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Child's play

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Child's Play

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There's much to attract kids along the South Carolina Heritage Corridor

It's the little things kids center on—the touches we adults tune out as part of the landscape. Eight-year-old Morgan Gravely, granddaughter of Emerald Farm owners Paul and Kathryn Zahn, makes sure that the visitor to her grandparents' Emerald Farm takes notice, though. In a warehouse-size room, model trains on the equivalent of 26 miles of H-O scale track are run by computer chip or remote. There, Morgan hops on one foot, desperate to show you this incredible train tunnel running right through the wall and into the next room. Then she triumphantly rings the vintage railroad bell in the center of the room. History, schmistory. This is child's play.

And this is just one of the many stops along the SC Heritage Corridor offering a gentle history, perfect for children as well as adults. The corridor, established in 1996, extends for 240 miles through 14 counties, from the mountains of Oconee County to the port city of Charleston, with stops along the way that tell the state's story in a way that excites kids. The approach has become

known as the "Corridor Kids Trail."

Take Emerald Farm (864-223-2247), for example. It offers so many kid-friendly activities that young visitors sometimes have to be pried away from its door, kicking and screaming, when it's time to leave. Yet it gives a pint-size view of some of the industries that were the backbone of South Carolina's development, such as agriculture and railroads. "Young people don't have a clue where their food comes from anymore," says Kathryn Zahn, "and the railroad was important to the development of Greenwood."

At Emerald Farm, kids get to milk goats, pet llamas, see how goat milk is turned into soap, play with Brio and other educational toys in the Touch Me Room, feed the fish in the pond, watch the model trains run through model towns and take their own little train ride along a gravel track. On the train ride, children are captivated by the "faces" on some of the trees—puttylike eyes, noses, mouths, and beards that make the forest "stare" back at them. It's an enchanted world perfectly matched with "educational" exposure to a side of the state's culture often missing in the modern world.

Here are some other highlights to watch for as you drive your kids along the Heritage Corridor:



REGION 1 (Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties)

Duke Power's World of Energy (North of Seneca; 864-885-4600)

Duke Energy's education center, beside the Oconee Nuclear Plant, features an audiovisual tour with animated displays, computer games and a short nature trail.

REGION 2 (Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, and McCormick counties)

Joanne T. Rainsford Region II Discovery Center (Edgefield; 803-637-1237 or 803-637-0877)

The center offers an overview of the region in a charming way. There's a renovated 1840s farmhouse, plus exhibits highlighting the roles of the state in the cotton trade, the Revolutionary War, antebellum politics and textile mills. There's even a virtual bike tour of the region.

Ninety Six National Historic Site

(Two miles south of Ninety Six; 864-543-4068)

How cool is this? A frontier settlement and Revolutionary War battle site with a fort, interpretive trail, archaeological digs, restorations and more.

REGION 3 (Aiken, Barnwell, Bamberg, and Orangeburg counties)

Heritage Corridor Region 3 Discovery Center (Blackville; 803-284-3976)

Talk about railroad heritage! Trains were important in the development of this region, too, so Discovery Center visitors travel through a train car simulation, stroll along railroad tracks and explore train cars.



The Living History Park (North Augusta; 803-279-7560)

This seven-and-a-half-acre park with natural springs gives kids hands-on experience with demonstrations and re-enactments of Colonial life, from blacksmithing to weaving.

REGION 4 (Colleton, Charleston, and Dorchester counties)

South Carolina Aquarium (Charleston; 843-720-1990)

This attraction on Charleston Harbor houses more than 60 exhibits and gives kids hands-on access to horseshoe crabs, starfish and other kinds of aquatic life. Its Great Ocean Tank exhibit extends from the first floor to the third with more than 385,000 gallons of water showcasing 300 marine animals.

Boone Hall Plantation

(Mt. Pleasant; 843-884-4371)

One of America's oldest working plantations, Boone Hall has been growing crops for more than 320 years. History is everywhere here, from antiques in the home to original slave cabins. In season, there are U-Pick fields for peaches, strawberries, tomatoes and pumpkins.

