



Charleston

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

SPONSORED BY



U.S.N.A. Alumni Association
February 15-20, 2026



Dear Alumni and Friends,

Join us on a fascinating journey to Charleston, one of the U.S. South's most beloved cities. To really get to know Charleston, we will explore its African American history and learn about the Gullah Geechee community, descendants of the enslaved people of West and Central Africa brought to United States. We'll tour the International African American Museum to learn how enslaved communities have influenced our lives today. On visits to the McLeod Plantation Historic Site and Boone Hall Plantation, learn about the contributions of the enslaved men, women and children who lived there.

Discover the artistic traditions of the Gullah Geechee at the Gibbes Museum of Art to examine the exquisite sweetgrass baskets of internationally recognized artisan Mary Jackson and the vibrant paintings of Jonathan Green. Included meals and an elective cooking class (at an additional cost) showcase the region's delicious culinary heritage.

A poignant highlight of the program is a visit to Mother Emanuel AME Church, which experienced tragedy at the hands of a shooter in 2015. Learn about the church, its role in the community and its history from a long-time member of the congregation.

This exceptional program has been thoughtfully designed with educational enrichment from expert guides and lecturers. It also offers you the security, ease and value of group travel with plentiful opportunities for independent exploration.

Please feel free to share this with classmates, family and friends as all are welcome. We look forward to exploring Charleston with you.

Sincerely,

Amy Garwood
Director, Alumni Travel
Amy.garwood@usna.com
U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association

McLeod Plantation Historic Site





Discovery begins here



Founded in 1670, Charleston's natural harbor led the city to becoming a wealthy port, trading sea cotton, indigo, rice, and grievously, an estimated 200,000 enslaved Africans. A complex, vibrant city evolved from this painful chapter of history. Many of the enslaved living in the Charleston area formed what we know today as the Gullah Geechee community, whose many artistic, culinary, and other cultural contributions created the unique and dynamic city of Charleston.

Top: Charleston | Above: Lowcountry cuisine

Cover: Charleston | Mail panel: Boone Hall Plantation
| Sweetgrass baskets

Right: Alfonso Brown, expert guide



Inspiring Moments



- Delve into the city's rich African American history on a **walking tour of Charleston**.
- Step inside a former slave-auction gallery at the **Old Slave Mart Museum**.
- Visit the new **International African American Amuseum**, built where many enslaved Africans entered the country.
- Contemplate the daily lives of enslaved Africans on two **historic plantations**.
- Enjoy a private visit and lecture at **Mother Emanuel AME Church**.
- Tour the historic **Aiken Rhett House** and the **Avery Research Center**.
- Learn about **Gullah culture, steeped in the traditions of West Africa**.



Old Slave Mart Museum

Day 1 | In Transit | Charleston, S.C.

Depart for Charleston, South, Carolina. 🚗
Transfer on your own to The Lindy Renaissance Charleston Hotel.

Enrichment: Slavery to Civil Rights, an African American Story of Charleston.

Mingle with your fellow travelers at a Welcome Reception.

Day 2 | Charleston

Historic Charleston. Explore Charleston's historic district. While you are seeing its landmarks, you'll also learn about the integral role that African Americans, enslaved and free, have played in the evolution of the city. See the Battery, the city's iconic promenade, and Rainbow Row, the street lined with colorful 18th-century homes. Explore the College of Charleston area on the city's East Side. Visit the Old Slave Mart Museum, housed in a slave auction building, to learn more about Charleston's role in the domestic slave trade. During a visit to the Philip Simmons Museum and Workshop, learn about the late master blacksmith, whose ornamental wrought-iron work can found throughout the city. The highly talented blacksmith was awarded the National Heritage Fellowship, the National Endowment for the Arts top honor in folk and traditional arts. Savor a taste of Charleston's famous culinary heritage during a group lunch at a local restaurant.

International African American Museum. The museum sits above infamous Gadsden's

Wharf, the point of entry of almost half of the enslaved Africans in the United States between the 1760s and 1808. Explore the museum's poignant exhibits, which tell the stories of enslaved Africans and African Americans and their many contributions to the world.

