

Charleston with kids 3-day itinerary

Heading to Charleston for a long weekend with the kids? You're in for a fascinating dose of history, combined with stunning sea life and a healthy dose of plain ol' outside fun.

Here are some suggestions for making the most of your days and nights, complete with built-in playtime!

Day 1: The forts

MORNING:

Start out your trip with a dose of Charleston history at [Fort Sumter](#). The fort, situated in the middle of Charleston harbor, is where the Civil War began. Boats ferry you over to the fort, and really informed guides lead you through the compound. Tours leave at 9:30 a.m., noon and 2:30 p.m. for most of the year. From most of the winter, tours are at 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. [Tickets](#) are \$16 for adults; \$10 for children; kids 5 and younger are free. Plan on spending all morning.

LUNCH:

Get in the car and head north over the Ravenel Bridge on U.S. 17 North. You're headed to [Jack's Cosmic Dogs](#), a hot dog joint described as "the Jetsons meet Charleston." It's three miles north of the Isle of Palms Connector. Read about it [here](#).

AFTERNOON:

Head back toward Charleston and hang a left over the Isle of Palms connector. That's where you'll find Charleston's famous beaches and [Fort Moultrie](#), where patriots fought off the British and kept Charleston from occupation in 1776. Admission is \$3 for adults. Children 15 and younger are free.

After tracing the Revolutionary War, look for the black metal bench on the grounds of the visitors center. The "[Bench by the Road](#)" was placed there by Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author [Toni Morrison](#) in memory of the thousands of slaves who were brought through Sullivan's Island – the entry point for nearly half of all captive Africans shipped to North America.

After leaving the fort, take an hour and walk on the beach. Seashells are free and make great souvenirs.

DINNER:

Have dinner at [The Wreck of Richard & Charlene](#), a seafood haunt on Mount Pleasant's famous Shem Creek. The restaurant, like most things in Charleston, has history and a great story. A trawler was wrecked on the restaurants' very spot during Hurricane Hugo.

Day 2:

MORNING:

Start your day off at the [South Carolina Aquarium](#), a real showcase for Charleston on the waterfront. Part of the aquarium projects over the harbor, which makes for great views. The aquarium has all sort of special programs and tours throughout the year. Take a look at the website for details. The aquarium is on the harbor, and parking is convenient.

LUNCH:

After leaving the aquarium, stroll along the waterfront and let the kids climb on the cannons guarding the harbor. If you visit in the summer, the splash park near the aquarium is a nice way to cool off.

Stop in for lunch at [Jestine's](#), 251 Meeting St. It's Lowcountry cooking at its best. And if you can't get a table there, the [Kickin' Chicken](#), 337 King St., was rated as having the best kids meal in the city.

AFTERNOON:

Afterwards, get dessert at [Cupcake](#), 433 King St., or Charleston's Candy Kitchen, 32 N. Market. It's a [mega-sweets-filled emporium](#) that's a must-stop for children of all ages.

Take your candy and cupcakes on a [horse-and-carriage tour](#) of the city. The guides are colorful and the kids always love horses. You'll find them parked near the market.

End your afternoon learning about Charleston's renegade history on a [Pirate tour](#). Or if you're into things that go bump in the night, evening [ghost tours](#) are popular too.

DINNER:

Ever wonder who sat at your same dinner table? Head to [Hyman's](#), 215 Meeting St. It's a mainstay in Charleston for decades, and you'll see. Each table has placards telling guests who has eaten there before. The staff does a great job catering to children, and the menu is as deep and wide as the harbor.

DAY 3:

MORNING:

Start your day by taking a stroll over the [Ravenel Bridge](#), the stunning diamond-tower bridge over Charleston harbor. It's about a three-mile walk, and you'll likely see lots of other folks making the trek. There's an area for walkers and joggers, and another one for bikers. Don't forget your camera. You'll want to capture the stunning views. Best parking is near the cruise terminal off East Bay Street.

After the bridge walk, you'll end up at the [Mount Pleasant Waterfront Park](#), a real gem in the Charleston area. Enjoy the outside a bit more and grab lunch on the pier, which juts out into the harbor underneath the bridge.

AFTERNOON:

Walk or take a taxi around the corner to Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum. It's one of the largest museums of its kind. You can tour the USS Yorktown, USS Clamagore, Medal of Honor Museum, Cold War Submarine Memorial and the only Vietnam Support Base Camp in the U.S. Plan to stay there all afternoon.

[Take a water taxi](#) back to the mainland. It's a great way to see the harbor close up, and it will drop you right back at the aquarium.

DINNER:

Haven't had enough great views? Dinner is at [Fleet Landing](#), which has the one of the best views in town. The restaurant is in a hurricane-proof retired Naval building and juts out over the marsh.

OPTIONAL FOURTH DAY:

If you have time to stay another day or want to squeeze something else in, here are some suggestions the children will love:

[Charlestowne Landing](#): Here a group of English settlers landed in 1670 and established what would become the birthplace of the Carolinas colony, the plantation system of the American South, and one of the continent's first major port cities. Guides tell the story, and you can visit Charleston's only 17th century replica sailing ship and an authentic experimental crop garden. There's also a natural habitat zoo and 80 acres of gardens.

[This Middleton Place](#): This 18th century rice plantation is a National Historical Landmark comprising America's oldest landscaped gardens, a museum and plantation stables. You can see craftspeople at work, including blacksmiths, potters, carpenters and weavers. And one of the oak trees is more than 1,000 years old.
4300 Ashley River RD

[Boone Hall Plantation](#): Boone Hall is one of America's oldest working, living plantations. They have been continuously growing and producing crops for over 320 years. Once known for cotton and pecans, they now grow strawberries, tomatoes, and pumpkins, as well as many other fruits and vegetables for our visitors to enjoy. The plantation has lots of different tours and exhibits, some of which are seasonal. Check the website for details.

[The Glass Onion](#): If you're looking for lunch on the way out of town, try The Glass Onion. It's a couple miles from downtown on U.S. 17 South. Look for nicely priced terrific Southern cooking. It's a place not to miss.

Where to stay:

Charleston is full of lovely old buildings, many of which have been turned into inns. Ask about room size when making reservations. A great resource for finding just the right place is www.explorecharleston.com