

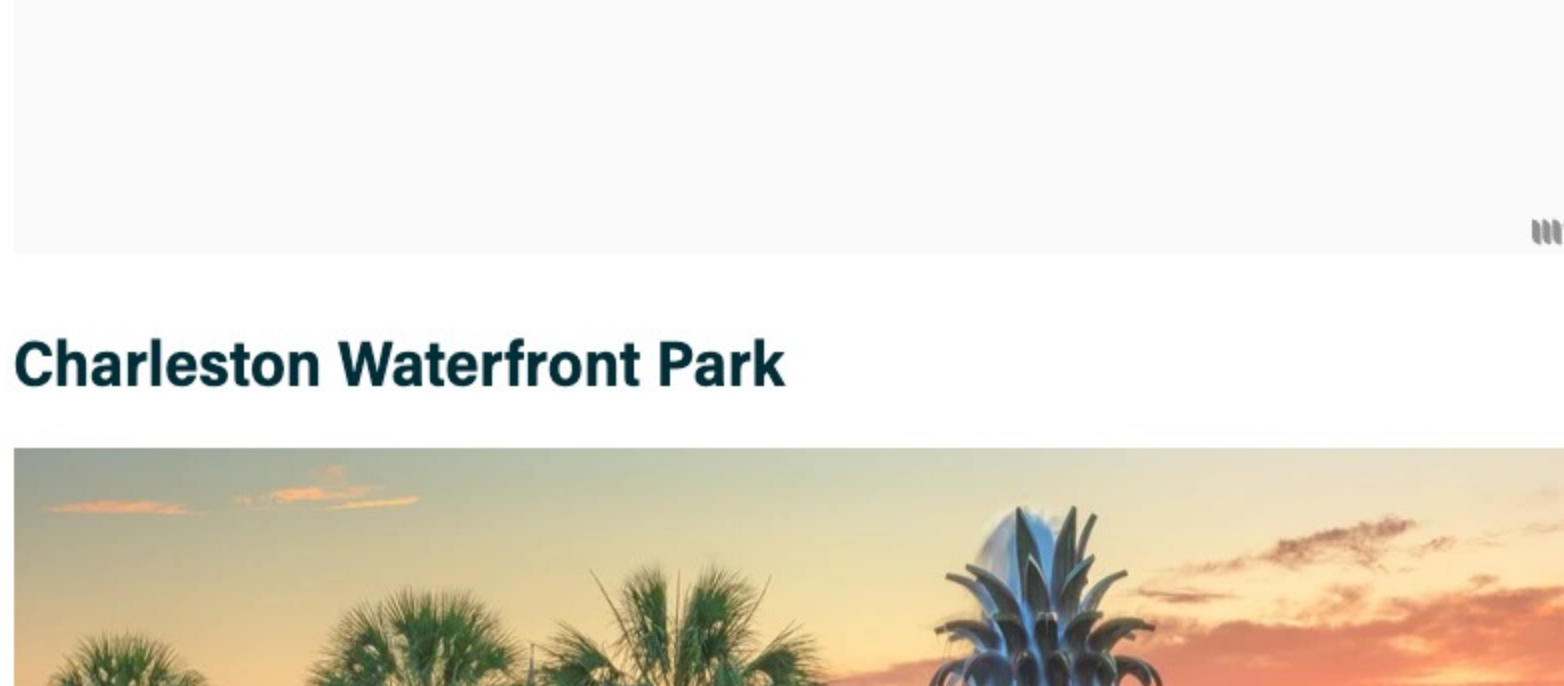
5 Of The Best Attractions For A Family-Friendly Vacation In Charleston



BY SARAH GILLILAND AUG. 5, 2024 6:30 AM EST

Charleston, South Carolina, was recently voted the number one destination to visit in the U.S. by Travel and Leisure readers for the 12th year in a row. Not only is [Charleston a favorite of adults and foodies](#), but it is also an ideal destination for families. Known for its well-preserved architecture, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality, Charleston offers a unique blend of historic attractions and modern amenities. Families visiting the city can explore its cobblestone streets, indulge in local cuisine, and enjoy a variety of outdoor activities. (Though there are some [attractions you can skip on a trip to Charleston](#), too.)

