



DAY TRIP TO DORCHESTER

From Summerville · Dorchester County, South Carolina



RIVER AND
LAKE



Photo: Bplusdminus, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

OPEN DAILY

The townsite is a South Carolina state historic site, open daily with a small admission fee, per the park's pages read October 24, 2026. The fort walls, the bell tower and the churchyard stand; the rest of the town is underground.

Colonial Dorchester makes an easy morning from Summerville, 12 minutes away. Walk the short paths to the tabby fort, the bell tower and the churchyard, and check the tide if you want to see the old wharf, which shows only when the water is low. Grills are not allowed, so the park asks picnickers to bring food already cooked; otherwise plan lunch in Summerville.

A SAMPLE DAY

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| ☐ 9:00 | Leave downtown Summerville on Main Street and SC 165. The park opens at 9. |
| ☐ 9:15 | Start at the information kiosk in the main parking lot. |
| ☐ 9:30 | Walk to the tabby fort and the magazine ruins inside it, above the river. |
| ☐ 10:15 | Walk to St. George's bell tower and the parish cemetery. The park's cemetery tour can be printed in advance. |
| ☐ 11:00 | If the tide is low, look for the wharf timbers along the river. The office is staffed from 11 to noon for questions. |
| ☐ 12:00 | Picnic, or drive back to Summerville for lunch. |

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The bell tower.** It stands alone in an open wood. Step back to get the whole tower and the trees around it in one frame.
- **The tabby walls.** Shoot close in raking light to show the oyster shells set in the wall.
- **The Ashley River.** The river bends right below the fort. Still mornings give reflections of the trees.



USGS topographic map, 1920 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	6 mi, about 12 min each way from downtown Summerville. From Charleston: 21 mi, about 36 min.
WHERE	Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site, 300 State Park Road, Summerville, SC 29485. Run by South Carolina State Parks.
HOURS	Daily 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. during Daylight Saving Time and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year, which in 2026 starts November 1. Closed Christmas Day. The park office is staffed 11 a.m. to noon. Park pages checked October 24, 2026.
ADMISSION	\$3 adults, \$1.50 South Carolina seniors, \$1 children 6 to 15, free for 5 and under.
WALKING	A few short walking paths through the town remains. No bike trails.
FOOD	Picnics are fine with food cooked beforehand. Grills are not allowed.
RESTROOMS	On site.
FISHING	Allowed behind the fort or behind the restrooms, with a South Carolina freshwater license.
RULES	No metal detectors. Pets on a leash no longer than 6 feet. No river access for boating.
PROGRAMS	Archaeology programs and colonial demonstrations run through the year; the park's events page has the dates.
WEBSITE	southcarolinaparks.com/colonial-dorchester

BEFORE YOU GO

- Check the status with the land manager before you go; conditions change.
- Keep out of unstable buildings and off fenced ruins.
- Leave artifacts where they lie. Removing them can be a crime.
- Carry water, a paper map and a charged phone; signal is often poor.

Coordinates 32.95018, -80.17121 • 32°57'01"N
80°10'16"W

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/south-carolina/dorchester/

Directions [Google Maps](#)

Details checked October 2026. Hours, prices and access change: confirm before you go.