

Southern Lady  
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## Peaceful Garden

Wander the grounds of Monmouth Plantation and you are sure to encounter an angel – a statue of one, that is. “I just adore angels. I think they bring the peace of God,” says Lani Riches, who just might be an angel herself. Thirty years ago, she and her husband Ron, rescued the circa 1818 mansion and the 26 acres around it from serious decline, returning the plantation to the glory it experienced back when cotton was king. “When we bought Monmouth, it was in total disrepair. We didn’t even know that the garden had been terraced,” Lani explains.

Today, Monmouth is like a gracious Southern hostess, welcoming you to one of her 30 beautifully appointed rooms, some in the historic main house, others nestled in scenic spots on the property. But to maximize your stay, you must step outside and follow where pathways lead.

Perhaps you seek the coolness of the gazebo, where you can simply sit and watch the subtly shift of shadows on the lawn as clouds move by.

You may amble over the bridge that spans a pond and veer right to find the Reuben Harper Sanctuary for quiet meditation. Four white columns command the front of this open-air church. An exquisite white-marble cross centers the altar, and angels are depicted in two stained-glass windows.

A walk to the rose garden rewards you with scented blooms as well as a visit with the antique white-marble angel standing sentry.

Seraphs also reside at the pergola, where entwined wisteria vines form a canopy under which many couples have pledged their marriage vows. In fact, notes Lani, the garden has become a popular site for destination weddings. But no matter the reason for visiting, the experience is certain to be a pleasant one. For surely while traversing the trails that wind through the garden of Monmouth, you will come to feel a sense of peace – as if angels read there with you.