From exploring historic sites like Fort Sumter and Middleton Place to enjoying the natural beauty of Folly Beach and Isle of Palms, there's something in Charleston to fit every vacationer's desire. The city also boasts family-friendly attractions like the South Carolina Aquarium and the Children's Museum of the Lowcountry, ensuring that young visitors have plenty to see and do as well. With its beautiful coastal setting and rich cultural heritage, Charleston is an ideal destination for families seeking both adventure and relaxation.



Charleston Waterfront Park

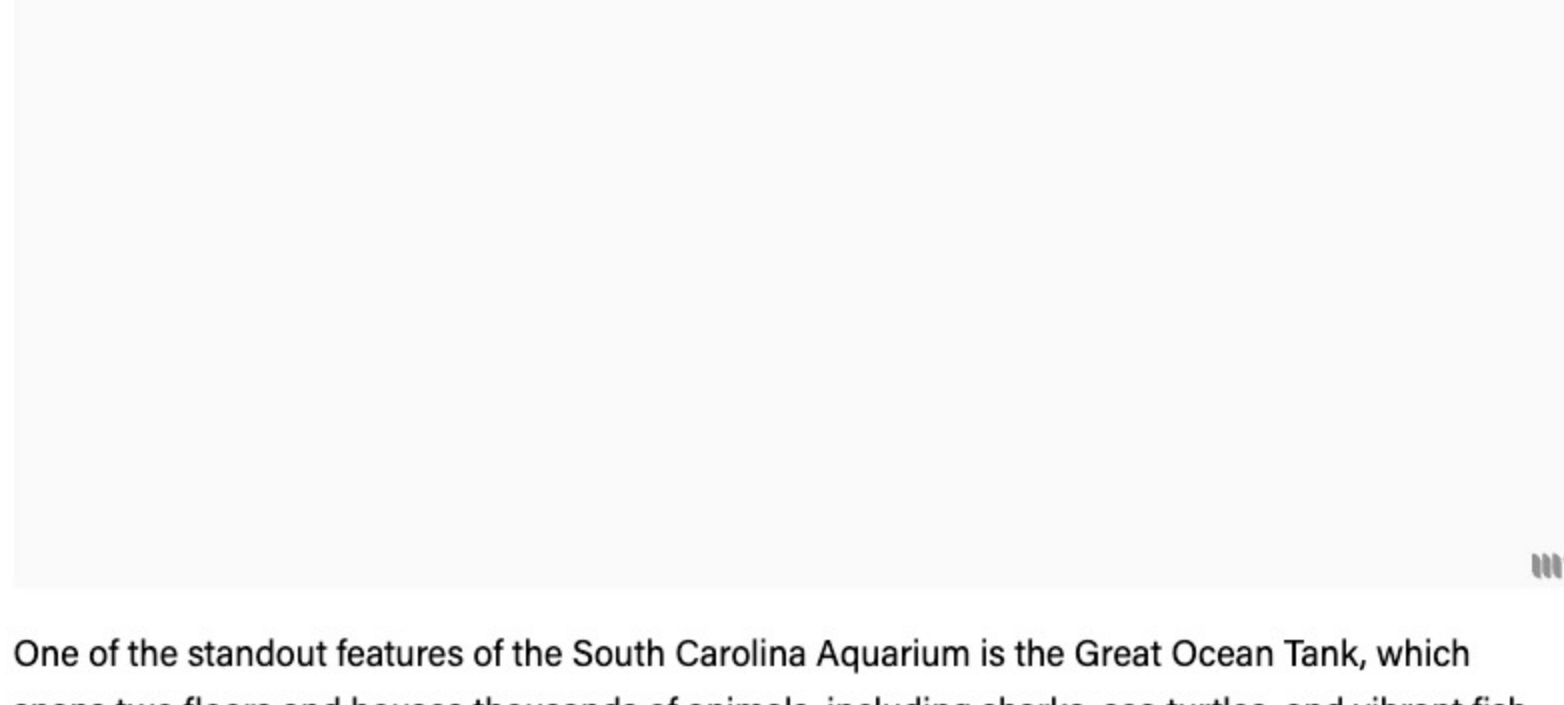
Charleston Waterfront Park is a beloved destination in Charleston, South Carolina. It offers stunning views of the Cooper River and the Charleston Harbor and provides a perfect blend of green spaces, water features, and walking paths. One of the park's highlights is the Pineapple Fountain, a popular spot for photos and a fun area for children to splash and play. The fountain is a symbol of Southern hospitality and is a favorite among both locals and tourists. Another popular feature is the long pier extending into the harbor, providing a perfect vantage point for viewing passing boats and the iconic Ravenel Bridge. Families can take a leisurely stroll along the pier or take a break on the swinging benches.

