

Planning Your Trip to Charleston & Hilton Head

In the pages that follow, we've compiled everything you need to know to handle the practical details on planning your trip: airlines, a calendar of events, visitor information, and more.

1 Visitor Information

Before you leave home, write or call ahead for specific information on sports and sightseeing. Contact the **South Carolina Division of Tourism**, 1205 Pendleton St. (P.O. Box 71), Columbia, SC 29202 (☎ 803/734-0122; fax 803/734-0138; www.discoverouthcarolina.com) or the **Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CACVB)**, 375 Meeting St. (☎ 800/774-0006 or 843/853-8000; www.charlestoncvb.com). The CACVB has five area visitor centers. The main location at 375 Meeting St. is open Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 5pm.

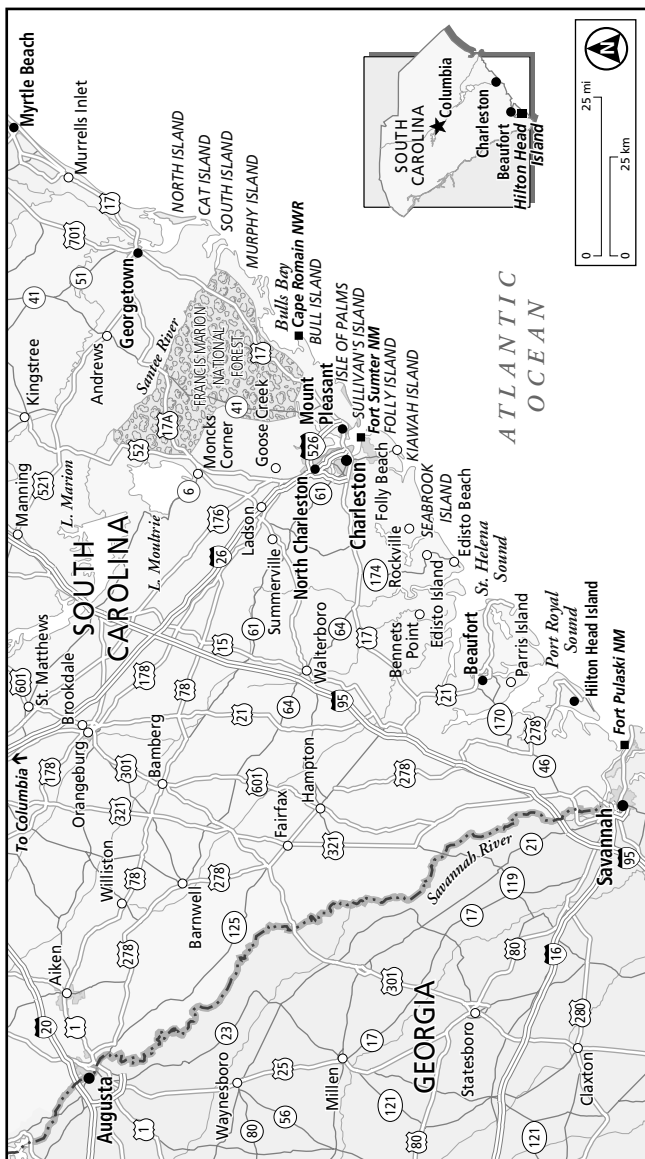
When you enter South Carolina, look for one of the 10 **travel information centers** located on virtually every major highway near the border with neighboring states. Information sources for specific destinations in the state are listed in the South Carolina chapters that follow. A particularly useful resource for travel information is the Citysearch website for Charleston (<http://charleston.citysearch.com>), which provides the latest events, entertainment, and restaurant and bar reviews.

2 When to Go

CLIMATE

Although Charleston can be quite hot and steamy in summer (to say the least), temperatures are never extreme the rest of the year, as shown in the average highs and lows noted in the accompanying charts.

