

# A Road With a View

ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST HISTORIC AND BEAUTIFUL HIGHWAYS, THE ASHLEY RIVER NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY IS AN 11.5-MILE STRETCH THAT EXTENDS THROUGH CHARLESTON AND DORCHESTER COUNTIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

By Gwen Thurmond

An early trading path for Native Americans, it later became a transportation route as the colony developed. The corridor features marsh, wildlife and towering live moss-draped oaks that form a canopy of green that envelopes the highway for miles. In this idyllic setting, wealthy planters established estates overlooking the Ashley River that today offer visitors a look into the state's Colonial past.

Magnolia Plantation and Gardens dates to the 1670s with the arrival of Thomas Drayton Jr. from Barbados and has been owned by 11 successive generations of Draytons. The

current manor house is a c. 1800s ground story topped by a pre-Revolutionary structure with Victorian elements. The c. 1680s garden pathways and signature white bridge are venues to enjoy such favorites as camellias, azaleas, lilies, dogwood, quince, oleander and crepe myrtle. A nature boat tour winds through an old rice field bordering the Ashley River. The 60-acre Audubon Swamp Garden is traversed by boardwalks, dikes and bridges and surrounded by local and exotic blooming plant species. The site also includes a nature train tour, petting zoo, wildlife observation tower, an 18th-century

*Drayton Hall is America's oldest preserved plantation house open to the public.*



South Carolina Smiles 2005

herb garden and an antebellum cabin.

Neighboring Middleton Place, begun in 1741, was home to Henry Middleton, president of the First Continental Congress, and his son, Arthur, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The 17th-century style formal English gardens feature wide sweeping terraces, walkways, artificial Butterfly Lakes and long vistas to the river. Rare camellias, azaleas, kalmia, magnolias, crepe myrtle and roses accent the landscape, which also contain a Rice Mill Pond and Reflection Pool. The c. 1755 gentlemen's guest wing is open as a museum with Middleton family treasures, a Stableyard offers living history interpreters, and Eliza's House contains exhibits that interpret the African American experience after Emancipation. The plantation was featured in the movie *The Patriot* with Mel Gibson.

Completed in 1742, Drayton Hall was built by John Drayton, a member of His Majesty's Council, with work from European and African American craftsmen. Considered the finest example of Georgian-Palladian architecture in the American South, it is the only plantation on the Ashley River to survive the Revolutionary and Civil Wars intact. The house is filled with 18th-century craftsmanship --the double portico with pillars capped with Doric capitals on the first floor and Ionic on the second. The main house remains in nearly original condition without running water, electric lighting or central heating, extending a sense of timelessness and continuity. *Connections: From Africa to America* is a 45-minute interactive program that traces African Americans from slavery and emancipation into the 20th century. Two scenic trails, the marsh walk and the Ashley River walk, give visitors a

If you've ever wondered what a true southern plantation might have been like, Drayton Hall should be on your list of places to see while in Charleston. Thought to be perhaps the first Palladian building in America, it is exceptionally well-preserved. Drayton Hall is the only plantation house in the area to have survived the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, thereby affording visitors an extraordinary look back through time.

## Drayton Hall



Completed in 1742, this magnificent plantation house remained in the Drayton family for seven generations until 1974, when it became a National Trust historic site. During your tour, professional guides take you room by room, covering the fascinating history of the Drayton family — and the African Americans who helped make the plantation prosperous.

You may call Drayton Hall at (843) 769-2600. To learn more about this historic site, visit their website at [www.draytonhall.org](http://www.draytonhall.org).

Drayton Hall is located at 3380 Ashley River Road, just nine miles from Charleston, South Carolina — and well worth the drive.

- Professionally guided house tours
- African-American cemetery
- Scenic marsh and river walks
- African-American programs
- Tours begin on the hour; during peak season, tours may begin every half hour.
- Museum shop
- Downtown walking tour available and can be combined with tour of Drayton Hall for additional savings.

close-up look at the beauty of the property with its massive live oaks, flora and fauna.

## Find out more...

Magnolia Plantation & Gardens  
843-571-1266  
[www.magnoliaplantation.com](http://www.magnoliaplantation.com)

Middleton Place  
843-556-6020  
[www.middletonplace.org](http://www.middletonplace.org)

Drayton Hall  
843-769-2600  
[www.draytonhall.org](http://www.draytonhall.org)