In addition to the water features, Waterfront Park offers plenty of shaded areas with benches and picnic tables. The wide, grassy areas are great for children to run around and play. The park's location in downtown Charleston also makes it a convenient stop during a day of exploring the city's historic district as it is within walking distance of many shops and restaurants.

South Carolina Aquarium

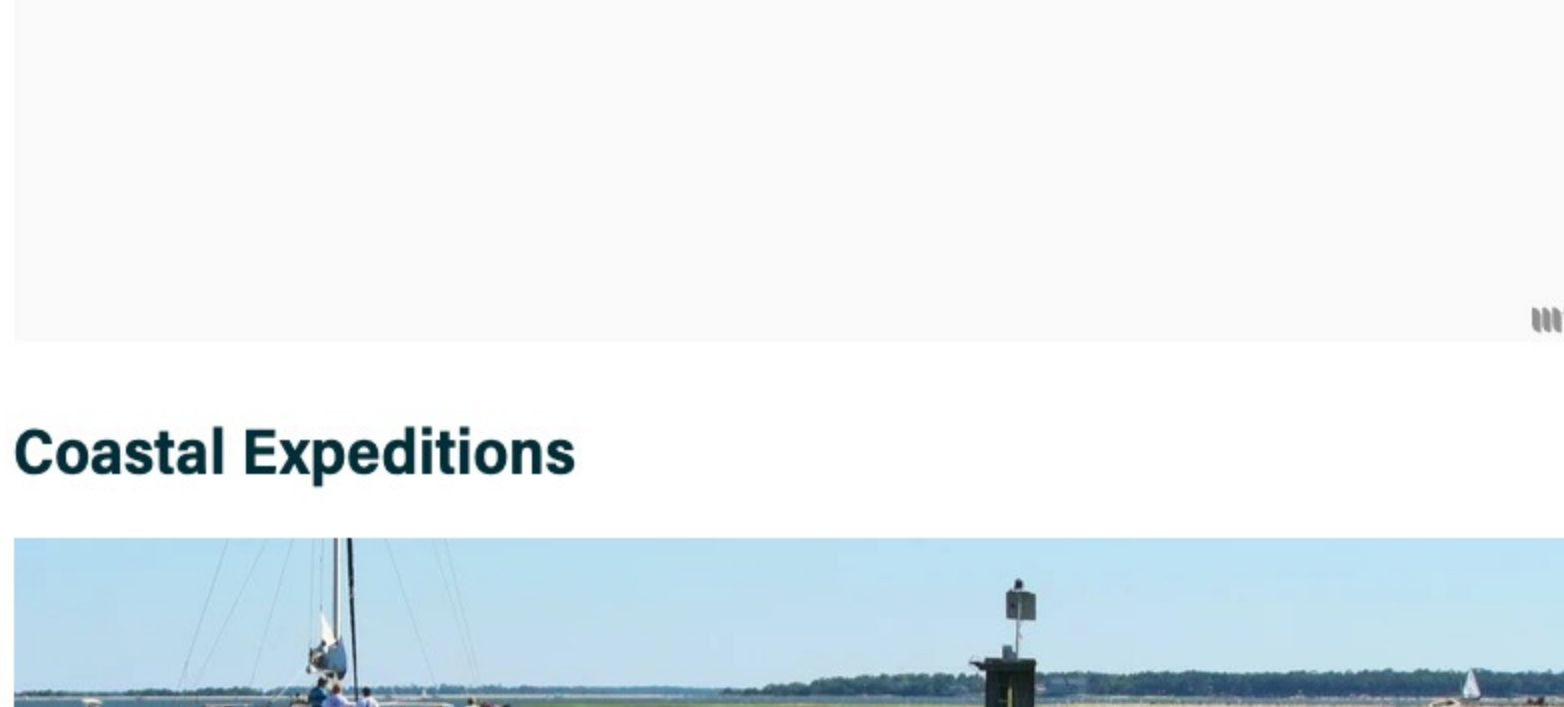


The South Carolina Aquarium, located on the historic Charleston Harbor, showcases a diverse array of marine life native to the state's coastal regions and beyond. The facility is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., allowing ample time for exploration. General admission tickets are dynamically priced and are usually lower if you book in advance. There are discounts for children and those under three admitted for free.