Free Time: The rest of the day is free to enjoy on your own. Get acquainted with Charleston at your leisure.

Day 3 | Charleston | Mount Pleasant

McLeod Plantation Historic Site. The McLeod Plantation Historic Site focuses its perspective on the enslaved African Americans who lived and labored on this 37-acre sea island cotton plantation. Learn about the everyday experiences of these men, women and children during their lives in bondage and after emancipation. Discover Gullah Geechee cultural traditions, while visiting the Cotton Gin House, Dairy & Kitchen and other buildings on the grounds.

Take a break for lunch with your group at a local restaurant.

Boone Hall Plantation. The grounds of Boone Hall, founded in 1681, feature nine original brick cabins that were the homes of the plantation's enslaved residents. Discover more about the Gullah Geechee culture, unique to the Lowcountry of the southeastern United States. from a Gullah descendant through storytelling, song and dance. You also have the opportunity to watch one of the region's famous sweetgrass baskets being made.



Live oak trees draped in Spanish moss, Boone Hall Plantation

Free Time: Return to Charleston, where you can enjoy dinner at your leisure.

Day 4 | Charleston

AHI Connects | Mother Emanuel AME Church: Private Visit & Lecture. Founded in 1816, Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church is one of oldest African American churches in the U.S. It has been at the forefront of civil rights activism since its founding and has welcomed speakers such as Booker T. Washington and Martin Luther King Jr. It also has known its share of tragedy. In 2015, nine members of the congregation's Bible study group were killed by a white supremacist. Lee Bennett Jr., church historian and longtime member, will delve into the story of this remarkable church.

Aiken-Rhett House. Get intriguing insights into the everyday life of enslaved people in an urban setting at this 19th-century townhouse. Its most prominent resident was William Aiken Jr., who was South Carolina's governor from 1844 to 1846. He also was a rice plantation owner and one of the state's largest enslavers. Take in the details of rooms untouched since

College of Charleston



the 1850s, including the living quarters of the enslaved residents, the kitchen, laundry and stables.

Enjoy a group lunch at a local restaurant.

Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. For many of its years, the Avery Normal Institute, which operated from 1865 to 1954, was the only college preparatory school open to Black students in the Charleston area. Today, the center preserves Lowcountry history and culture. Learn about the school's fascinating history and tour the Center's collections.

🕒 Elective | Gullah Geechee Cooking Class. Delve into the culture of the Gullah Geechee people during a fun, hands-on cooking lesson. Learn how to prepare classic Lowcountry



Mother Emanuel AME Church



favorites. Then, dig into your delectable creations!

Day 5 | Charleston

Gullah Tour with Alphonso Brown. Enjoy an entertaining, educational city tour as guide Alphonso Brown proudly shares his love of the Charleston and Gullah culture. Learn how African Americans shaped Charleston while introducing you to landmarks such as the home of local historic figure Denmark Vesey and Catfish Row.

Gibbes Museum of Art. Admire the exquisite sweetgrass basketry, a Gullah Geechee ancestral tradition originating in Africa, by master artisan Mary Jackson, a 2008 recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship “Genius Grant.” The museum also includes paintings by Jonathan Green, celebrated for his vibrant portrayals of the Gullah Geechee life and Southern culture.

Free Time: Enjoy an afternoon at leisure.

Enrichment: “Payne-ful” Business: Charleston’s Journey to Truth. Gather for a festive Farewell Dinner.

Day 6 | In Transit

Transfer on your own to the airport for your return flights home. ✈

Note: Itinerary may change due to local conditions.

✈ Flights included for AHI FlexAir participants.

🕒 Elective experiences available at an additional cost.

Activity Level

We have designated activity levels for all excursions on this program. For more details, please call or visit our website.

Excursions on this itinerary require:

- walking on cobblestones, unpaved paths and/or uneven surfaces
- getting on/off motor coaches and boats

Included Features



Accommodations (with baggage handling)

- **5 nights** in Charleston, South Carolina, at the first-class The Lindy Renaissance Charleston Hotel.

