



Follow the Flow: Water Shapes the Land

South Carolina's waterways connect history, culture, and ecology.

Imagine a single drop of water, starting in the Atlantic Ocean at Charleston Harbor, moving upriver past historic forts and plantations, through tidal marshes, and inland to the ancient floodplain forest at Congaree National Park.

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- Charleston Harbor: Where saltwater and freshwater mix, shaping trade and defense.
- Fort Sumter & Fort Moultrie: Strategic points where water routes made these forts crucial in American history.
- Middleton Place Gardens & Plantations: Irrigation and rice cultivation show how water shaped early life and labor.
- Congaree Floodplain: A 'giant sponge' that filters water, reduces flooding, and creates habitat for wildlife.

Quick Facts: Water & South Carolina

- Longest river: The Santee River, stretching 143 miles across the state.
- Deepest swamp forest in North America: Congaree National Park.
- Charleston Harbor: One of the busiest ports on the East Coast since colonial times.
- Rice cultivation: By the 1700s, South Carolina exported more rice than any other colony—made possible by tidal irrigation.
- Hurricanes & floods: Coastal storms continually reshape the shoreline and estuaries.
- Salt marshes: Cover nearly 350,000 acres of the South Carolina coast, serving as nurseries for shrimp, crabs, and fish.

Prompt

At your next stop, look for signs of water shaping the land: tide lines, eroded soil, floodplains, or canals.

Ask: How might this place look without the water nearby?