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Pawleys Island *(and Pimento Cheese)*

LIFE STANDS STILL AT THE SEA VIEW INN

STORY: Sarah Gleim

Even though houses—some quite grand—have grown up all around it, time has stood still at the Sea View Inn. The old-fashioned Southern resort has been a mainstay on Pawleys Island in the South Carolina lowcountry since 1937. It's the sort of place you can imagine your grandparents' spending summers—charming and rustic, peaceful and relaxing.

A stay here can transport you back to the time when Pawleys Island was, as its tagline says, "arrogantly shabby"—when the ocean breeze was the air conditioner, and everyone ran around barefooted. The tiny, 4-mile island, is about five-and-a-half-hours from Atlanta, and was originally settled in the early 1700s by wealthy rice planters. Twelve homes still date back to the late 18th and 19th centuries and mark the island's historic district. Families have been coming here for generations.

The 20-room white inn sits close to the historic district in the middle of the island. It's surrounded by the ocean on the front and the salt marsh

along the back. The idyllic location is what drew current owners Brian and Sassy Henry here in 2002. They moved their family to Pawleys Island from Buckhead to escape their hectic schedules. They were overwhelmed, juggling two high-powered careers—he over time with Anderson Consulting, Coca-Cola and an internet startup; she with her own landscaping business, as well as Atlanta traffic and their daughters' social lives and extracurricular activities. They purchased the inn and have worked to maintain the appeal that has lured families to the Sea View for decades.

Part of that draw means no frills. Though you can get Wi-Fi in one section of the inn, there are no TVs or telephones. There is no pool or spa. But you won't lack for things to do because what you get instead is a beachfront porch lined with at least a dozen rocking chairs and perfect for afternoon board games with the family. Hammocks line the property and will gently rock you into an afternoon slumber. When the beach itself beck-

ons, the inn provides beach chairs, umbrellas and toys—everything to get your feet in the sand.

The rooms are simply appointed, but with all you need. Each features two beds (either a double and a single or two doubles) with hand-stitched bedspreads from Guatemala and a private half bath. The inn has three indoor showers, as well as private hot water showers outside for guests to share. All rooms have views of either the ocean or marsh, but you're encouraged to relax in common areas and mingle.

Socializing is part of the draw here, and so is the food. The inn specializes in seafood and lowcountry cuisine. Three meals a day are included and announced when the kitchen staff rings a bell that can be heard up and down the beach. They're about as Southern as anything a good Georgia grandmother would have made. The "dinner" meal is served at 1:15 p.m. and "supper" at 6:15—both might include anything from fried chicken and fresh vegetables to seafood gumbo,

shrimp creole, barbecue ribs and potato salad. Breakfast starts daily at 8:30 a.m. and always includes eggs, bacon, sausage, pancakes, grits and more.

But the Sea View Inn's claim to fame is its pimento cheese. The recipe was owner Sassy Henry's from her days living in Atlanta. It became a popular hors d'oeuvre at the inn and an instant guest favorite. Vertrella Brown, a long-time Gullah cook at Sea View, began making large batches of the yummy cheese, and guests started buying tubs of the stuff. Now it's available in more than 5,000 stores as Palmetto Cheese. Yea, that pimento cheese.

The Sea View might not be for everybody, and the Henrys are the first to admit that. If you're looking for luxury spas and high tech toilets, this is not that place. But if you want a spot where life stands still, this is as good as it gets. ■

SEA VIEW INN

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