



Congregation Beth Yam
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Frequently Asked Questions about the Jewish Community of South Beaufort County, South Carolina (Including Hilton Head Island, Greater Bluffton, and Sun City)

Shalom and welcome to the Low Country of South Carolina!

Our synagogue often receives inquiries from people asking if there is much of a Jewish presence here. We respond with a resounding YES! We are a vibrant, thriving Jewish community that continues to grow as people see what we have to offer. Since most of us came here from elsewhere, we are a Jewish community where one can quickly become rooted and involved.

In addressing specific questions that come our way and that may help you decide if South Beaufort County is for you, we have compiled this fact sheet. We hope you will find it informative and helpful.

We look forward to welcoming you to this beautiful area and to Congregation Beth Yam very soon. Please visit our website at www.bethyam.org to learn more about our current worship services and programs.

How large is the Jewish population of Hilton Head/Greater Bluffton?

The following estimates are based on the county demographic estimates and a 2010 survey of the Jewish community:

- The total permanent population of the Hilton Head Island/Greater Bluffton area is estimated at 88,000. Of that number, the Jewish population is estimated to be 2,400, or 2.7% of the total.
 - Hilton Head Island total population is approximately 38,000, of which there are estimated to be 820 Jews (2.2%). The total population of Hilton Head Island is expected to grow to 40,000 by 2017.
 - Greater Bluffton's population is about 49,000, but is growing at a faster rate than that of Hilton Head Island. The Jewish population of Greater Bluffton is estimated to be 1,600 (3.3%), with the largest concentration living in Sun City (900). The total population of Bluffton is expected to grow to 55,000 by 2017.

What are the overall demographics of Hilton Head/Greater Bluffton?

- The general population of Hilton Head can be described as follows:
 - 23% of resident households have children.
 - 77% of resident households are empty-nesters.
 - 32% are retirees.
- The general population of Greater Bluffton/Sun City can be described as follows:
 - 45% of resident households have children.
 - 55% of resident households are empty-nesters.
 - 25% are retirees.

What is the Jewish community like in Hilton Head/Bluffton/Sun City?

- We are a warm and caring Jewish community.
- The community is very diverse with people from Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Jewish backgrounds.
- Jews in this area are very active in the larger community. In addition to our varied social action projects, members of our Jewish community volunteer at the many local non-profit organizations dedicated to serving those in need. These organizations include Volunteers in Medicine, the Beaufort County and Hilton Head Schools, Literacy Volunteers of the Low Country, CODA (Citizens Opposed to Domestic Violence), Heroes on Horseback, Habitat for Humanity, and many more.

How many synagogues are there? Where are they located?

- Congregation Beth Yam (Reform) on Hilton Head Island, at 4501 Meeting St. (off Main Street), is the only synagogue in Southern Beaufort County with a full-time rabbi.
- Oseh Shalom is a congregation in Bluffton that offers monthly Shabbat services and High Holiday services in a local church.
- Beaufort, SC has one synagogue (Conservative).
- Nearby Savannah, GA has three synagogues (Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox).

What does Congregation Beth Yam uniquely offer?

Congregation Beth Yam has much to offer:

- Full-time rabbi, Brad Bloom, URJ-ordained (Union for Reform Judaism).
- Over 300 member families consisting of Jews from all backgrounds and ages. We welcome interfaith families.
- URJ Affiliated (<http://urj.org>).
- Shabbat services every Friday Night.
- Monthly Saturday morning Shabbat service.
- Religious/Hebrew School.
- Sisterhood [WRJ Affiliated (<http://wrj.org>)] and Men's Club.

- Adult education programs, Scholar-in-Residence programs, Speaker program, and Torah study.
- Large Jewish library and resource center.
- Youth Group.
- Social Action Committee.
- Complete High Holy Day services.
- Extensive social activities.
- Senior Citizen Programs.

What other Jewish organizations are in the area?