One of the standout features of the South Carolina Aquarium is the Great Ocean Tank, which spans two floors and houses thousands of animals, including sharks, sea turtles, and vibrant fish species. Another popular exhibit is the Touch Tank, where visitors can interact with gentle marine creatures like stingrays, sea stars, and horseshoe crabs. This hands-on experience is particularly enjoyable for young children, but teens will probably like it, too.

In addition to its aquatic exhibits, the aquarium offers various educational programs and interactive displays that delve into the importance of conservation and environmental stewardship. Families can also enjoy the daily animal feedings and dive shows, where knowledgeable staff members provide insights into the behaviors and habitats of the aquarium's residents.



Coastal Expeditions

Coastal Expeditions in Charleston, South Carolina, offers a variety of outdoor adventures that allow families to explore the region's natural beauty. Specializing in eco-friendly tours, the company provides guided kayak tours, boat tours, and paddleboard excursions, giving visitors a chance to experience Charleston's rich coastal ecosystems up close. Coastal Expeditions offers daily tours, with hours varying based on the tides and weather conditions. We recommend that you book in advance, as tours can fill up quickly, especially during peak seasons.

Kayak tours start at \$48 per person, while boat tours range from \$40 to \$85 per person. Coastal Expeditions offers family-friendly packages and discounts for children, making it a budget-friendly option for groups. They also provide all necessary equipment, including kayaks, life jackets, and paddles, along with knowledgeable guides who ensure safety and provide informative commentary.

Families may particularly enjoy the Morris Island Shark Tooth Beach Drop, which combines a scenic boat ride with an opportunity to hunt for shark teeth on the island. The Shem Creek Kayak Tour is another popular choice. It offers a leisurely paddle through tidal creeks and marshes, where participants can observe local marine life and learn about the area's ecology. For those looking for a more personalized experience, private tours are available, allowing families to tailor the adventure to their interests and pace.

