

# DESTINATIONS

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## Outdoor adventure close to home

Explore parks, enjoy fireworks, view eclipse in Greenville, S.C.

By Chris Starrs  
For the AJC

Natural settings, cultural events and a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon await visitors to Greenville this summer.

If communing with nature for a laid-back experience in nearby state parks is your groove, you've come to the right place. But if you're more into being outdoors in a city setting, Greenville's affordable summer festivals and activities have got you covered.

Greenville, only 2½ hours north-east of Atlanta on Interstate 85, is the jewel in the crown of South Carolina's Upstate, and there's something outdoorsy for everyone to enjoy.

### State parks are great parks

Greenville touts a trio of state parks that provide many family-friendly and adventurous outings.

Just 7 miles north of downtown, Paris Mountain State Park is one of the city's most popular weekend recreation spots, and attracts about 500,000 guests every year. ([www.southcarolinaparks.com/parismountain](http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/parismountain))

Named for early Greenville settler Richard Pearis, Paris Mountain State Park has about 15 miles of linked trails, with most being easy to moderate walks. In addition, the park offers mountain biking, fishing, camping and swimming; the park also has kayak, canoe and boat rentals.

"When I'm there, when I'm hiking, I don't even hear the traffic," said Dawn Dawson-House, spokeswoman for the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism.

Perhaps one of Paris Mountain State Park's most outstanding features is that once you've embraced its natural majesty, you're liable to forget you're just minutes from a bustling downtown area.

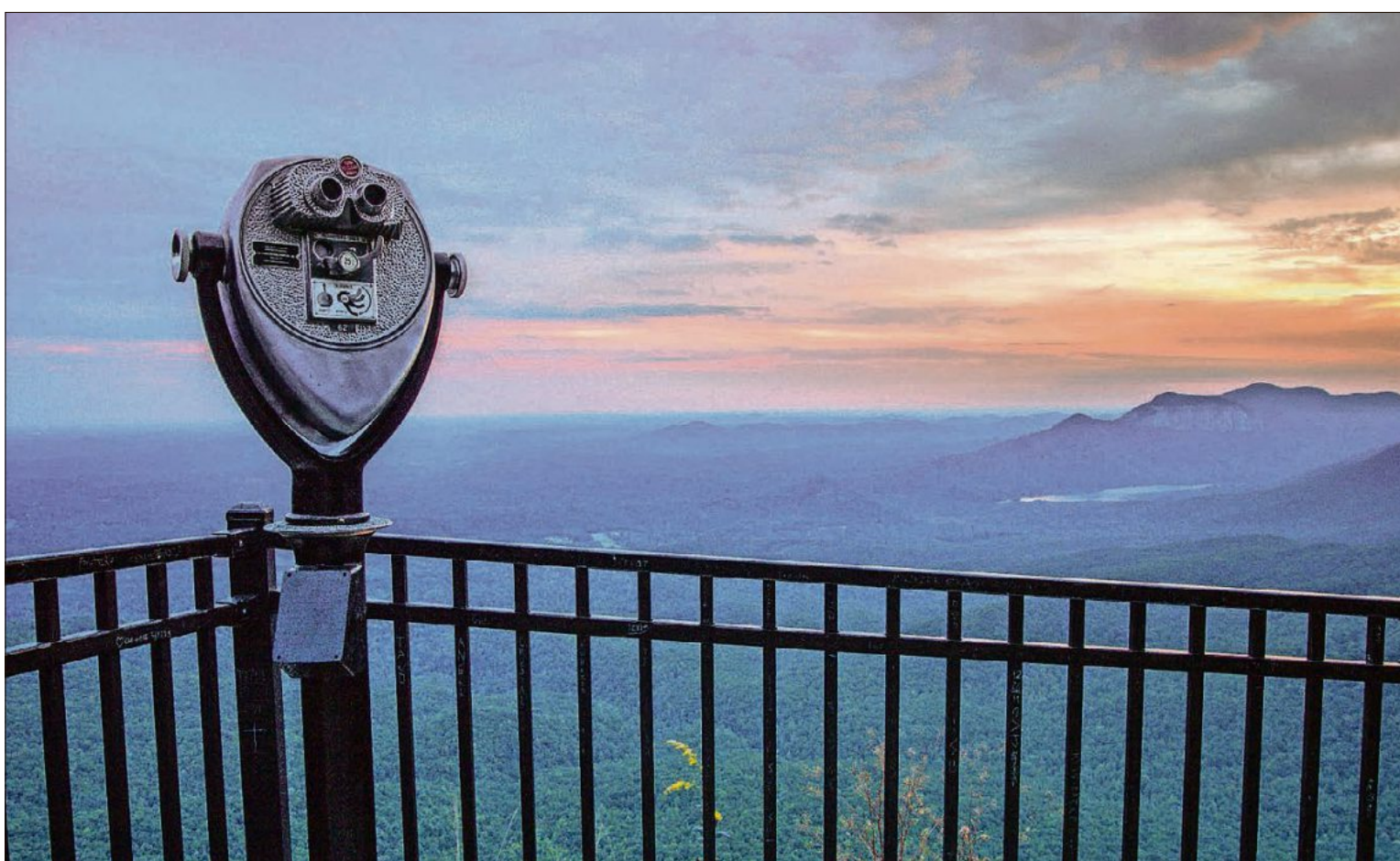
"It is a preserved and protected watershed, so it looks exactly like that—something that's been preserved and protected for more than 70 years," Dawson-House said. "And it has some of the tallest, most beautiful hardwood forests in a downtown area of any kind."

