



The "Other" Coast

South Carolina's Best-Kept Secret

By Phil Sarata

WHILE MOST PEOPLE FLOCK TO SOUTH CAROLINA'S ATLANTIC OCEAN COASTLINE, MANY REMAIN UNAWARE OF ANOTHER, LESSER-KNOWN FRESHWATER COAST SITUATED ON THE STATE'S WESTERN BOUNDARY WITH GEORGIA. IT BOASTS MORE WATERFRONT SHORELINE THAN THE ENTIRE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND MYRIAD FORMS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION. AND THE WORD ON THIS BURGEONING TOURIST MECCA IS ONLY NOW BEGINNING TO GET OUT.



Hickory Knob State Resort Park offers golf along scenic waterways and wooded roughs.

The featured attraction is Thurmond Lake, the largest U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reservoir east of the Mississippi River. Anglers flock here to pull in bass and hybrid bass, catfish, bream, crappie and striper, and public boat launches abound at various points along the lake.

But it doesn't stop there. Three South Carolina state parks, a national forest (Sumter) and one resort line the lake's eastern shore in rural McCormick County. Hunters are welcome. A private wildlife reserve and select areas of the Sumter National Forest provide a wide variety of habitats teeming with rabbit, quail, wild boar, turkey, deer, duck and partridge. For non-hunters, Sumter National Forest offers two target ranges in the area.

If creature comforts are important, two of the best places to bed down are

Savannah Lakes Resort and Hickory Knob State Resort Park, located adjacent to one another off US 378. A community originally developed in 1989 in conjunction with the state and McCormick County, Savannah Lakes began as an enclave of private homeowners. It is only within the last three years that the resort was devel-



oped for the general public, offering prime accommodations in its lodges and townhouses. It also features two golf courses, skeet ranges, tennis, a four-lane bowling alley, swimming pool, Jacuzzis, miniature golf and shuffleboard. Savannah Lakes contracts with nearby Little River Plantation to offer its guests fishing excursions and hunting on the plantation's private reserve.

Hickory Knob offers an 18-hole golf course and comfortable accommodations in the 80-room lodge or one of 18 fully appointed villas. Outdoor recreational facilities include an archery course, a swimming area, a skeet range and tennis courts, plus playground equipment for children. Both resorts offer separate meeting facilities that can accommodate large and small groups.

Hickory Knob, and to a greater extent Baker Creek and Hamilton Branch state parks, all located within Sumter National

Forest, offer the luxury of lakeside sites for those looking for a real camping experience. Each site, complete with water and electrical hookups, can accommodate RVs in lengths of 30, 35 and 40 feet. Primitive camping areas for organized groups (up to 100 at Baker Creek and 400 at Hamilton Branch) are also available.

Trails of all kind, crisscrossing the entire region, are featured prominently in the Long Cane Ranger District of Sumter National Forest. Ten miles of trails have been added at Hickory Knob, and short hiking and biking trails are available here and at Hamilton Branch. Longer mountain bike trails, including a new 10-mile trail at Baker Creek, wind through the Piedmont forests and, at Hickory Knob, past breathtaking lakeside vistas.

The Long Cane Ranger District covers much of McCormick County and portions of nearby Greenwood, Abbeville and Edgefield counties. Here one can find both motorized vehicle trails and a 23-mile equestrian trail, with a moderate difficulty rating, near the Parsons Mountain Recreation Area south of Abbeville. A 12-mile canoe trail on Stephens and Turkey Creek runs through the southeast central portion of the district, and canoe and kayak rentals are available at Hickory Knob.

After you experience South Carolina's Freshwater Coast area, it's a sure bet you won't be able to keep this secret to yourself any longer!

IF YOU GO:

**LONG CANE RANGER DISTRICT—
SUMTER NATIONAL FOREST**
810 Buncombe St., Edgefield, SC 29824
Phone: 803-637-5396
www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms

SAVANNAH LAKES RESORT & MARINA
101 Village Dr., McCormick, SC 29835
Phone: 800-544-8912 or 864-391-2152
www.savannahresorts.com

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS
1205 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29201
Phone: 803-734-0156
www.southcarolinaparks.com