Coastal South Carolina



Charleston Average Temperatures & Rainfall

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
High (°F)	59	61	68	76	83	87	89	89	85	77	69	61
High (°C)	15	16	20	24	28	31	32	32	29	25	21	16
Low (°F)	40	41	48	56	64	70	74	74	69	49	49	42
Low (°C)	4	5	9	13	18	21	23	23	21	9	9	6
Rain (in.)	3.5	3.3	4.3	2.7	4.0	6.4	6.8	7.2	4.7	2.9	2.5	3.2

LOW COUNTRY CALENDAR OF EVENTS**January**

Low Country Oyster Festival, Charleston. Steamed buckets of oysters greet visitors at Boone Hall Plantation. Enjoy live music, oyster-shucking contests, children's events, and various other activities. Contact the Greater Charleston Restaurant Association at ☎ **843/577-4030**. End of January.

February

Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, Charleston. More than 150 of the finest artists and more than 500 exhibitors participate at 13 locations in the downtown area. Enjoy carvings, sculpture, paintings, live-animal exhibits, food, and much more. Call ☎ **843/723-1748** or go to www.sewe.com for details. Mid-February.

March

Festival of Houses and Gardens, Charleston. For nearly 50 years, people have been enjoying some of Charleston's most historic neighborhoods and private gardens on this tour. Contact the Historic Charleston Foundation, P.O. Box 1120, Charleston, SC 29402. Call ☎ **843/723-1623** or go to www.historiccharleston.org for details. Mid-March to mid-April.

Flowertown Festival, Summerville. More than 180 booths of arts and crafts, a road race, a "Youth Fest," and lots of entertainment are set in this historic city surrounded by brilliant azalea and dogwood blossoms. Contact the YMCA at ☎ **843/871-9622** to learn more. Late March to early April.

April

Cooper River Bridge Run, Charleston. Sponsored by the Medical University of South Carolina, this run and walk starts in Mount Pleasant, goes over the Cooper River, and ends in the center of Charleston. **Note:** The April 2, 2005, race is the last one on the old Cooper River Bridge; the 28th annual race in 2006 will go over the new bridge. For information, call ☎ **843/792-0345** or go to www.bridgerun.com. Early April.

Family Circle Cup, Charleston. Moved from Hilton Head to a modern tennis center in Charleston, the Family Circle Cup WTA tournament is one of the oldest on the women's pro tour. For information, call ☎ 843/856-7900 or go to www.familycirclecup.com. April 5 to April 13.

WorldCom Classic, Hilton Head. This \$1.3-million tournament brings an outstanding field of PGA tour professionals to the Low Country each year. The weeklong tournament is held at Harbour Town Golf Links in Sea Pines Plantation. Contact Classic Sports, Inc., 71 Lighthouse Rd., Suite 414, Hilton Head, SC 29928 (☎ 843/671-2448). Mid-April.

May

Spoletto Festival U.S.A., Charleston. This is the premier cultural event in the tri-state area. This famous international festival—the American counterpart of the equally celebrated one in Spoleto, Italy—showcases world-renowned performers in drama, dance, music, and art in various venues throughout the city. For details and this year's schedule, contact Spoleto Festival U.S.A., P.O. Box 157, Charleston, SC 29402. For more information, call ☎ 843/722-2764 or go to www.spoletousa.org. Late May through early June.

June

Edisto Riverfest, Walterboro. The main attractions at this festival are guided trips down the blackwater Edisto River. Call ☎ 843/549-5591 or go to www.edistoriver.org for details. Mid-June.

September

Scottish Games and Highland Gathering, Charleston. This gathering of Scottish clans features medieval games, bagpipe performances, Scottish dancing, and other traditional activities. Call the Scottish Society of Charleston at ☎ 843/224-7867 or go to www.charlestonscots.com. Mid-September.

Candlelight Tour of Homes & Gardens, Charleston. Sponsored by the Preservation Society of Charleston, this annual event provides an intimate look at many of the area's historic homes, gardens, and churches. For more information, call ☎ 800/968-8175 or 843/722-4630 or go to www.preservationsociety.org. Late September to late October.

October

MOJA Festival, Charleston. Celebrating the rich African-American heritage in the Charleston area, this festival features lectures, art exhibits, stage performances, historical tours, concerts, and much more. Contact the Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs

at ☎ 843/724-7305 or go to www.mojafestival.com. Early October.

