

South Carolina Heritage Tourism Development



For more information
on the
South Carolina Heritage Corridor
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South Carolina
Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism

An economic development initiative for rural SC

South Carolina's Heritage Corridor

The nationally recognized South Carolina Heritage Corridor is a grassroots initiative designed to use natural, cultural, and historic resources to provide economic development through tourism. The 240 mile corridor started as an idea in one rural community and has grown to encompass 14 counties in South Carolina, stretching from the mountains of Oconee County to the port city of Charleston. These counties have been divided into four regions which reveal a vibrant history of the land and its people.

In 1996, federal legislation designated the South Carolina Heritage Corridor a **National Heritage Area**. This designation was the culmination of an initiative that began at the local level. In 1994, the South Carolina Heritage Areas Program was created by Executive Order of the Governor, in recognition of the value of heritage tourism to the economic revitalization of rural communities. Through the continued support and technical assistance of private citizens, the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT), and various state agencies, a master plan for the implementation of a heritage corridor in South Carolina was developed. The Heritage Tourism Development Office was then created by SCPRT to partner with the private sector in orchestrating the planning and development of the Heritage Corridor.

The management of the corridor combines a nonprofit partnership board, state agencies, regional boards, local governments and private sector partners to create a network of sponsors that touch every aspect of the 14 corridor counties. SCPRT has made a two year commitment to coordinate the process and provide staff. The Heritage Partnership Board, established as an nonprofit entity, will then assume responsibility for the Corridor as it implements the strategic plan.

Heritage Corridor

Benefits of the Corridor

As an economic development initiative for rural South Carolina, the corridor could attract 700,000 visitors who could generate \$83.5 million in tourism revenue each year. Designated as a national heritage area, the corridor will bring in tourism dollars that will create employment opportunities, support existing businesses, increase tax revenues and provide opportunities for new economic activity.

Heritage tourists are interested in history, nature, and vanishing lifestyles. To attract these visitors, **new tourism products** will be created to add to the market potential of the corridor's existing asset base. These products will begin with the Regional Discovery Centers, routes, and trails and will expand as new attractions* are developed.

As tourism spawns economic development, the citizens of the corridor will experience another benefit: **pride in place**. As more residents become aware of the unique qualities of their region, stewardship of those valuable resources will be strengthened and quality of life

improved. Through increased pride and economic development, the Heritage Corridor will continue to develop as a long-term grass roots initiative that recognizes, supports and builds on South Carolina's rich heritage and natural, cultural and historic resources.

Discovery and Nature Routes

Two parallel routes will run the length of the Heritage Corridor when it is completed. These highway routes will connect and tie the 14 counties into one tourism destination. Coupled with these routes will be a series of "Specialty Trails" focusing on the corridor's military history, birds, local arts and crafts, story of cotton, and South Carolina's African-American heritage.

The "**Discovery Route**" links many of the corridor's significant historic sites and settlements. This route will begin in the mill villages of the Upstate and run through the historic courthouse towns of Pendleton, Abbeville and Edgefield. It continues past the military sites of Ninety-Six, follows the South Carolina Railroad through Aiken's horse country, and arrives in historic Charleston's wealth of African-American and antebellum history.

The “**Nature Route**” is a gateway to a wide variety of South Carolina’s natural resources. Beginning in the waterfalls and mountains of Table Rock and the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area, the nature route winds along Russell and Thurmond Lakes and on to the Savannah River. The route then follows the Edisto River, the longest free flowing black water river in America, until it reaches the ACE Basin and coastal plain of the Lowcountry.

Regional Discovery Centers ☆

A primary element of the Corridor’s framework will be **Regional Discovery Centers**. They will provide visitor information and regional interpretation. The centers will accent the themes unique to each region as well as demonstrating the common threads that run throughout the corridor. From these centers, visitors can embark on a series of “**Regional Trails**” to feature the key resources and activities of the area. These routes will encircle each Discovery Center and enable visitors to explore the area’s resources.

The Future

The South Carolina Heritage Corridor is the first product of a statewide strategy to promote heritage tourism. When the corridor plan is fully implemented it will be self sustaining through the partnership board, regional and statewide partnerships. The corridor will be used as a blueprint for developing other heritage areas across the state. In this way, South Carolina will achieve economic development by utilizing the natural, cultural, and historic assets it possesses to promote heritage tourism.

