

Splish Splash!

WE'RE HAVING A BLAST!

By Angela Shoultz

There's something magical about a South Carolina summer—nature is enveloped in a green embrace, gentle breezes tousle sun-splashed tresses, and the air carries the scent of cool watermelon and warm sunshine.

There's only one thing that could improve upon such perfection—a screaming, 30-foot drop into a pool of cool water.

It's summer, and it's time for fun at one of South Carolina's county waterparks!

Even though the state's county parks offer a diverse system of campgrounds and equestrian, nature, cultural and historic centers, it's the water parks that really pack 'em in during the summer months.

One of these parks is Palmetto Islands County Park & Splash Island Waterpark in Mt. Pleasant. The 943-acre park, built in a tropical setting, boasts a multitude of activities for family and group use, including a Big Toy Playground, Nature Island, fishing and crabbing docks, an observation tower and Splash Island (843-884-0832)—the park's crown jewel of summer. The big feature? The Cyclone, a 10-minute swirling, spilling, dropping thrill. Plus, there's a 200-foot water slide, sprays, geysers, raindrop waterfalls and a recreational pool. With a lounge area, concessions, lifeguards and more, Splash Island offers everything the family needs for a fun-filled day at the park.

Nestled in 1,000-plus acres of Lowcountry woodlands and wetlands, North Charleston's Wannamaker County Park & Whirlin' Waters Waterpark includes miles of paved trails, plenty of green space and loads of other amenities. But the attraction sure to please the entire family is Whirlin' Waters (843-572-7275). This 15-acre island-style waterpark has it all—from Otter Bay, a kiddie pool area with a six-lane racer slide, sprays and 10 different interactive features, to Tubular Twister, a multi-slide complex offering 900 total feet of slippery thrills and chills. And for those who really like to get their feet wet, there's The Big Kahuna—27,000 square feet of water and waves. Whirlin' Waters also features a toddler play area, an 870-foot lazy river and much more.

And there's one more choice in the area. James Island County Park & Splash Zone Waterpark is just a short drive from downtown Charleston. Within the park's 643 acres is a 50-foot climbing wall and a Children's Funyard playground, fishing and

crabbing opportunities, paved trails and Splash Zone (843-795-7275)—the seasonal waterpark. Here, you'll find a 200-foot tube and open water slides, a 500-foot lazy river, recreational pool and Caribbean play structure complete with slides, wheels and sprays. There are also concessions, showers and changing areas, lockers, lounge chairs and more.

Not heading to the coast anytime soon? No problem! South Carolina's waterparks extend into the Upstate as well. Just a short drive from downtown Greenville, Discovery Island (864-963-4345) at Simpsonville County Park is the state's newest waterpark, with great fun for all ages. Float for hours around the Lazy Day Lagoon, or ride down Hurricane Hazards or the Cyclone Zone—a 30-foot drop sure to get a rise out of the biggest thrill-seeker. And when you're looking to escape the sun for a while, oversized umbrellas offer a shady place to relax and enjoy a snack from the Caribbean Café—the park's poolside concession stand.

So, when the days get hot and you long for the splash of water, accompanied by the fun of a thrill-ride, break out the swim trunks, slap on some SPF and head out to one of these four South Carolina county parks. No matter where you are in the state, fun isn't far away.

