

# Sights to See

By Carla Caldwell

A family trip or weekend outing to explore your new community can be a great adventure. It can also be a huge expense.

But put away the wallet. There are many things for families to do in the mid-Atlantic states that cost little, if any, money.

The scenery is hard to beat. There are beaches, mountains, historical monuments and battlefields. Attractions run the gamut from educational (think Smithsonian) to down right wacky (Pedro's South of the Border, for example).

And granted, in our limited space, we will leave out some of your favorites. But, we'll do our best to touch on a few places you like, or might want to visit. (If we've left out one of your favorites send us a note, or e-mail, and perhaps the spot can be featured in an upcoming guide). Prices listed are current at press time, but to be sure, call or check your destination's web site before you go.

Let's start near the bottom, geographically speaking of course, and work our way up.



## South Carolina

**The Peachoid (Gaffney)** What pre-teen would not giggle at the site of a huge rear-end in the sky. Rumor has it this water tower shaped like a giant peach looked so like a posterior that civic leaders in the 1990s ordered it painted to look, well, more like a peach. It still looks like a rear-end – only bright orange. Silly, sure. A kid favorite, you bet. And, it's free.

**Charleston** For culture of the more highbrow sort, head to historic Charleston. The historic architecture and famous Palmetto trees are unlike much of what can be found elsewhere in the country. Founded as Charles Town in 1670, the name was changed to Charleston in 1690. Free to sightsee. Hotels and restaurants run from family-friendly to expensive. Parents like it. Kids like it, too. Although some kids have been known to prefer Pedro's (see below).

**Military highlight – Patriot's Point (Charleston Harbor)** There are many military highlights in the Carolinas, but for fans of U.S. Navy history, a stop by the USS Yorktown is a must. The 900- foot vessel, whose keel was laid on Dec. 1, 1941, weighs 27,000 tons and glistens with weapons and aircraft. The ship had a crew of 2,500 sailors in World War II. In open water the ship, then the Pacific Yorktown, was often the target of Kamikazes. Active-duty military personnel are admitted free. Otherwise, adults \$15, children \$8 and children under 6 are admitted free. Call 866- 831-1720 or visit [www.patriotspoint.org](http://www.patriotspoint.org)



# North Carolina

It's hard to resist a visit to the Great Smoky Mountains. Once there, if you manage to get your fill of majestic vistas and pristine streams, head to:

**Wright Brothers National Memorial (Kill Devil Hills)** Site of the world's first controlled powered flights by the Wright Brothers on December 17, 1903. Museum exhibits, reproduction of the 1903 airplane and 1902 glider. Admission is \$4, free for ages 16 and younger. Call 252-473-2111 or visit [www.nps.gov/wrbr](http://www.nps.gov/wrbr)

**Military highlight - Bennett Place State Historic Site.** (Durham) If you took in Fort Sumter in South Carolina, you have to drop the other shoe with a trip here – the site where the Civil War ended in 1865. Confederate General Johnston surrendered to Union General Sherman 17 days after Lee's surrender at Appomattox. There is no charge to visit the reconstructed farmhouse, outbuildings, interpretive center and museum. Call 919-383-4345 or visit [www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/bennett/bennett.htm](http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/bennett/bennett.htm)



**Military highlight – Fort Sumter (Charleston Harbor.)** See where the Civil War began. Decades of strife between the North and South sparked civil war on April 12, 1861 when the Confederate artillery opened fire on the Federal fort. The fort surrendered 34 hours later. Union forces tried four years to win it back. National Park. Fort is on island accessible only by boat. Admission is free, but there is a charge for the ferry ride. Concession-operated ferry service fees are adults \$14, seniors \$12.50, children \$8, children under age 6 are admitted free. Call 843-883-3123 or visit [www.nps.gov/fosu](http://www.nps.gov/fosu)

