every year; a new terminal is scheduled to open in late 2012.

While big business grabs the headlines, the creative industry has quietly become a vibrant sector of the Charleston area's economy. Artists, chefs, software designers, and the like have flocked to the area showcasing their talents and fostering a high quality of life. They've also taken advantage of the area's educational institutions, enrolling in the state's only undergraduate arts management degree at the College of Charleston, as well as signing up for everything from fashion design and culinary arts to graphic design and digital filmmaking at [The Art Institute of Charleston](#).

A recent study commissioned by Parliament, an all-volunteer advisory committee, found that creative employees number more than 27,000, or 6.7 percent of the region's work force. Occasionally, the committee hosts a Pecha Kucha Night, where innovative thinkers present their work and ideas on stage in seven minutes or less. The high-energy shows are so popular that the previous nine have sold out.

"It's more about sharing passions than trading business cards," says Lee Deas, owner of Obviouslee Marketing and a founding member of Parliament. "We really celebrate and support one another, and that's addictive." And so, it seems, is Charleston.

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