In addition to the synagogues, several other Jewish organizations exist in the area:

- Active Hilton Head Hadassah chapter with about 350 members.
- United Jewish Communities.
- Sun City residents can participate in the Shalom Club, which has over 600 members. The club holds monthly social, educational and cultural programs of interest to a Jewish audience. Yiddish classes are also held at Sun City.
- Invitations are extended to area residents for Jewish programs in Savannah and Charleston.

Are there Jewish cemeteries in the area?

- Congregation Beth Yam has its own section in Six Oaks Cemetery called Beth Yam Garden, open to members of the congregation. Six Oaks Cemetery is in Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island.
- The Jewish community in Savannah, GA has its own cemetery, and Bonaventure and Laurel Grove Cemeteries have Jewish sections.
- Beth Israel Cemetery is located in Beaufort, SC.
- Oseh Shalom has a cemetery area on site at Saul's Funeral Home on Simmonsville Road, Bluffton, SC.

What cultural offerings exist in the area?

Hilton Head/Greater Bluffton has much to offer culturally. A brief subset is listed below:

- The Arts Center of Coastal Carolina on Hilton Head Island offers a variety of cultural experiences:
 - Elizabeth Wallace Theater (Professional) featuring dramatic, comedic, and musical productions.
 - The Art league of Hilton Head, located in the Walter Greer Gallery featuring high quality art exhibits.
- There are several other professional and community theater venues in the area, including:
 - The historic Savannah Theatre (Savannah).
 - Johnny Mercer Theater (Savannah).
 - Main Street Youth Theater (Hilton Head) (Community).

- May River Theater Company (Bluffton) (Community).
- The Sun City Community Theater (Sun City) puts on 4-5 major productions each year.
- The Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra has a year-long program with a world recognized conductor (<http://www.hhso.org>).
- The Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra Youth Concerto Competition is an annual event where the top high school aged orchestral musicians from the Southeast compete for cash prizes and an opportunity to solo with the Hilton Head Symphony. The finals, which are held each February and are open to the public, feature the top contestants each performing an accompanied movement of a standard concerto of their choosing (<http://www.hhsoconcertocompetition.org>).
- Hilton Head International Piano Competition held in March each year. The mission of the Hilton Head International Piano Competition is to encourage and support excellence in the performance of classical piano music by showcasing the talents of young pianists on the threshold of their careers in a competition adjudicated by internationally acclaimed judges, and to offer additional performance opportunities (<http://www.hhipc.org/>).
- Choral Society. The one hundred voice ensemble presents five major programs per season - A Fall Pops Concert, A Festival Invitational concert involving invited guest singers, The Christmas Concert, The Musical Masterworks Concert featuring classical pieces and 2 Memorial Day celebratory concerts honoring America and our Armed Forces with American Music (<http://www.hiltonheadchoralsociety.org>).
- Chamber Music Charleston. Performs 3-4 concerts a year on Hilton Head Island (<http://www.chambermusiccharleston.org>).
- Hilton Head Shorenotes (<http://www.hiltonheadshorenates.com>) and Men's and Women's Barbershop groups.
- Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, SC has performances by renowned artists as well as emerging performers in opera; theater; dance; and chamber, symphonic, choral and jazz music. Spoleto Festival USA is internationally recognized as America's premier performing arts festival (<http://spoletousa.org>).
- Focusing primarily on artists of the Southeast region, Piccolo Spoleto in Charleston complements its parent Spoleto festival. Piccolo Spoleto's traditional program offerings include visual arts exhibits, classical music, jazz, dance, theatre, poetry readings, children's activities, choral music, ethnic cultural presentations, crafts and film (<http://www.piccolospoleto.com>).
- The Jazz Corner Jazz Club (Hilton Head), voted one of the 100 best jazz venues in the world (<http://www.thejazzcorner.com>).
- The Hilton Head Art League and The Society of Bluffton Artists have their own galleries.
- A Biannual Public Art Exhibit in February.
- Coastal Discovery Museum (<http://www.coastaldiscovery.org>) has nature walks and programs and the history of Hilton Head Island and Lowcountry wildlife.
- Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration. Hilton Head is in the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

- Native American Shell Rings.
- The Heritage Library.
- Mitchelville, on Hilton Head Island is the First self-governed Freedman's town in America (<http://www.mitchelvillepreservationproject.com>).
- There are several Civil War sites on the island: Ft. Mitchell, Ft. Howell, and Ft. Walter which all housed over 50,000 Union troops.

