

South Carolina Road Trips

In this presentation, we will explore some of the many beautiful places which showcase SC wildlife and natural history. These places have been picked for several reasons, including wildlife abundance, special plants, accessibility, availability of outdoor recreation opportunities, but not necessarily popularity among tourists (which is often why they are GOOD for wildlife & nature viewing!)

BEFORE YOU VISIT: Please check websites for good directions, GPS is not always reliable when finding some of these. Websites will also give you information about HOURS of operation, which often change throughout the year.

BE PREPARED: Always take plenty of water to drink, especially in the summer months. Lightweight long pants, long sleeved shirt, and hat will protect you from sunburn, poison ivy, mosquitoes/ticks, etc. NOTE that many of these places do not have restrooms.

RULES OF THE TRAIL: Please keep these things in mind when visiting any natural area – some may seem like common sense, but these are things often forgotten...especially when trying to see or photograph wildlife or plants:

- Stay on trails – not only so you don't get lost, but also to protect fragile vegetation.
- Do not "harass" wildlife – including approaching nests of any kind. Take a good pair of binoculars and keep your distance. It is illegal to touch/keep feathers, bones, etc.
- NO DOGS – We love dogs, but they will disturb wildlife before you ever get a chance to see it. If you must take your dog, absolutely keep it on a leash no longer than six feet.
- Do not take cuttings or dig up plants.
- Take only photographs, leave only footprints.

Technology:

- App - Map My Walk to track your progress, find your way back out.
- App - iNaturalist to see what flora & fauna others have identified in the area.
- Geocaches may be located in several of these areas.

This list is in order of BEST SEASON TO VISIT. Please view the MAP ON THE LAST PAGE for locations.

Winter: December/January/February

Great time of year for shorebirds! Also easier to see hawks and other birds of prey while there's no leaves on the trees.

1. **Jocassee Gorges** – Devils Fork State Park is a great place to enjoy Lake Jocassee in any season. In the winter, take a pontoon boat tour through Jocassee Lake Tours to see the Loons on Lake Jocassee. January/February is great time to go!
<http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/devilsfork/introduction.aspx>
<http://www.jocasseelaketours.com/>
2. **Huntington Beach** – January - considered by many to be the best birding spot in South Carolina -- anytime of year. Although you may not expect it, wintertime can yield some of the best sightings of all. Print their detailed birding checklist of over 300 species that have been seen within park boundaries before you go. Admission: \$8/adult; \$5/ S.C. Senior; \$4/youth age 6-15; Free for children 5 and younger.
<http://southcarolinaparks.com/huntingtonbeach/introduction.aspx>
3. **ACE Basin, Bear Island Wildlife Management Area** – late February - Great place to drive through, stopping often to get out and watch birds. Be sure to check the impoundment at the entrance, which you can see from Bennetts Point Road, for Tundra Swans gathered at dawn in late February. CLOSED OCTOBER THRU FEBRUARY. No restrooms, no admission fee (be sure to fill out the vehicle pass form when you enter – helps DNR to receive funding)
<https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/ManagedLand/ManagedLand/56> (be sure to check for closure dates)
<https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/sites/SC/bearisland.html>

Spring: March/April/May

Birds sing the most in the spring, so if you are hoping to hear lots of birds, visit the good birding sites in the Spring.

