

BEST HIKING ADVENTURES

presented by



Awendaw Passage of the Palmetto Trail (Francis Marion

National Forest): The Palmetto Trail, signature project of the Palmetto Conservation Foundation, crosses the state from the mountains to the sea with the Awendaw Passage its coastal terminus. The 7 mile Awendaw Passage passes through maritime forests of pine and palmetto and is arguably the northernmost “tropical” trail in the U.S. Bring binoculars — the broad vistas across the salt marsh are a haven for both wading shorebirds and migrating songbirds. The sandy, flat trail is appropriate for all ages and is bikeable.

Directions from Charleston: Head north on Hwy 17. 3 miles past Awendaw turn at the Buck Hall Recreation Area sign and the trailhead is at the end of the road. There is a \$5 per vehicle fee to park.

Caw Caw County Park (Ravenel): Once the site of several working rice plantations carved into a cypress swamp, Caw Caw now boasts 6 miles of raised trails through the watery landscape. Alligators, deer, and otters abound, and bald eagles, kites, and a host of waterfowl are commonly present. Trailside interpretive signs explain the land’s natural and plantation history. Despite the excellent wildlife viewing opportunities, visitors often have the trails at Caw Caw all to themselves.

Directions from Charleston: Head 15 miles south on Hwy 17 from downtown. Enter the park from Hwy 17 on your right.

Edisto Beach State Park (Edisto Island): Perhaps S.C.’s finest coastal state park, trails at Edisto include a 1.7 mile walk to Spanish Mount, a Native American shell mound dated to 2,000 B.C. Half-mile loops circle the maritime forest and marshland, where deer, osprey, and bobcat abound. The finest hiking at Edisto may be on the beach itself, known for its “boneyard” of trees emerging from the surf at high tide, and the abundance of sizeable whelk shells washed up along the shore. The park is a fantastic place to car-camp.

Directions from Charleston: Take Hwy 17 S for 25 miles to SC 174 (there are signs for Edisto Beach). Continue 20 miles south on 174 to the park.

I on Swamp Trail (Francis Marion National Forest): This easy, 2 mile loop follows the abandoned rice-field dykes along the remnants of Witheywood Plantation. The narrow causeways pass through bald cypress wetlands and swamp, providing close sightings of alligators and a multitude of migrating songbirds in the spring and fall (the rare Bachman’s warbler is known to stop here).

Directions from Charleston: Take Hwy 17 N 23 miles to I’on Swamp Rd. (Forest Service 228). Take a left and continue 2.5 miles to the parking area on left.

Audubon Swamp Garden (Magnolia Plantation): By the time most visitors to Magnolia Plantation have walked the ornate gardens, navigated the topiary maze, and played in the petting zoo, they breeze by the Audubon Swamp Garden on their way out the gate. But the 60-acre swampland is a destination in itself (only a \$4 entry on its own). Over a mile of raised dikes allow as close an encounter with gators, egrets, and herons as any hike in the Lowcountry. Tupelo and cypress trees rise from the mat of green plant life covering the surface of the water. Combined with nature trails within the Plantation, there are over 7 miles of trail to explore.

Directions from Charleston: Take Hwy 17 S and bear right onto SC 61. Continue 10 miles until you reach the plantation district. Magnolia is the third on your right, after Drayton Hall and Middleton Place.

Related Resources

Palmetto Trail Info & Maps: Palmetto Conservation Foundation / 803- 771-0870 / www.palmettoconservation.org

Francis Marion National Forest Ranger Station, McClellanville: 843-887-3257 / www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms

Caw Caw Interpretive Center: 843-889-8898 / 5200 Savannah Hwy / Hwy 17 S, Charleston / www.ccprc.com/cawcaw.htm

Edisto Beach State Park: 843-869-2756 / 8377 State Cabin Rd., Edisto Island / www.southcarolinaparks.com/park-finder/state-park/1298.aspx

Audubon Swamp Garden: 800-367-3517 / 3550 Ashley River Rd., Charleston / www.magnoliaplantation.com