A Taste of Charleston, Charleston. Held in 2004 at Boone Hall Plantation, this annual event offers an afternoon of food, fun, entertainment, and more. A selection of Charleston-area restaurants offers their specialties in bite-size portions, so you can sample them all. For more information, call ☎ 843/577-4030 or go to www.charlestoncvb.com. Mid-October.

Fall Tour of Homes, Beaufort. Frank Lloyd Wright's Aldbrass Plantation is only one of the beautiful homes on this tour. The public is invited to get a rare view of this coastal city's most stately residences during a 3-day tour. For more information, call ☎ 843/379-3331 or go to www.historic-beaufort.org. Late October.

December

Christmas in Charleston, Charleston. This month-long celebration features home and church tours, Christmas-tree lightings, craft shows, artistry, and a peek at how Old Charleston celebrated the holiday season. For more information on how to participate or to visit, call ☎ 843/853-8000. December 1 to December 31.

3 Money

It's getting easier all the time to access your bank account while you're on the road. You won't have any problem finding ATMs all over the state connected to the major national networks. For specific locations of **Cirrus** machines, call ☎ 800/424-7787; for the **PLUS** network, dial ☎ 800/843-7587.

If you run out of funds on the road, you can have a friend or relative advance you some money through **MoneyGram**; www.moneygram.com. This service allows you to transfer funds from one person to another in less than 10 minutes from thousands of locations.

4 The Active Vacation Planner

BEACHES The South Carolina coast, both north and south of Charleston, is the true gem of the state, and many of the best beaches in the South—even the country—are an easy commute from Charleston. Along more than 280 miles of seashore are white-sand beaches shaded by palms, stretching from the Grand Strand to the mouth of the Savannah River. If you're looking for seclusion, head for Edisto Beach. For a luxury-resort experience, you can't beat Hilton Head. For a combination of both, check out Kiawah Island.

What Things Cost in Charleston	U.S. \$
Taxi from Charleston airport to city center	20.00–25.00
Bus fares (exact change)	1.25
Local telephone call	0.50
Double room at the Planters Inn (expensive)	195.00
Double room at 1837 Bed & Breakfast (moderate)	129.00
Double room at Best Western King Charles Inn (inexpensive)	105.00
Dinner for one, without wine, at Charleston Grill (expensive)	45.00
Dinner for one at Magnolias (moderate)	30.00
Dinner for one at Hyman's (inexpensive)	18.00
Bottle of beer	2.50–3.00
Coca-Cola	1.00
Cup of coffee	1.50
Roll of 35mm Kodak film, 36 exposures	8.50
Admission to the Charleston Museum	9.00
Movie ticket	7.50
Ticket to a Charleston Symphony concert	22.00

BIKING The aptly named Low Country has basically flat terrain, which makes for some of the country's best biking areas. The hard-packed sand of the beaches is particularly good for bike riding. Resorts such as Hilton Head have extensive paved bike trails, and many rental outfits operate just off the beaches.

CAMPING Many of South Carolina's lakes have lakefront campsites. Reservations aren't necessary, but you are strongly advised to make reservations for such big weekends as Memorial Day or Labor Day. Campsites are also available in South Carolina's 34 state parks, many of which lie within easy reach of Charleston. For more information, contact the **South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism**, 1205 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29202 (☎ 888/887-2757 or 803/734-0159; www.southcarolinaparks.com).

FISHING & HUNTING Fishing is abundant in South Carolina, especially along coastal Carolina north and south of Charleston. On the coast, fish for amberjack, barracuda, shark, king mackerel, and other species. In South Carolina's many lakes and streams, fish for trout, bass, and blue and channel catfish. No license is required for saltwater fishing, but a freshwater license is needed. Hunting on public lands is illegal, but many hunting clubs allow you to join temporarily if you provide references. For information, write the **South Carolina Department of Natural Resources**, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202 (☎ 803/734-3447; www.dnr.state.sc.us).

GOLF Some of the best golf in the country is available in South Carolina, at courses like the one at fabled Harbour Town in Hilton Head. Contact the **South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism**, 1205 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29202, or call ☎ 888/887-2757 or 803/734-0159; www.southcarolinaparks.com. Ask for the "South Carolina Golf Guide."