4. **Stevens Creek Heritage Preserve** – wildflowers – late March - Starting from the trailhead at the parking area on this moderately difficult loop trail, you will make a brief descent before you climb a ridge overlooking a beautiful river valley. To the left, an ancient species of moss and lichen coat outcroppings of rock. You will wind through trees on the hilltop, make u-turns to the left, and descend to a lush river flat splashed with wildflowers and dogwood trees. From here the view is reversed. The ridge is above and you are following the banks of the river. You are invited to appreciate the scenery, but since this area has an abundance of rare plants, walk with care. The Florida Gooseberry, Webster's Salamander and some other rare plants and animals are protected by special regulations. Rock crossings above a gentle waterfall and parts of the lower trail may be slippery in wet weather. No admission fee, no restrooms.
<https://www.sctrails.net/trails/trail/stevens-creek-heritage-preserve>
<https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/ManagedLand/ManagedLand/15>
5. **Forty Acre Rock Heritage Preserve, Kershaw** – late March, very early April. From upper parking lot - easy, flat walk out to granite out-cropping with plant life uniquely adapted to grow in seasonal pools on the rocks – including lichens, mosses, sedum, and the endangered pool sprite. Short hike, but with moderately difficult terrain, down to waterfall. No admission fee. No restrooms.
<https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/ManagedLand/ManagedLand/42>
6. **Peachtree Rock Heritage Preserve, Lexington** – early April. Easy walk downhill to Peachtree Rock and only natural waterfall in the Midlands – plants found include mountain laurel, titi, sweet pepperbush, Carolina allspice. Walk increases in difficulty somewhat once you pass that area – hilly terrain, confusing network of trails. The federally endangered Rayner's blueberry is found growing on the seepage slope within the longleaf pine forest. No admission fee. No restrooms.
<https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/peachtree-rock-heritage-preserve/>
<https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/ManagedLand/ManagedLand/102>
7. **Station Cove Falls at Oconee Station Historic Site, Mountain Rest, SC** – easy 30-minute walk to falls, trail includes mountain laurel & trillium blooming late April, may apple all along forest floor. No admission fee, no restroom.
<http://southcarolinaparks.com/oconeestation/default.aspx>
8. **Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge, McBee** (on Highway 1 in Chesterfield County) – late April, very early May. Amazing refuge with good network of roads – drive through and stop often. Trees with a white band painted around them have nesting cavities of the endangered Red-cocakded Woodpecker – keep your distance! Use good binoculars to observe the birds. Large areas of pitcher plants bloom in late April/very early May with large yellow flower. Ask at Visitor's Center for directions to the "Seepage" to see the blooms. Restrooms at Visitor Center and Lake Bee. Check website for dates of hunts (and avoid those days). No admission fee.
https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Carolina_Sandhills/
9. **Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve** – bird migration – early to Mid-May. Drive along the entrance road all the way to the end, and you will find an office building (not likely open) and a picnic shelter. On the opposite side of the grassy "parking lot" from the building, there begins a trail with relatively easy walking. Birds in mid-May might include indigo & painted buntings, hooded warbler, northern parula, summer tanager, American redstart, acadian & great-crested flycatchers. Natural trails not clearly marked. No restrooms, no admission fee. Gates are sometimes closed before you get to the building, but you can park near the gate and walk along the road to the building/picnic shelter – there is a nice overlook/observation deck behind the building.
<http://scgreatoutdoors.com/park-congareebluffshp.html>
<https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/ManagedLand/ManagedLand/101>

10. **Lewis Ocean Bay Heritage Preserve** – mid-May - At least 20 Carolina bays are found on this 9,393-acre preserve, which provides habitat for Venus flytrap, yellow pitcher plants, native orchids, black bear, bald eagles, and red-cockaded woodpeckers. The visitor will find the most plant diversity along the ecotones at the edge of the bays. In this nutrient poor environment, some plant species survive by eating insects. Open dawn to dusk, no admission fee.
<http://discoversouthcarolina.com/products/25930>
<https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/ManagedLand/ManagedLand/104>
11. **Landsford Canal State Park, Lancaster** – Easy, flat walking trail along the river to the platform where you can observe the endangered Rocky Shoals Spider Lilies blooming in late May. Also ask Rangers if the Bald Eagle nest is active (and take good binoculars!) Park admission - \$6/adult; \$3.75/S.C. senior; \$3.50/child ages 6-15; ages 5 & under free.
<http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/landsfordcanal/>

Summer: June/July/August

12. **Congaree National Park** – Boardwalk Loop Trail is 2.4 miles roundtrip, elevated section leads down into the old-growth bottomland hardwood forest. The boardwalk has benches along the way and is wheelchair and stroller accessible. Pick up the Self-guided Boardwalk Tour brochure at the Visitor Center before beginning your walk to learn more about the natural and cultural history of Congaree. In mid- to late-May, stay until dark & try to catch the synchronized fireflies. Check website for any potential full or partial closures due to flooding (year-round).
<https://www.nps.gov/cong/index.htm>
13. **Beaches of SC** – Loggerhead Sea turtles come ashore to nest from mid-May to early August. Late June, early July – best chance of seeing adults and hatchlings. Follow SCUTE on Facebook and they tell you where to see nests, inventories, etc. SCUTE, or South Carolina United Turtle Enthusiasts, is a group of volunteers dedicated to sea turtle conservation in Georgetown and Horry counties.
<https://www.facebook.com/SCUTE-36320641283/?fref=ts>
<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/seaturtle/nest.htm>
14. **Purple Martin Sanctuary on Bomb Island, Lake Murray, Irmo** – mid July, thousands of purple martins come in to roost every evening for about a month in the summer. You will have to have a boat to see this, and know where you are going. Several local outfitters will take groups out for a tour.
<http://lakemurrayfun.com/martins.shtml>
15. **Allendale Kite Fields** - From July through mid-August, swallow-tailed kites converge upon Allendale County, SC. They put on spectacular aerial displays, particularly in mornings when they hover above farm fields in search of june bugs.
<http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/sites/SC/allendale.html>
<http://www.lowersavannahriveralliance.org/index.html>