Extensive Meal Program

- 3 lunches and 1 Farewell Dinner, including tea or coffee with all meals, plus wine with dinner.

Your One-of-a-Kind Journey

- **Visit 3 countries** during this program.
- **Small group:** Sized just right at 24 guests.
- **Enrichment by expert speakers** enhances your insight into the region.
- **Engaging excursions** showcase the local culture, heritage and history.
- 🕒 **Electives** and free time to pursue your individual interests.
- 🌍 **AHI Connects:** Local immersion.
- Welcome Reception to mingle with fellow travelers.
- A personal VOX headset to hear your guide clearly.
- Tipping of guides and drivers.
- **AHI Sustainability Promise:** We strive to make a positive impact wherever we travel.

Aiken-Rhett House





Sweetgrass Baskets

A BRIDGE BETWEEN CONTINENTS

Sweetgrass baskets, ubiquitous in Charleston, are a beautiful and functional contribution of South Carolina's Gullah Geechee culture. Enslaved Africans brought this artistic tradition from West Africa to South Carolina, where they discovered grasses similar to those used to make baskets in their homeland. Laboring on South Carolina's rice plantations, they drew upon their heritage to create baskets to separate grains of rice from the chaff. Today's basket weavers, descendents of enslaved artisans, are the legacy of 300 years of tradition, of calloused fingers and dexterous hands creating a link to their ancestors with each twist of a palmetto ribbon around a coil of sweetgrass.



The Battery, Charleston's iconic promenade

2026 | Departure Details

Program Dates

Travel dates ✈ **February 15-20, 2026**

✈ Travel dates include any overnights required for international travel. These dates may vary depending on air schedules.

Tour dates* **February 15-20, 2026**

* Tour dates begin on the scheduled arrival date at your destination and end on the scheduled departure date from your destination.

Land Program

Full Price **\$4,245**

Special Savings **\$750**

Special Savings Price* **\$3,495**

***This Special Savings Price includes our \$250 Early Booking and \$500 Pay-in-Full discounts and is valid if you book by the date on the address panel and pay in full at booking.**

Deposit amount is \$750 per person.

Final Payment is due at least 120 days prior to departure.

Price includes applicable program taxes (such as VAT and port charges).

All prices quoted are in USD, per person, based on double occupancy and do not include air transportation costs (unless otherwise stated).

Special offers, promotions and discounts cannot be combined.

Single accommodations are an additional \$995 (limited availability).

Please note: Program-specific terms and conditions are available at <https://navy.ahitravel.com/destinations/1943A?schoold=111>.

AHI FlexAir

Let us arrange your flights

Our experts are ready to assist you in booking flights. Our personalized air program offers the following advantages:

- **price guarantee** to protect you from fuel surcharge increases after ticket purchase
- **flexibility** to change or cancel your reservation before departure on most flights (Fees may apply.)
- **assistance** in the event of schedule changes or delays

AHI Travel Expertise

Travel Consultants assist with the reservation process.

Travel & Air Coordinators offer their personalized assistance with flights, electives and special requests.

Travel Information provides pre-departure details and enrichment about your destination.

Your Travel Director, a seasoned, multilingual professional, manages daily logistics so you enjoy a seamless experience.

Handpicked Expert Guides and Knowledgeable Lecturers deepen your appreciation for the region and its history, culture and current events.

Accommodations



The Lindy Renaissance Charleston Hotel | Charleston



Discover Charleston's Southern charm and hospitality when staying at The Lindy Renaissance Charleston Hotel, which embraces its local roots. Haint blue ceilings of the guest rooms, for example, stem from a Gullah tradition, and the hotel's restaurant from award-winning Southern chef Vivian Howard highlights local ingredients and regional cuisine. Each evening, sink into the comfort of your inviting, well-appointed room, decorated with works by local artists.



Rainbow Row



Book your journey today!

800-323-7373

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Charleston's African American Legacy

Committed to connecting travelers
to the people, places and cultures
of the world for more than 62 years.



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program information,
discounts and pricing.**

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