More than 335 years after they made landfall, the story of the English settlers and the Kiawah Indians who greeted them is being told once more at Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site.

The old Visitors Center at the park, built in 1970 to commemorate the tricentennial of the founding of the first permanent European settlement in the Carolinas, has been replaced by a state-of-the-art Interpretive Center featuring extensive exhibits and a number of new visitor amenities.

The center is actually part of a sweeping upgrade of the popular park along a tidal creek off the Ashley River in Charleston. Another highlight is an interactive archaeology room displaying the ongoing work that is helping researchers reveal more and more of the daily lives of the people who first carved what is now South Carolina out of the wilderness.

The picturesque park now boasts a history trail that takes visitors around such sites as the faithfully reconstructed palisade wall and spots where archaeologists believe settlers built houses and other buildings.

Animal Forest, home to natural enclosures in the woods for native species the settlers would have encountered such as bears, puma, elk and bison, has also been upgraded and includes new interpretive signage.

The reconstructed Adventure, a replica trading ship, is taking its place again, too, at its dock on Old Towne Creek off Albermarle Point.

“When the founding settlers left Charles Towne Landing to inhabit what is now the City of Charleston, they left behind an intriguing story that we are excited to share with our guests more than 300 years later,” says Chad Prosser, Director of the SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism.

“This park is an important piece of American history, and it’s a great place for a picnic or a nature walk, too,” Prosser says. “It really is a complete family experience.”

Also on the park’s grounds is the Legare-Waring House, formerly the Charleston residence for sitting governors. The house was donated in 1987 by Ferdinanda Izlar Backer Waring’s daughter, former Lt. Gov. Nancy Stevenson. Recently redecorated and remodeled, it’s an ideal setting among the placid ponds, moss-draped live oaks, azaleas, camellias and magnolias for receptions, elegant parties and other functions.

Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site is open daily and located just a few minutes off Interstate 26, near downtown Charleston.