Fall: September/October/November

16. **Caesar's Head State Park – Hawk migration** – September - Hawk Migration is one of nature's most spectacular events. Each year thousands of hawks migrate south for the winter. These fascinating creatures make use of the prevailing wind currents as warm air from the valley below mixes with the cool air on the ridge of Caesars Head. The overlook provides a great opportunity to witness this annual event. \$3 adults; \$1.50 SC seniors; \$1 children age 6-15; age 5 & younger free.
<http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/caesarshead/introduction.aspx>

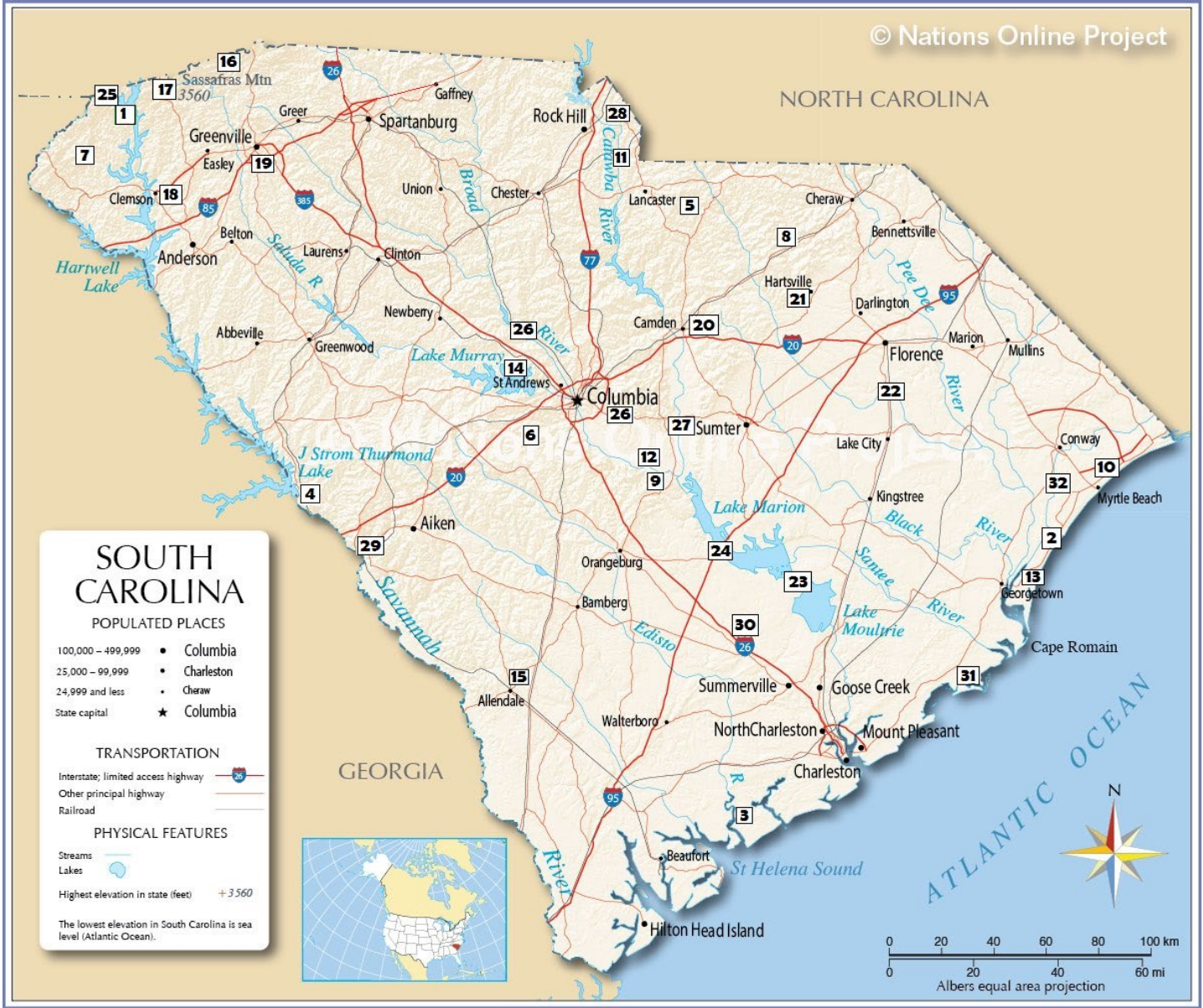
Any time of year, Mountains to the Sea

17. **Twin falls, Pickens County** – This easy trail follows along the Reedy Cove Creek the whole way with virtually no climbing or descending. There are several small side trails leading down to the creek where you can view some nice cascades, and get your feet wet on a hot summer day. After about a quarter mile the trail ends at an overlook shelter where you are treated to an excellent view of the Falls. No restrooms, no admission fee.
<https://www.sctrails.net/trails/trail/twin-falls-reedy-cove-falls-rock-falls-or-eastatoe-falls>
18. **SC Botanical Garden, Clemson** – Explore display gardens, hike nature trails, visit the Geology Museum, peruse the Art Gallery, or just relax and enjoy the 295 acres of natural beauty. New Heritage Trail includes plants native to all parts of the state, trail takes you from the Mountains to the Sea. There is also a Children’s Garden. Very easy walking, many paved trails. Great for birding too – majority of plants have high wildlife value. The Garden is open every day, dawn to dusk, free of charge.
<http://www.clemson.edu/public/scbg/>
19. **Lake Conestee Nature Preserve, Greenville** – The park contains both hardwood and evergreen forest, extensive wetlands, 3 miles of the Reedy River, and a rich diversity of wildlife habitat. Over 200 bird species have been reported by the Greenville County Bird Club. The park has been designated as an Important Bird Area of Global Significance by the National Audubon Society. Good walking trails – some paved trails, boardwalks/observation decks, natural trails. The park is open sunrise to sunset. Admission is free.
<https://conesteepereserve.org/>
20. **Goodale State Park** – 3 mile, moderately difficult canoe/kayak trail on flat water. Also short, easy walking trails along edge of lake. Canoe/Kayak Rentals : \$10/half day; \$20/day – NO RENTALS December-February.
