

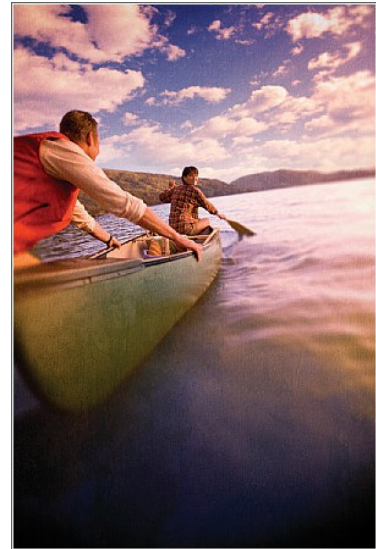
For Fall Fun: State Parks Strung Like Pearls Along S.C. 11

So much to do. And such a great time to do it!

The fall months are ideal for taking advantage of some of South Carolina's true treasures – the string of eight amazingly diverse, uncrowded and unspoiled state parks along S.C. 11.

The state highway follows the path of an ancient Cherokee trail along the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains for more than 100 miles. Its other official name is the Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Highway, and autumn is the perfect time to see just how that designation was earned.

“The fall colors are just beautiful, reason enough to make the drive through these rolling hills on the edge of those legendary mountains,” says Horace Craig, Manager of District III, the upstate region of the S.C. State Park Service.



“But there's so much more. For your family's hard-earned entertainment dollar, it's hard to beat the value our parks offer, especially now,” Craig says. “Come take a look.”

What you'll see at these parks on or near S.C. 11 is a vista of unparalleled beauty from the heights of Caesars Head, the deep and serene mystery of mountain coves in Devils Fork, a look at the environmental and human history of these ancient hills, the wide-open waters of Lake Hartwell and more.

The series of eight parks includes some 17,000 acres of protected public property, more than 300 campsites, cabins and villas, dozens of hiking and nature trails, picnic tables, playgrounds and a great opportunity to cool down from a hot South Carolina summer as fall fills the air.

Let's begin our trip at the South Carolina-Georgia border, right where Interstate 85 crosses Lake Hartwell. From there, we'll head north and east as S.C. 11 hugs the line that divides foothills from mountains and opens the door to an unforgettable season of highly affordable family fun.

Lake Hartwell State Recreation Area: Water skiing, fishing, picnics and campsites with sunsets over the lake. You'll find that at Lake Hartwell State Recreation Area, which includes 14 of the Savannah River reservoir's 962 miles of shoreline. The big lake is one of the South's most popular fishing destinations, and the park information center includes a “can't miss this” collection of fishing tackle sure to please the angler and history buff alike in your crew.



Oconee State Park: Nestled among tall pines and hardwoods on a high plateau is Oconee State Park. Quiet campgrounds, picnic areas and playgrounds, pretty mountain lakes and clean, comfortable cabins have made this 1,165-acre retreat a family favorite for generations since it was built by the men of the Civilian

Conservation Corps (CCC) during the days of the Great Depression. And for those who'd rather hoof it, Oconee State Park also is the western end of the Foothills Trail, an 85-mile walk in the woods ending to the northeast at Jones Gap State Park. (Don't laugh. There are people who do it! And they say it's unforgettable.)

Oconee Station State Historic Site: Discover a piece of our nation's history at this 210-acre park on Oconee Creek. Explore a stone blockhouse, the oldest building in the South Carolina Upcountry, built in 1792 as one of a series of small forts arising amid tension between white settlers and Native Americans, and a two-story brick residence known as the William Richards House, a trading post built in 1805. Guided tours, hiking and picnicking are available. Picturesque Station Cove Falls are not far away and accessible by trail.



Devils Fork State Park: This park offers the only public access to Lake Jocassee, a 7,500-acre, deep, clear reservoir that's home to trophy trout and other fine fishing opportunities, as well as unforgettable scenes such as waterfalls cascading into the lake along a heavily wooded shoreline ablaze in fall foliage. Devils Fork is a great place to enjoy the cool mountain breezes with lots of camping opportunities and beautiful mountain villas for a memorable stay with family or friends.

Keowee-Toxaway State Natural Area: Covering 1,000 acres on the shores of Lake Keowee in the upper reaches of the Savannah River Valley, this park is known for its dramatic rock outcroppings (kids of all ages love those!), an outstanding scenic hiking trail and a serene campground nestled on a wooded knoll. History also lives here, with an interpretive trail and exhibits telling the story of the Native American town that once thrived under what is now Lake Keowee.



Table Rock State Park: One of South Carolina's most beloved parks, Table Rock offers cabins and trails with breathtaking views of the sheer rock face of the mountain that gives the park its name. The park has been a family-friendly fall favorite ever since it was built by the CCC in the 1930s. Camping, hiking, fishing in the park lake and picnics in the shady woods are just some of the memories that keep folks returning year after year.

Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area:

Together, **Caesars Head** and **Jones Gap** state parks form the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area. In upper Greenville County near the North Carolina border, these 10,000 acres of protected wilderness include 50 miles of hiking trails (one leads to Raven Cliff Falls), trailside camping and panoramic views of the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains. Caesars Head's namesake stony outcrop rises nearly 3,300 feet above sea level and is one of the Palmetto State's most prominent natural landmarks. The park also hosts the annual Hawk Watch, where humans gather each fall to watch thousands of migratory hawks, eagles and other raptors dipping and soaring as they make their way south.



Jones Gap, meanwhile, features deep mountain coves, home to an unusually diverse gathering of plants and animals, and the Middle Branch of the Saluda River, the state's first designated scenic river. Jones Gap, with its environmental education programs, is one of the most popular destinations in the state's Discover Carolina school curriculum, but don't let the kids have all the fun!

In fact, most of the parks offer interpretive programs, many interactive and hands-on. They make a great addition to a journey across South Carolina's scenic northwest corner, where this string of state parks offers endless possibilities for a fall season of fun and fascination.

To find out more, including cabin and campsite availability, and to make your reservations, call 1-866-345-PARK or go online at www.SouthCarolinaParks.com.