THE LAKES South Carolina's rivers feed lakes all over the state, offering plentiful opportunities for boating, fishing, and camping. With 450 miles of shoreline, the lakes are a magnet for commercial development. While lakeside resort communities are booming, 70% of the lakeshore is slated to remain in a natural state. Many operators and marinas rent boats and watercraft. For information about staying lakeside, contact the **South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism**, 1205 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29202, or call ☎ 888/887-2757 (www.southcarolinaparks.com).

STATE PARKS Camping, fishing, boating, and extensive hiking are available in South Carolina's many state parks, including those in and around Charleston (in particular Francis Marion National Forest). Cabin accommodations are rented all year in 14 of the 34 parks. All cabins are heated, air-conditioned, and fully equipped with cooking utensils, tableware, and linens. Rates range from \$60 to \$144 per night or \$288 to \$959 per week. Cabins can accommodate anywhere from 4 to 12 people. Advance reservations are necessary for summer. For full details, contact **South Carolina State Parks**, 1205 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29201 (☎ 888/887-2757; www.southcarolinaparks.com).

5 Specialized Travel Resources

The Charleston telephone directory contains a special section of community service numbers. It's quite comprehensive and includes services for most of these groups.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES The state of South Carolina has numerous agencies that assist people with disabilities. For specific information, call the **South Carolina Handicapped Services Information System** (☎ 888/978-2273; www.scaccesshelp.org). Two other agencies that may prove to be helpful are the **South Carolina Protection & Advocacy System for the Handicapped** (☎ 803/782-0639) and the **Commission for the Blind** (☎ 803/898-8700; www.sccb.state.sc.us).

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS The most important center in the state is the **South Carolina Pride Center**, 1108 Woodrow St., Columbia, SC 29205 (☎ 803/771-7713; www.scglpm.org). It's open on Wednesday and Sunday from 1 to 6pm, on Friday from 7 to 11pm, and on Saturday from 1 to 8pm. On the premises are archives, a "gay pride" shop, an inventory of films, and a meeting space. It also functions as a conduit for such other organizations as the **Low Country Gay and Lesbian Alliance** (☎ 843/720-8088).

SENIOR TRAVEL Seniors may want to contact the **Retired Senior Volunteer Program** (☎ 803/252-7734). When you're sightseeing or attending entertainment events, always inquire about discounts for seniors; they're plentiful.

FOR FAMILIES A great vacation idea is to rent a cabin in one of South Carolina's state parks, including reserves around Charleston. For rates, see "State Parks," above. For details on advance reservations and on accommodations at the 14 other state parks, contact **South Carolina State Parks**, 1205 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29201 (☎ 803/734-0156; www.southcarolinaparks.com).

6 Getting There

BY PLANE **American Airlines** and **American Eagle** (☎ 800/433-7300; www.aa.com), **Continental Airlines** (☎ 800/525-0280; www.continental.com), **Delta Air Lines** and **Delta Connection** (☎ 800/221-1212; www.delta.com), **United Airlines** and **United Express** (☎ 800/241-6522; www.united.com), and **US Airways** (☎ 800/428-4322; www.usairways.com) are the major airlines serving South Carolina. **Myrtle Beach** has scheduled air service via Continental, Delta, US Airways, AirTran (☎ 800/247-8726; www.airtran.com), and Spirit (☎ 800/772-7117; www.spiritair.com). You can fly into **Charleston** on Continental, Delta, United and United Express, and US Airways. If you're traveling to **Hilton Head**, you have the option of flying US Airways directly to the island or flying into the Savannah (Georgia) International Airport

via Continental or Delta, then driving or taking a limousine to Hilton Head, which is 1 hour away. **Independence Air** (☎ 800/FLY-FLY; www.flyi.com) has entered the competition, flying six to seven daily non-stop flights from Washington's Dulles International Airport to Charleston. The airline was immediately hailed for its low-cost airfares by visitors and locals alike.