In addition to three-dozen camping sites, the park also features Camp Buckhorn, with a lodge dining area that can accommodate up to 75 people and primitive cabins that can sleep up to 40.

"We have an interpretive center that explains the geography, but we also have a lake for swimming and bicycling trails, and we have programming on a regular basis with our naturalist that people can take part in," she said. "We have a group facility that is rented out for major events and weddings, along with family events and reunions. We have back trails for hiking and we have a campground there."

Other state parks in the area include Jones Gap State Park, located 45 minutes north in Marietta. Part of the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area, the 11,000-acre Jones Gap State Park is highlighted by the 2.2-mile trail to Rainbow Falls. The Middle Saluda River presents opportunities for swimming and fishing for mountain trout, and hike-in campsites are available. ([www.southcarolinaparks.com/jonesgap](http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/jonesgap))

Called the "No. 1 Hidden Gem of South Carolina" by USA TODAY, Caesars Head State Park sits atop the Blue Ridge Escarpment and offers camping, hiking and fishing, as well as some amazing views in the higher elevations. It's located about an hour north of the city on Geer Highway in Cleveland.



About an hour north of Greenville, S.C., Caesars Head State Park sits atop the Blue Ridge Escarpment, offering amazing views along with camping, hiking and fishing.



In Greenville, July Fourth means the Wells Fargo Red, White & Blue Festival presented by AT&T downtown. Thousands of revelers flock to Greenville for concerts, food and drinks. Fireworks start around 9:45 p.m. to close the festivities with a bang!

Also part of the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area, Caesars Head State Park's trails connect with Jones Gap State Park and showcase a variety of waterfalls, including a 420-foot cascade from Raven Cliff. ([www.southcarolinaparks.com/caesarshead](http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/caesarshead))

### July Fourth, the Bard and a rare solar eclipse

Greenville guests will enjoy numerous fun outdoor events, arts experiences and festivals this summer, too.

The highlight of summer comes on July 4, when the Wells Fargo Red, White & Blue Festival presented by AT&T takes place downtown. It's in its 21st year, and with about 50,000 revelers annually, it's the largest Fourth of July celebration in the Upstate.

"It gets bigger and better every year," said Victoria Iriel, sales and finance manager for the City of Greenville.

The Red, White and Blue Festival, which lasts from 5-10:30 p.m., will showcase live music on two stages.

The Pepsi Stage will welcome up-and-coming country star (and South Carolina native) Cody Webb, plus opens South 85 and the West End String Band. The outdoor TD Stage at the Peace Center features the 246 Army Band, which will play patriotic music. There's also the Zaxby's Kidz Zone and plenty of food and beverage options.

"This is one of the times throughout the year where people can have

a beer on the street," Iriel said.

And it wouldn't be Independence Day without fireworks, which are scheduled to begin at 9:45 p.m., and are best viewed on Main Street, between Court Street and Falls Park Drive. ([www.greenville.org/1328/Wells-Fargo-Red-White-Blue](http://www.greenville.org/1328/Wells-Fargo-Red-White-Blue)).

The 23rd annual Upstate Shakespeare Festival will present "Titus Andronicus" at 7 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays from July 13-30 in Falls Park on the Reedy.

Presented by the Warehouse Theatre's Upstate Shakespeare Festival Ensemble, "Titus Andronicus" will be performed free on an outdoor stage ([@WarehouseGvl](http://www.warehousetheatre.com/season/upstate-shakespeare-festival)).

