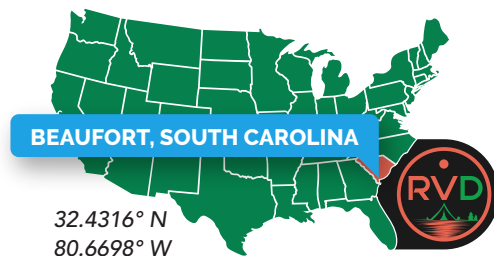


# TOP THINGS TO DO IN BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND THE LOWCOUNTRY



Written and Photographed by Gwendolyn Call



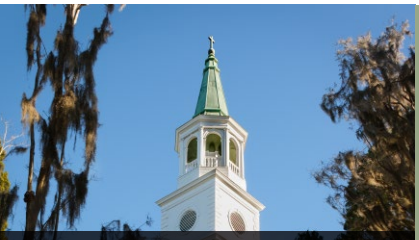
**THE SPANISH MOSS TRAIL**

**S**teeped in history and with stunning landscapes, the Lowcountry and Beaufort, South Carolina, is one of the friendliest places you'll ever visit. The second-oldest town in South Carolina attracts people who want to discover its incredible history, explore its fantastic architecture and grand homes, and then want to stay for its great outdoor activities. You can visit any time of the year with ongoing festivals and activities. Be sure to fit these Top 10 activities into your vacation.



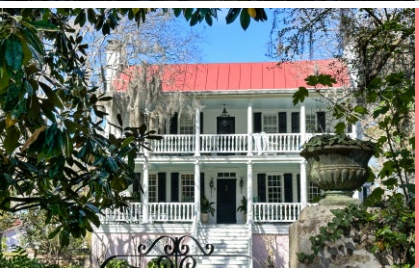
**FORT FREMONT HISTORICAL PRESERVE**

**10** The rails-to-trails movement has become an ever-popular addition to many areas, and Beaufort is no exception. Rent a bike at one of the local shops or hop on your own and pedal the 10-mile paved path through beautiful saltwater marshes, past stunning historic areas and glide under the Spanish moss draping from ancient live oak trees. With many trailheads, you can explore from the nearby town of Port Royal, go past the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort and eventually find another couple of miles on the proposed expansion to the trail.



**ST. HELENA'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**9** A quick 25-minute drive from Beaufort to Fort Fremont on nearby St. Helena Island takes you to the ruins and history center of an old fortification built to protect the southeastern coast. You can view a diorama of the old fort and grounds while asking any questions of the docent during weekend hours. The area is quiet and slightly eerie, which lets your mind wander as you discover the gun batteries and tunnels hidden in the exterior walls. Be sure to walk to the back of the property and enjoy some time on the secluded beach.



**THE POINT**

**8** A visit to St. Helena's Church is a lesson in Beaufort's history. You'll find many notable people buried here, including two British officers and two Confederate generals. Initially built in 1724, the church—with a white exterior and surrounding graveyard—has undergone many restorations and reconstructions. It has been used as a space of worship, a political hub and, during the war, it became a hospital with the headstone slabs used as operating tables.



**THE PENN CENTER NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DISTRICT**

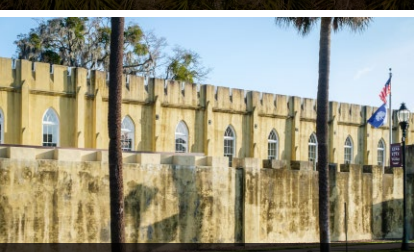
**7** Stroll through the historic and stunning neighborhood, once the wealthiest and most beautiful in the Lowcountry. It's still a place that takes you back in time with its grand antebellum homes that have been lovingly preserved. At any moment, you may expect to see Southern ladies and gentlemen step out on their porches to relax with a glass of sweet tea. Many of the homes built by plantation owners that were abandoned during the war have been fully restored and make up this incredible neighborhood. Stop by 601 Bay Street and catch a glimpse of the house made famous in the movie *The Prince of Tides*.



**THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**



**HUNTING ISLAND STATE PARK AND LIGHTHOUSE**



**BEAUFORT HISTORY MUSEUM AND VISITORS CENTER**



**BEAUFORT NATIONAL CEMETERY**



**TAKE A TOUR AND VISIT THE WATERFRONT PARK**

**6** A stop at the Penn Center on St. Helena Island will immerse you in the period following the Civil War and the effort to educate and prepare formerly enslaved people for life after slavery. As the first school for the formerly enslaved, it has a fascinating past and a reach far beyond its grounds. Start at the York W. Bailey Museum to watch an informative video and view the Education for Freedom Exhibit. Afterward, explore the 50-acre site and see the Brick Baptist Church, the original school, and the Gantt Cottage, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stayed and wrote part of his "I Have a Dream" speech.

**5** A stop at the historical park visitor center in the old Beaufort firehouse downtown will give you all the information you need to locate and tour the properties that are part of the park. You can speak with a National Park Ranger or join in on one of the walking tours. You can continue learning about the Reconstruction Era by visiting Darrah Hall and the Brick Baptist Church at the Penn Center with the information you gathered. Also, stopping at the Camp Saxton site in neighboring Port Royal will put you on your way to understanding this time.

**4** Head to St. Helena Island, home to the incredible 5,000-acre state park. Here you'll find a tremendous maritime forest with miles of hiking trails, five miles of Atlantic beachfront to play on and a historic lighthouse. You can fish, bird watch, kayak, camp and explore the Lighthouse Museum. Head to the end of the park to see the nature center, fish off the pier and walk out to the incredible boneyard beach with its unearthly scene of maritime forest destroyed by erosion and decay. Listed on the National Register, this state park has everything to keep you busy for a day, a week or more.

**3** Located in the heart of the historic district, you can't miss the ancient, yellow Arsenal building that houses the Visitor Center and History Museum. Start in the visitor center to pick up brochures about the area and buy a locally crafted souvenir, then head upstairs to the History Museum. There is so much information about the beginnings of Beaufort that you could easily spend hours here reading from the past to the present and viewing the exhibits.

**2** No visit to Beaufort is complete without a stop at the National Cemetery. One of the very first cemeteries built under the direction of President Abraham Lincoln, this quiet, somber place is worth visiting. If you're a Civil War or history buff, you'll be overwhelmed by viewing more than 9,000 headstones of soldiers interned here, including Confederate and unknown Union soldiers. The massive grounds and monuments rest under beautiful live oaks with Spanish moss dripping from their branches.

**1** The number one way to see and learn about Beaufort and the Lowcountry is to take a tour. There are so many ways to tour Beaufort! To immerse yourself, hop on a horse-drawn carriage, golf cart, minibus or guided walking tour. Of course, you can take a history tour, but how about including a ghost, movie or Gullah Heritage tour? If you combine any of these tours, you'll be a Beaufort and Lowcountry expert before you know it. Enjoy the Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park along the beautiful Beaufort River downtown following your tours. Relax on one of the many porch swings while enjoying the riverfront views and complete your day by heading to one of the restaurants or shops that line the park and Main Street.