<http://southcarolinaparks.com/goodale/introduction.aspx>
21. **Kalmia Gardens of Coker College** - <http://www.kalmiagardens.org/>
22. **Lynches River County Park** – canopy tour, archery range (BYO), splash pad, campground -
<http://www.lynchesriverpark.com/>
23. **Berkeley County Blueways** – This paddling trail system identifies over 175 miles of navigable water course from 23 trails. <https://berkeleyblueways.com/>
24. **Santee/Sparkleberry Swamp** – Fisheagle Tours has great boat tours through the area – it leaves from Santee State Park. Great birdwatching! Check out Santee State Park and Santee National Wildlife Refuge.
<http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/santee/introduction.aspx>
<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/santee/>
25. **Foothills Trail** – Foothills Trail Conference - <http://foothillstrail.org/>
26. **Palmetto Trail** – Palmetto Conservation Foundation - <http://palmettoconservation.org/palmetto-trail/>
27. **Wateree River Heritage Preserve** – Fantastic for birding. Good network of roads so you can see lots from the car. Be sure to visit the observation deck at the top of Cooks Mountain!
<https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/ManagedLand/ManagedLand/900>
28. **Anne Springs Close Greenway** – 36 miles of trails - \$6 per person | Youth (ages 5-12) \$4 per person (Monday - Thursday) <http://www.ascgreenway.org/>
29. **Phinizy Swamp & Nature Park** – North Augusta - <http://phinizycenter.org/>

30. **Francis Beidler Forest** – bird migration
<http://sc.audubon.org/chapters-centers/audubon-center-sanctuary-francis-beidler-forest>
31. **Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge**
<http://www.sccoastalfriends.org/service-area/cape-romain-national-wildlife-refuge/>
32. **Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge**
<http://www.sccoastalfriends.org/service-area/waccamaw-national-wildlife-refuge/>
33. **Botany Bay** – Edisto Island - Beautiful driving loop, great scenery from the car, Roseate Spoonbills frequent. Amazing undisturbed beach – long walk to beach, no shell collecting allowed.
<https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/ManagedLand/ManagedLand/57>
34. **St. Phillips Island** – Beaufort – Pristine barrier island once belonging to Ted Turner is now a part of Hunting Island State Park. Only accessible by ferry - Current Ferry Schedule:
Tuesdays/Thursdays/Fridays/Saturdays
9 a.m.- 2:45 p.m.
11 a.m.- 4:45 p.m.
Adults \$45/Kids 12 & under \$25

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