

The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

The best and the worst of the Palmetto State in 2007

THE GOOD

■ Many Thanks

For the eleventh year in a row, *Travel + Leisure* bestowed us with the title of most polite city in the country. (Reviewers apparently haven't driven on I-26 at rush hour.) They also named Charleston one of the "10 Best" destinations in North America. It's hard not to agree with that, even with traffic.

■ Do It for the Kids

The South Carolina Education Lottery—also known by some as the idiot tax—contributed more than \$273 million to educational programs throughout the state and made some people very rich in the process. Who's the idiot now?



■ Lookin' Up

Search engine superpower Google invested \$600 million into a new data center in Berkeley County. Once operational, the center will employ about 200 people. Calling all computer geeks!

■ You Too

The Citadel, of all places, was the site of an early Democratic presidential debate this year. But it was the method of questioning, not the very red-tinted location, that garnered national attention. For the first time, candidates fielded (and even answered) questions submitted by citizens via YouTube.

■ Dream Come True

The first fuselage for the next generation Boeing 787 Dreamliner rolled off the North Charleston assembly line in May. When complete, the state-of-the-art plant will create more than 700 jobs.



■ We'll Leave the Light On For You

The folks at *Travel + Leisure* sure do love Charleston. They ranked three Low-country hotels in their Top 10 in North America: Woodlands Resort & Inn (#2), The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort (#5), and Planters Inn (#7). Wonder if they give locals a discount?

THE BAD



■ Bye-Bye?

The Town of Edisto Beach threatened to secede from Colleton County and rejoin Charleston County after the school board instituted a mill levy without a popular vote.

■ No Such Bliss

South Carolina residents may be the most polite, but they are also the most brutal toward each other. The Palmetto State had the dubious distinction of the most reported domestic violence cases—more than 30,000 this year—in the country.

■ You Want Some Fries With That?

When it comes to being healthy, S.C. residents aren't, ranking 42nd in the U.S. The state's low education and high poverty, violence, and obesity rates contribute largely to the insalubrious state of its citizens. The good news is the ranking is up from 48th.

■ Abreast of the Situation

City Council member Wendell Gaillard has again railed against those sinful coeds who scandalize the city by frolicking with the sun on their bare shoulders in Marion Square. Or maybe he revisits the topic every year 'cause the view is better from his soapbox.

■ Reedin' & Ritein'

The state's education system has yet again come under fire with the news that we are dead last in the country in high school graduation rates. Less than half of S.C.'s freshmen will don cap and gown.



■ Party Poopers

When political satirist Stephen Colbert declared his run for the presidency, everyone, including state Democratic Party leaders, thought it was just a joke. Not so much. After he filed to be put on the ballot in S.C., party officials voted to not allow the funny-man to seek office.

THE UGLY

■ A True Testament

Miss S.C. Teen USA Lauren Caitlin Upton proved how bad our education system is during her rambling interview, when she referenced "U.S. Americans" and "the Iraq."



■ Crossing the Line

State Treasurer Tommy Ravenel and his eclectic mix of friends did more than discuss art and politics at his infamous late-night salons. Law enforcement officials pinned a deal for slightly less than 500 grams of cocaine on him—enough to charge distribution. He faces 20 years.



■ Go Cocks

In *Borat*, three USC boys get Borat drunk and show him porn. After its release, two sued, claiming they were forced to drink and set up to give a misogynistic diatribe.

■ How Dare You Say Whatever You Said

Former school board member Sandra Engleman stated she would vote to expel three sixth-graders for what was written in a student's diary. Engleman was adamant that the girls be expelled despite the fact she had not read the objectionable verbiage.

■ And You're No Winston Churchill

The latest gem from John Graham Altman: "When Adolf Hitler, the evil Hitler" (was there a good Hitler?) "was about to invade England, Churchill rallied the people. We don't have a Churchill to rally Americans to stop these illegal aliens. I want to do my share."

■ Mo' Money Mo' Problems

It became clear how Al Parish did so well for himself investing other people's money—he kept it. The flamboyant CSU professor absconded more than \$55 million of investors' money. Shortly after, he was hospitalized with sudden amnesia.

—Andrew Mosier