The Charleston Museum

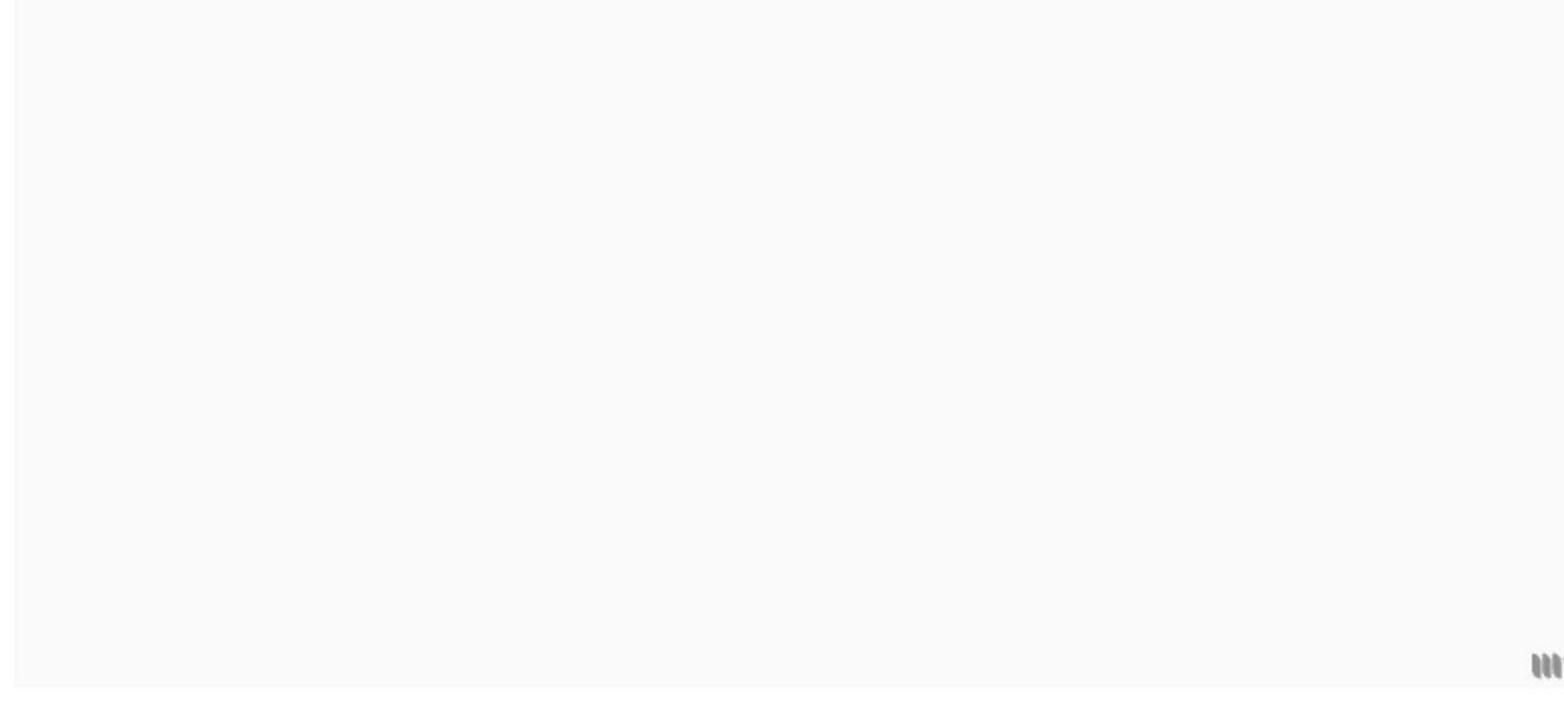


The Charleston Museum, founded in 1773, is considered America's first museum. Located in the heart of downtown Charleston, it is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Mondays. Admission prices are reasonable, and children two and under enter for free. The museum also offers combination tickets with other nearby historic sites for visitors looking to explore more of Charleston's heritage.



At The Charleston Museum, families are in for a treat with a diverse range of exhibits and activities that cater to all ages. A major draw is the Kidstory exhibit, a specially designed interactive space for young visitors. This area allows children to interact with hands-on displays, try on historical costumes, and explore a recreated 18th-century ship's cabin. It's a fun and educational experience that helps kids grasp the history and culture of Charleston in an engaging way.

Another must-see is the Natural History Gallery. Families can enjoy displays of fossils, skeletons, and preserved specimens. The museum also houses extensive collections of decorative arts, textiles, and artifacts from Charleston's past, including items from the Revolutionary and Civil War periods. For those keen on local artisanship, the Lowcountry History Hall shines a light on the cultural contributions of various communities, including African Americans, Native Americans, and European settlers.



Historic Tours of Downtown Charleston



Charleston's historic charm is best experienced through its numerous downtown tours. One of the standout offerings is "Beau's Charleston Adventure," a new scavenger hunt by Bulldog Tours designed specifically with families in mind. A friendly, knowledgeable guide leads all walking tours, and children can complete their scavenger hunt clues while on any of the historical tours. Beau's Charleston Adventure comes with an adorable plush bulldog that children get to keep in addition to the collectible guide map. Once filled in, families can collect an additional prize for completion at tour headquarters down by the Charleston City Market.

For those seeking an easier way to see the Holy City, the city's popular carriage tours offer a unique way to see Charleston's historic district. These horse-drawn tours provide a leisurely pace to take in the architecture and hear stories of the past, making them ideal for children who may enjoy the novelty of riding in a carriage. After dark, Charleston's haunted history comes to life with tours like the Haunted Jail Tour, also offered by Bulldog Tours. This tour takes older children, teens, and adults through the Old City Jail, a place known for its eerie past and reported ghostly encounters. While not suitable for very young children, these evening tours provide a thrilling experience for families with older members, offering a spine-tingling glimpse into Charleston's darker history. Here's what makes [Charleston one of the most budget-friendly cities on the East Coast](#).