**Wacky diversion - South of the Border (Dillon)** Also known as Pedro's, this 350-acre roadside attraction in the middle of nowhere just south of the North Carolina border off I-95 is hard to miss – due to the more than 120 billboards spread over 200 miles leading to the place. There are more than a million thingamajig-style souvenirs, a restaurant that sells renowned tacos, and an antebellum-style chicken restaurant. The highlight is the 97-foot tall Pedro billboard complete with sombrero. Cars drive between his legs. It's free to look, but could cost you depending on what you eat and how much you buy. There is a fee to ride to the top of Pedro's sombrero, but how many times do you get to ride a glass elevator 97 feet into the sky to a sombrero, from which you can view pine trees and the interstate? Call 843-774.2411 or visit [www.pedroland.com](http://www.pedroland.com)



# Virginia

The state is filled with beauty from its mountain to beaches, and boasts some of the country's most interesting colonial and Civil War history. Virginia Beach is the official home of Beach Music and the popular dance the Shag. And 2007 is a big year in the state's history.

**Jamestown (1607-2007)** The first permanent settlement in the New World this year celebrates its 400th birthday. Queen Elizabeth II even paid a visit to celebrate the occasion. Jamestown Settlement, a museum of 17th-century colonial Virginia, explores the world of America's first permanent English colony. Historical interpreters depict life of the period, and you can also visit the Colonists' fort, three ships, and Powhatan village. Visitors can grind corn, scrape out a canoe, play games, wear armor, and more. Admission: Adults \$13.50, children ages 12-6 \$6.25. Call 757-253-4838 or visit [www.historyisfun.org](http://www.historyisfun.org)

**Monticello (Charlottesville)** Home of American's third president Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, designed and built the home and grounds. Admission: Adults \$15, children \$7, under 6 free. Call 434-984-9822 or visit [www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org)

**Colonial Williamsburg (Williamsburg)** This colonial town stays in character 24 hours a day — shop keepers, townsfolk, children at play, farm families, marching militia, tavern folks — encouraging you to immerse yourself in the lifestyle of the 18th century. It includes 301 acres encompassing 88 original buildings and hundreds of other homes, shops and public buildings. Call 800-HIS-TORY or visit [www.colonialwilliamsburg.org](http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org)

If the family tires of historic sites, take in Busch Gardens Williamsburg, with its 50-plus rides and attractions and 10 main stage shows. But be forewarned: A day at the park can be pricey. Admission: adults, \$54.95; children \$47.95. General Information 800-343-7946. Web site: [www.buschgardens.com](http://www.buschgardens.com)



# Washington D.C.

Where to begin? From free concerts on The Mall to the numerous free museums and historic monuments, not to mention the famous neighborhoods, such as Georgetown and Adams Morgan that are worth a visit for their history, restaurants and shops—our nation's capital truly has something for everyone.

Some fun annual events to check out include the Cherry Blossom Festival ([www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org](http://www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org)) and the Smithsonian Kite Festival ([www.kitefestival.org](http://www.kitefestival.org)), both held each spring, and the spectacular Fourth of July fireworks on The Mall each year. And do save yourself a headache and ride the renowned Metro system to get to these and other D.C. events.

## Especially fun for children:

**Bike the Sites** (1100 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.) Offers a range of bike tours including combination walk and ride family tours. Bicycles, helmets, and water provided. Price: \$25 - \$45 depending on age of rider and tour selected. Call 202-842-BIKE or visit [www.bikethesites.com/family-bike-tours.htm](http://www.bikethesites.com/family-bike-tours.htm)

**Smithsonian Institute** The world's largest museum and research complex with 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoo and many research centers. Be sure to check out the Smithsonian "Castle" on Jefferson Drive SW, where you can find out anything you'd like to know about each of the museums. Call 202-633-1000 or visit [www.gosmithsonian.com](http://www.gosmithsonian.com)

And if all the education, history and beauty fails to entertain the kids—there is always that peach... ●

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