What medical facilities are available?

- Hilton Head Regional Medical Center on Hilton Head Island, SC.
- Coastal Carolina Hospital In Hardeeville, SC.
- Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, FL (3 hour drive).
- Medical University of SC (MUSC) in Charleston (2 hours).
- St. Joseph's-Candler in Savannah (1 hour).
- Beaufort Memorial Hospital in Beaufort, SC (1 hour).

What educational opportunities are available?

- The University of South Carolina Beaufort maintains a satellite campus adjacent to Sun City. In addition to its undergraduate programs, USCB has the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) (<http://www.uscb.edu/community-outreach/olli/index.php>) program, which offers several hundred courses each year, including several visiting lecturer series, in a variety of locations.
- There is also a Hilton Head Lifelong Learning program (LLHHI) (<http://www.lifelonglearninghhi.org>). LLHHI offers peer-organized, peer-led and peer-taught courses, which draw from topics in the arts, history, business/finance, psychology/medicine, law/policy/current events, science and literature. Classes are offered in a term of six weeks in the fall and a term of eight weeks in the winter/spring. All classes are on Hilton Head Island and are of two hours duration weekly; most are four to six week sessions.
- World Affairs Council of Hilton Head (<http://wachh.org>) The World Affairs Council of Hilton Head is a forum on international affairs and American interests throughout the world, with over 800 members drawn from across Beaufort and Jasper Counties, SC. WACHH is the largest World Affairs Council of America affiliate financed solely by membership dues and voluntary contributions.
- 92nd Street Y Programs. Live from NY's 92nd Street Y, now in its thirteenth year, uses streaming technology to simultaneously broadcast 92nd Street Y's renowned educational and cultural programming to community organizations across America. Broadcasts are shown at Congregation Beth Yam. There are two semester series per year (<http://bethyam.org/learning/92sty>).
- Public libraries in Hilton Head and Bluffton.

Are there bridge or mah jongg players in the area?

- There are many people in the area who play mah jongg, bridge, poker, canasta, and other games.

Where can I buy kosher meat and other Jewish-type foods (Challah, bagels, etc.) in the area?

- Publix and Kroger have challah, baked fresh daily and Publix has a selection of frozen kosher food (Empire).
- All of the major grocery chains stock Jewish food in their ethnic food sections.
- Island Bagel Company is located in S. Island Square on Hilton Head Island and Sheridan Park in Bluffton.

Are there restaurants that cater to a Jewish audience?

- Gruby's New York Style Deli on Hilton Head Island.

Where can I buy Judaica and Jewish greeting cards?

- Congregation Beth Yam has a Judaica Shop. In addition, most local party and card stores carry Jewish holiday and B'nai Mitzvot cards and wrap.

Where can I go to locate a vacation or short-term rental unit?

- Marriott Vacation Club International, Westin, Omni, Sonesta Resorts, and Disney have resort locations on Hilton Head Island. Marriott, Disney, and other companies offer numerous time-share options. In addition, there are dozens of vacation rental companies, which can be found in vacation magazines and on the Internet.

What airports service the area?

There are airports in Hilton Head, Savannah, GA, Charleston, SC, and Jacksonville, FL.

What types of activities are available?

The Low Country is a wonderful venue for outdoor activities. They include:

- Golf.
- Boating, kayaking, fishing, and water sports.
- Bicycling.
- Tennis.
- Bird Watching/Nature Tours/Dolphin Tours.
- Horseback Riding.
- The Beach.
- New Zipline and Aerial Adventure (<http://www.ziplinehiltonhead.com>).
- Shopping at the Outlet Malls (<http://www.tangeroutlet.com/hiltonhead/>).