

*Beautiful spaces.  
Colorful decorations.  
Cookies and cakes.*

It's that most wonderful time of year again, time for the Cassina Garden Club's Christmas Tour of Homes. This year's tour – the club's 24th – is slated for Saturday, Dec. 13.

The Christmas Tour of Homes was begun as a fundraiser to help maintain the circa 1804 tabby slave cabins at Gascoigne Bluff on St. Simons Island. The cabins are part of a group of 10 to 12 cabins on the bluff, but are the only two that remain standing. Foundations of other cabins have been found on the site.

“Because Cassina Garden Club raised money for their restoration through grants and by persuading the 1932 era county commissioners to also provide funds, Cassina was permitted to use the cabins for their meeting place and give guided tours, which we still do today,” says Denise Trethaway, publicity chair for this year's tour.

“In 1950 Cassina Garden Club



was presented the deed to the cabins and to the land surrounding them.”

To this day, proceeds from the sale of tour tickets, baked goods and crafts for sale in the club's new Holiday Gift Market go wholly to fund cabin maintenance.

The tour draws anywhere from 600 to 800 visitors annually, and generates roughly \$14,000 for the club's mission.

“We often have bus loads of out-of-town visitors as well and numerous out-of-town guests who will stay at hotels featuring a discount for the tour weekend,” Trethaway says. “It has become a social event for family and friends alike.”

More than 150 volunteers—club members and non-members – work to make the annual tour a success.

Seven stops comprise the tour this year, which begins at the historic tabby cabins at Gascoigne Bluff. The

“tea cabin” will house the Holiday Gift Market, featuring a variety of creative Christmas gifts and decorations made primarily by members of the Cassina Garden Club. The meeting cabin will house the club's bake sale, known far and wide as “The Best Bake Sale in the Southeast.”

Five houses and the Island Design and Architectural Center are highlights of this year's tour. IDAC will serve not only a rest stop, but will host demonstrations on topics related to home design at the top of each hour all day. The houses represent a variety of architectural styles and homeowner tastes, and many surprises sure to delight and intrigue tour-goers this year.

**They are:**

**2309 Bruce Drive  
St. Simons Island  
(Villa Suenos)**

This Spanish Villa sited on a promontory at the end of Bruce Drive on East Beach captivates its lot and surroundings, overlooking Gould's Inlet and the Atlantic Ocean. In a past life, this was the site of T. M. Baumgardner's home. Baumgardner, who served as landscape architect for the Sea Island Co. for more than 66 years, defined the landscaping style for the Golden Isles. The current owners of this seaside lot have capitalized on the natural beauty and location of the site. Architect Keith Summerour's design of Villa Suenos was inspired by a 15th Century castillo in Ejica, Spain.

Look for exotic touches, like the entry door, which is actually a door