BY CAR Interstate 95 enters South Carolina from the north near Dillon and runs straight through the state to Hardeeville on the Georgia border. The major east-west artery is I-26, running from Charleston northwest through Columbia and on up to Hendersonville, North Carolina. U.S. 17 runs along the coast, and I-85 crosses the northwestern region of the state.

South Carolina furnishes excellent travel information to motorists, and there are well-equipped, efficiently staffed visitor centers at the state border on most major highways. If you have a cellular phone in your car and need help, dial ☎ *HP for Highway Patrol Assistance.

BY TRAIN South Carolina is on the **Amtrak** (☎ 800/USA-RAIL; www.amtrak.com) New York–Miami and New York–Tampa runs, serving Charleston, among other South Carolina cities. Amtrak also has tour packages that include hotel, breakfast, and historic-site tours in Charleston at bargain rates. Be sure to ask about the money-saving “All Aboard America” regional fares or any other current fare specials. Amtrak also offers attractively priced rail/drive packages in the Carolinas.

BY BUS **Greyhound/Trailways** (☎ 800/231-2222; www.greyhound.com) has good direct service to major cities such as Charleston from out of state, with connections to almost any destination. With a 21-day advance purchase, you can get a discounted “Go Anywhere” fare (some day-of-the-week restrictions apply). Call for information and schedules, or contact the Greyhound depot in your area.

PACKAGE TOURS Conducting 8-day tours of the South, specifically South Carolina and Georgia, Collette Tours (☎ 800/832-4656 or 401/727-900; www.collettetours.com) sweeps across the antebellum South from Atlanta, cultural capital of the South, to historic Charleston, which is often called a “living museum.” The tour also encompasses the 300-year-old Boone Hall Plantation, the best example of antebellum plantation life.

Mayflower Tours (☎ 800/365-5359; www.mayflowertours.com) launches its excursions in Charleston, with its cobblestone streets and antebellum houses, and proceeds to some of the most appealing tourist destinations in Georgia or South Carolina, including Jekyll Island, Savannah, and Hilton Head. Land prices for the week-long tours start at \$1,269.

7 Getting Around

BY PLANE **Delta Air Lines** and **US Airways** (see “Getting There,” above) both have flights within South Carolina, although connections are sometimes awkward.

BY CAR South Carolina has a network of exceptionally good roads. Even when you leave the major highways for the state-maintained roadways, driving is easy on well-maintained roads. AAA services are available in Charleston at (☎ 843/766-2394).

In South Carolina, vehicles must use headlights when windshield wipers are in use as a result of inclement weather. Remember that drivers and front-seat passengers must wear seat belts.

FAST FACTS: South Carolina

Area Code It's 843 for Charleston and the South Carolina coast.

Emergencies Dial ☎ 911 for police, ambulance, paramedics, and the fire department. You can also dial ☎ 0 (zero, *not* the letter O) and ask the operator to connect you to emergency services. Travelers Aid can also be helpful; check local telephone directories.

Fishing A fishing hot line (☎ 800/ASK-FISH) gives you an up-to-date fishing report on South Carolina's major lakes, as well as information on fishing regulations. For more information, contact **South Carolina Department of Natural Resources**, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202 (☎ 803/734-3886; <http://water.dnr.state.sc.us>).

Liquor Laws The minimum drinking age is 21. Some restaurants are licensed to serve only beer and wine, but a great many offer those plus liquor in mini-bottles, which can be added to cocktail mixers. Beer and wine are sold in grocery

stores 7 days a week, but all package liquor is offered through local government-controlled stores, commonly called "ABC" (Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission) stores, which are closed on Sundays.

Newspapers & Magazines The major paper in the Low Country is the *Charleston Post and Courier* (www.charleston.net).

Police In an emergency, call ☎ **911** (no coin required).

Taxes South Carolina has a 5% sales tax and the city of Charleston adds a 6.5% accommodations tax (room or occupancy tax) to your hotel bill. Charleston County's sales tax, however, is 6.5%.

Time Zone South Carolina is in the Eastern Standard Time zone and goes on daylight saving time in summer.

Weather Phone ☎ **803/822-8135** (www.nws.noaa.gov) for an update.