

## **2010 South Carolina Gardens 4-Day Itinerary**

Garden lovers will find much to like about South Carolina. One Charleston plantation boasts the first formal gardens in the Colonies and they're still open for viewing. Another, the birthplace of the commercially available azalea and camellia.

Near Myrtle Beach you'll find the nation's largest outdoor sculpture collection in a stellar garden setting. Newberry is home to one of the nation's largest orchid greenhouses. Nearby in Greenwood is one of America's largest mail-order garden plant operations. Clemson and Columbia both have large public horticultural gardens.

Of course, the seasons drive the destinations for this kind of trip. Spring is probably the ideal time, when the azaleas are in full bloom, starting at the coast and moving upstate. The view is stunning in neighborhoods across the state and the formal gardens are at their peak.

Here is a sample itinerary. For more, visit the [Plantations and Gardens page](#) at [www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com](http://www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com).

**Day 1: Where it all Began:** Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, Middleton Place, Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site, Battery & White Point Gardens (Charleston).

**Day 2: Up the River and to the Coast:** Azalea Park (Summerville), Mepkin Abbey, Cypress Gardens (Moncks Corner), Boone Hall Plantation (Mount Pleasant), Brookgreen Gardens (Murrells Inlet).

**Day 3: Centrally Located:** Kalmia Gardens of Coker College (Hartsville), Swan Lake Iris Gardens (Sumter), Edisto Memorial Gardens (Orangeburg), Fryar's Topiary Garden (Bishopville), Riverbanks Zoo & Garden in Columbia.

**Day 4: Go West, Young (at Heart) Gardeners:** Carter & Holmes Orchids (Newberry), Park Seed (Greenwood), Hopelands Gardens (Aiken), South Carolina Botanical Garden (Clemson).

### **Details, Details ...**

South Carolina boasts many beautiful gardens from the Upstate to the Grand Strand. Here are a few we suggest you visit during your next South Carolina vacation. Be sure to check online or by phone with your specific destination to verify hours of operation before making final plans.

**Day 1: Charleston** - With gardens dating to the 1680s, [Magnolia Plantation & Gardens](#) is a birthplace of the commercially grown azalea and camellia and now also features tropical and swamp gardens, a wildlife art gallery and an impressive antique collection. Nearby stately [Middleton Place](#), a National Historic Landmark, is an 18<sup>th</sup> Century rice plantation that boasts America's first formal landscape gardens and a fully stocked plant

center for today's gardener. Potters, weavers and other artisans also are on hand to display the skills of those older days. Closer to downtown, [Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site](#) preserves the site where Barbadian planters landed in 1670, and now features a replica crop garden among its many offerings. Downtown, check out the colorful homes and plantings of the [Battery & White Point Gardens](#) on Charleston Harbor.

**Day 2: Azaleas, Monks, Plantations and Sculpture Gardens** – If the azaleas are in bloom, make a point of visiting 12-acre [Azalea Park](#) in Summerville for the unforgettable riot of seasonal color. Then it's off to [Mepkin Abbey](#), a serene Trappist monastery on the Cooper River. A national colonial leader's plantation that was later home to the Luce publishing family, it's now home to a group of monks who raise and sell mushrooms and maintain beautifully landscaped grounds that include a wildflower labyrinth and formal plantings. Nearby is [Cypress Gardens](#), a 175-acre swamp garden with boat rides, a butterfly house and trails through the azaleas, wisteria and daffodils. Back toward the coast is [Boone Hall Plantation](#) in Mount Pleasant, America's oldest working plantation at 320 years and counting. An iconic live oak alley is a highlight as is the haunting, unique row of brick slave cabins. Seasonally, and the growing season is long here, there are you-pick offerings including peaches, pumpkins, strawberries, tomatoes and more. Then an hour drive up the coast gets you to unforgettable [Brookgreen Gardens](#) in Murrells Inlet. A sprawling, 9,000-acre property, it's home to America's largest outdoor sculpture collection, extensive garden plantings, a naturalistic zoo and boat rides through the ancient rice fields.

**Day 3: Inland Gems – Along the banks of Black Creek, with a 65-foot elevation drop feeding botanical diversity,** [Kalmia Gardens of Coker College](#) in Hartsville makes for an enchanting walk in the woods. Then there's [Swan Lake Iris Gardens](#) in Sumter, where a blackwater lake has become home to thousands of blooming irises in the spring and colorful camellias and other seasonal bloomers year-round. There's also waterfowl by the hundreds, including several species of resident swans. Be sure to check out the thousands of long-blooming roses in the large national trial plantings at [Edisto Memorial Gardens](#) in Orangeburg and then take a stroll on the boardwalk along the blackwater Edisto River. A unique visit is then in order to [Fryar's Topiary Garden](#) just off Interstate 20 in Bishopville, where a couple acres of intricate, uniquely creative topiary are maintained by master topiary artist Pearl Fryar. Then in the state capital of Columbia, there's [Riverbanks Zoo & Garden](#). The zoo itself is full of lush plantings and then across the river is about 70 acres of botanical gardens, including a large walled formal garden, a shade garden and woodlands walks along the Saluda River, where cool water and a Deep South location makes for the unusual sight of Spanish moss on mountain laurel.

**Day 4: Greenhouses Galore, Formal Splendor and Horticultural Genius** – [Carter & Holmes Orchids](#) near Newberry boasts 18 greenhouses, 93,000 square feet of tropical beauty and is one of the nation's largest growers of orchids. Plant lovers will find it stunning. Then it's over to Greenwood for a visit to [Park Seed](#), one of the nation's largest mail-order plant operations and a great place to visit in person, with its robust garden center. Formal garden splendor from the golden days of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is the order

of the day at [Hopelands Gardens](#) in equestrian-happy Aiken. Then there's the [South Carolina Botanical Garden](#) at Clemson University, where budding horticulturists cut their chops under the guidance of noted plant masters, yielding 290 acres of diverse plantings.

***Now, to Eat and Sleep:***

Dining and accommodation options on this itinerary range from the inexpensive to notably luxurious and opulent. Good places to explore options online include [www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com](http://www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com), [www.ExploreCharleston.com](http://www.ExploreCharleston.com) and [www.SCATR.com](http://www.SCATR.com).