

Pee Dee in 1, 2, 3

By Joquita Burka

Let's say you have three days—perhaps a long weekend—and you'd like to get away, to avoid the crowds, to see someplace "real." Here's the perfect place. Just off Interstates 95 and 20—accessible, beautiful and fun. Named for the river that runs through it, the Pee Dee River, this area in the northeast corner of South Carolina can yield some fascinating discoveries.

Day 1

The need for speed:
DARLINGTON AND ITS RACEWAY



Today, your travels take you to the track "Too Tough to Tame" in Darlington, SC. As the original superspeedway, Darlington Raceway is considered NASCAR®'s 1.366-mile demon. Many points contenders have ended a race early on the tight angles of Turns 3 and 4. Even the legendary Dale Earnhardt said, "If you happen to be a racecar driver, there's no victory so sweet, so memorable, as whipping Darlington Raceway." Be sure to stop by the Darlington Raceway Museum. Filled with racing

memorabilia, the NMPA Hall of Fame and souvenirs, the museum is a must-see for any race fan.

Note to fans: On Mother's Day weekend every year, Darlington Raceway roars to life when the Southern 500®, a part of the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series, takes to the track.

Overnight accommodations: Less than 30 miles from Darlington is Abingdon Manor Inn and Restaurant in Latta, SC. You'll be treated like royalty in this AAA Four-Diamond inn.

Day 2

History won't need to repeat itself if we listen the first time:
THE COTTON TRAIL



You probably already know that cotton shaped much of the agrarian South. Today, you can pick up a guide at a South Carolina Welcome Center (or sccottontrail.org) to trace this important part of Southern history. The Cotton Trail stretches about 90 miles from I-20 to I-95. Along the trail, you'll visit museums, gardens, market towns, cotton fields and working gins in Clio,

Bennettsville, Cheraw, Society Hill, Hartsville and Bishopville.

Overnight accommodations: Continue your immersion in history by staying overnight at The Breden Inn, in Bennettsville, SC. Four, late 19th-century houses give guests a range of options. As a bonus, the property is certified by The National Wildlife Federation as a backyard Wildlife Habitat.

Day 3

Into the woods:
NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL



The Pee Dee area is, after all, named for the river. And about 18 miles from Latta is Dillon, SC, home of Little Pee Dee State Park where you can fully appreciate the mysterious beauty of the blackwater Little Pee Dee River. This section of the river was designated a State Scenic River by the Department of Natural Resources, a nod to its pristine scenery and rich ecosystem—a favorite of kayakers. The water's color comes from

the leaching of tannins from the surrounding vegetation. The state park is a quiet setting where you can hike, camp, fish or explore a unique geological depression known as the Carolina Bay.

Quiet, peaceful and calming. Little Pee Dee State Park—and the Pee Dee region—isn't flashy or synthetic. It is real, simple and honest—what might today be called "organic."

Find Out More in **PLACES...**
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