On Aug. 21, the city will be in the path of a full solar eclipse, the only solar eclipse the Upstate will see in the 21st century.

Greenville is one of the few cities in the country in the "path of totality," which means the city will experience total darkness in the middle of the day.

South Carolina expects more than a million visitors during the eclipse, which will start at 2:38 p.m. and last for a little more than 2 minutes. ([www.visitgreenville.org/eclipse](http://www.visitgreenville.org/eclipse)).

### Free 'n' cheap

If you're on a tight budget, but still want to get out and about, a number of summertime events should fit the bill.

### WHERE TO STAY

There are plenty of hotels for an overnight stay in Greenville. Here are six places to consider:

**Hyatt Place Greenville/Haywood** — Located in Greenville's premier shopping and dining district. 40 West Orchard Park Drive, Greenville, S.C., 29615. 864-232-3000, [www.hyatt.com](http://www.hyatt.com), @HyattTweets

**TownePlace Suites by Marriott Greenville Haywood Mall** — Convenient to both Haywood Mall and downtown Greenville. 75 Mall Connector Road, Greenville, S.C. 29607. 864-675-1670, [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com), @TownePlace

**Hilton Garden Inn Greenville** — The Shops at Greenridge and The Point, which feature both retail and restaurants, are nearby. 108 Carolina Point Parkway, Greenville, S.C. 29607. 864-284-0111. [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com), @HiltonGardenInn

### Courtyard by Marriott Greenville-Spartanburg Airport

— Provides quick access to the BMW plant, Performance Center and Zentrum museum as well as downtown Greenville. 115 The Parkway, Greenville, S.C. 29615. 864-213-9009, [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com), @CourtyardHotels

### Fairfield Inn Greenville-Spartanburg Airport

— Breakfast is free and it's also near several restaurants, in addition to the airport. 48 Fisherman Lane, Greenville, S.C. 29615. 864-234-9916, [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com), @FairfieldHotels

### Sleep Inn at TD Convention Center

— The closest motel to the TDCC, it's also approximately 3 miles from the Peace Center and Bon Secours Wellness Arena. 231 N. Pleasantburg Drive, Greenville, S.C. 29607. 864-240-2006, [www.greenvillesleepinn.com](http://www.greenvillesleepinn.com), @ChoiceHotels

### IF YOU GO

Downtown Greenville is about a two-and-a-half-hour drive on I-85 North from Atlanta.

Be sure to stop by the VisitGreenvilleSC Visitor Center: 206 S. Main St., Greenville, SC 29601

Hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m., weekdays; 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays; noon-4 p.m. Sundays. 800-717-0023 [www.VisitGreenvilleSC.com](http://www.VisitGreenvilleSC.com), @Greenville\_SC

The ScanSource Reedy River Concerts, from 7-9 p.m. on Wednesdays through Aug. 30, will showcase a variety of musical performers on the TD Stage at the Peace Center. ([www.ridgreenlink.com/1327/ScanSource-Reedy-River-Concerts](http://www.ridgreenlink.com/1327/ScanSource-Reedy-River-Concerts))

The Piedmont Natural Gas Downtown Alive concert series presented by Clemson MBA will be held from 5:30-8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings through Aug. 31. The free concerts will be held in NOMA Square on Main Street ([www.greenville.org/1321/PNG-Downtown-Alive](http://www.greenville.org/1321/PNG-Downtown-Alive)). And to keep the street party going, the Greenville Heritage FCU Main Street Fridays Presented by Pepsi will be held from 5:30-9:30 p.m. in NOMA Square through Sept. 29. ([www.greenville.org/1322/Greenville-Heritage-Main-Street-Fridays](http://www.greenville.org/1322/Greenville-Heritage-Main-Street-Fridays)).

And on Saturdays through late

October, downtown Greenville becomes what Southern Living calls one of "The South's Best Farmers' Markets" with its TD Saturday Market.

Main Street (between Washington and Court Streets) shuts down for 75 vendors offering fruits, vegetables, grass-fed meats and fresh seafood. There's also live music, cooking demonstrations and special attractions for children. ([www.saturdaymarketlive.com](http://www.saturdaymarketlive.com), @GvilleSatMarket)

And while the Greenville Drive's baseball games at Fluor Field at the West End aren't free, tickets for the games—featuring this affiliate of the Boston Red Sox—are available at several price points, and children age 2 and under are free. ([www.greenvilledrive.com](http://www.greenvilledrive.com), @GreenvilleDrive)



"52 Places to Go  
(In the World) in 2017"

- The New York Times

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