

EDUCATION MEETS ADVENTURE

By Lockie Hunter ♦ WNC Parent contributor

With so many family destinations within a short drive of Western North Carolina it's easy to find fun married with educational opportunities. Three nearby historic cities offer top-notch family activities. Here is a sampling.

Savannah

Savannah's bounty is certain to delight both parent and child. Many of Savannah's historical excursions are outside, providing the opportunity to learn history while experiencing the natural world.

Begin your trip with a family stroll along Historic River Street's Pedestrian Walk.

Featuring a park and a pier, children can feed the wildlife while adults secure tickets to a river tour or dolphin tour. Learn history afloat on one of Savannah's Riverboat Tours. Hear your captain's historical tales of the city woven with facts about Savannah's modern day port.

Another watery attraction not to be missed is an Alligators Galore Tour. Choose from coastal eco dolphin gator cruises, fossil shark tooth excursions, kayak outer island adventures or port cruises. Beverly Hollingsworth, with Alligators Galore, said that you can "design your own personalized trip with local master naturalists. The trip is a photographer's and outdoor lover's delight!"

Once back on dry land, consider taking A Child's View of Savannah Walking Tour with guide Ted Eldridge.



SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT

Enjoy time on the water during one of Savannah's many water excursion opportunities.

He drew on his skills and experience as a lifelong educator and parent to develop this scavenger hunt, geared to ages 4-12. "I offer a verbal challenge and then I lead them to the next area on the walking history tour of Savannah's beautiful Historic District," Eldridge said.

Become a Junior Ranger at Fort Pulaski. Offering interpretive programs including musket firings and fort tours, Fort Pulaski is located in a national park, and the salt marsh boasts a protected species of wildlife. The fort's lighthouse overlook trail allows visitors to better view the ethereal Cockspur Island Lighthouse.

For the child (or adult!) who loves railroads, chug on over to the Roundhouse Railroad Museum. Meander through the seven historic railroad structures and enjoy exhibits explaining the workings of a steam engine.

Finally, when the kids simply need to let off some steam by running, jumping, playing and climbing, head to Forsyth Park. With 30 acres of playgrounds and large lawns shaded by large mature oaks your family can picnic, fly kites or just relax amid the magnolias.

Continues on Page 4

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TRAVEL GUIDE

Continued from Page 3

Williamsburg and the historic triangle

Offering three historic destinations within easy drive of one another, the objective of Williamsburg, Jamestowne and Yorktown is to offer hands-on history with a bang. History truly does come to life at the 301-acre Colonial Williamsburg. Hundreds of shops and homes are reconstructed to their original details.

“Colonial Williamsburg is a fantastic destination for families with kids of all ages to enjoy,” says Katherine Laucks, a spokeswoman for the site..

Children will be enchanted with this living village as they ask questions of the shopkeepers, all dressed in period costume. “The Children’s Orientation Walking Tour provides families with must-see stops during their visit,” says Laucks, who adds that “Colonial Williamsburg’s staff is expert at speaking with kids of all ages, helping them to be part of the story by helping them participate in demonstrations and programs and keeping them engaged so the entire family is happy.”

Scavenger hunts at the art museums are specifically for kids, and all historic area buildings and programs are family friendly. Get your hands dirty tending a colonial garden or join the militia and march!

James M. Perry, acting public affairs officer for Colonial National Historic Park, says Historic Jamestowne, the site of the first permanent English settlement in North America, is a place of beginnings.

“Walk in the footsteps of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas as we explore the foundations of our representative government. Trace the origins of our modern language, laws and customs from the beginning of America,” Perry says. The Jamestown Junior Ranger program is designed for visitors between the ages of 6-12. “It generally takes about two hours,” Perry says, “and gives

A FAMILY TRAVEL GUIDE TO 3 HISTORIC CITIES

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTERS

- ◆ **Savannah:** savannahvisit.com, 877-SAVANNAH, 912-944-0455
- ◆ **Williamsburg area:** visitwilliamsburg.com, 757-229-6511, 800-368-6511
- ◆ **Charleston:** explorecharleston.com, 800-868-8118, 843-853-8000



GANNETT

The Fife and Drum Corps, Colonial Williamsburg's musical ambassadors, perform weekends in the spring and fall and daily during the summer months.

our young visitors, and their parents, a good background into the history of Jamestown.”

The Pinch Pot program is a hands-on, 20-minute children's program that will show participants how the American Indians and English settlers made and used pottery. “Each child receives a small ball of clay to make a souvenir pot using the pinch method employed by American Indians. All families with children are encouraged to attend,” Perry says.

Jamestown Settlement allows families to view the Virginia colony at its roots in the 1600s as they interact with the cultures of the Powhatan Indians,

Europeans and Africans of the time. Families can explore a life-size colonists' fort or climb aboard replicas of the three ships that sailed from England to Virginia. The settlement even offers home-school programs with a variety of curriculum-based education programs for a range of grade levels. There are special admission combinations that allow access to both the settlement and the Yorktown Victory center.

Yorktown Battlefield is a perfect find for those older children studying American history. As the site of the last big battle of the American Revolution, a trip to Yorktown includes artillery demonstrations and a young soldiers program.

Charleston

Charleston and the barrier islands are well known for sun, surf and seafood, but history also walks the streets in the Palmetto City.

Begin your trip in the historic district. Cool off with ocean breezes in Waterfront Park then promenade past colorful Antebellum mansions to White Point Gardens at the Battery, where the locals still go for a stroll.

Breathe in the history of this town under drooping oaks while climbing on the Civil War-era cannons. Fort Sumter and the U.S.S. Yorktown are both visible from the Battery.

Combine two extraordinary bits of American history into one educational morning. A trip to the Lowcountry is not complete without climbing aboard the colossal U.S.S. Yorktown aircraft carrier at the Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum.

Nick Tompkins, from Patriots Point, notes that “the Naval and Maritime Museum strives to preserve the living history of our nation's bravest men and women while telling their stories in honorable, educational and engaging ways. It's history you can touch.”

From Patriots Point, hop on a tour boat to historic Fort Sumter, the site of the first shots of the Civil War. Go in the morning before the sun is at its hottest.

Boone Hall Plantation, in nearby Mount Pleasant, has been growing crops for 320 years, making it one of America's oldest working plantations. Children will enjoy the many activities including a plantation coach tour, a colorful butterfly pavilion and a live Gullah culture presentation. Be sure to visit the new Black History in America exhibit on display in nine original slave cabins.

Recently renovated 80-acre state park Charles Towne Landing showcases exhibits designed by naturalist Jim Fowler. Boasting a 53-foot replica of a colonial trading ship and a reproduction of a 17th-century original settler village, Charles Towne Landing is also home to

Continues on Page 10

A FAMILY TRAVEL GUIDE TO 3 HISTORIC CITIES

Continued from Page 5

many species of animals that would have greeted the early settlers.

End your day at the Old Charleston Market watching local women weave their craft of seagrass baskets. Purchase a one-of-a-kind basket to take home or peruse the many market stalls looking for Lowcountry treasures from spices to shell jewelry to sunhats.

Contact freelance writer Lockie Hunter at lockie@lockiehunter.com.



At Boone Hall Plantation in Mount Pleasant, outside of Charleston, kids can learn about slavery and Gullah culture by touring slave cabins.

SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT

Summer Camp Will Soon Be Here!

Public registration begins April 5th. Be sure to secure your spot!

Camp Dates: June 14th - August 13th
Time: 7:30am - 6:00pm
Location: 750 Haywood Road
Cost: See Kim to determine individual weekly rates (Lunch Provided)
 Teen Center Available for ages 14-18
 Spaces limited.

- \$60 fee due upon registration
- Scholarships offered and Buncombe County Child Care Vouchers accepted
- All participants must be 6 years old and enrolled in the 1st Grade

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