



**HISTORIC**  
COLUMBIA

## Group Tour Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: What can groups experience on the house tour with Historic Columbia?

A: Historic Columbia offers a variety of options for groups to enjoy, including historic house museum tours, neighborhoods walking tours and bus tours of historic districts within the heart of the capital city.

- **House Tours:** Trained guides lead guests on guided tours through exhibit spaces at each of Historic Columbia's five sites. Each site provides a unique experience and offers a variety of interactive activities for visitors. Scattered throughout many of the exhibits are engagement stations, in which visitors can watch videos, touch historic objects from the teaching collection and use touch screen displays to learn more about the sites.
- **Walking and Bus Tours:** Either on foot or by bus, groups can explore the robust history of Columbia's neighborhoods and districts by enjoying one of the many tours presented by Historic Columbia. Walking tours range from strolls down the capital city's Main Street and historic neighborhoods, to bus tours that travel to important Civil War and African American Sites. Bus tours include the opportunity to step off and explore sites, including the grounds of South Carolina's State House.
- **Seasonal Tours:** Tour groups are invited to see a variety of holiday decorations and experience traditions at the Robert Mills House and the Hampton-Preston Mansion. Tour guides will provide stories of holidays past in Columbia and discuss how families decorated and entertained during the 19th and early 20th centuries. After the holiday tour, groups will have the opportunity to make a historic holiday craft to take home with them. *Note: These tours are seasonal and are offered in November and December.*

### Q: What houses do groups get to see on the house tour?

A: Groups can choose to take a tour of one of Historic Columbia's five historic house museums, including the Robert Mills House & Gardens, the Hampton-Preston Mansion & Gardens, the Woodrow Wilson Family Home, the Mann-Simons Site & Outdoor Museum and the Modjeska Monteith Simkins House. Each house tour explores different topics, themes and periods in Columbia's history.

- The **Robert Mills House & Gardens**, a national historic landmark, explores architecture and daily life in the 1820s in Columbia. The property was designed by South Carolina native and architect Robert Mills, who also designed the Washington Monument.
  - Tickets are issued at the Gift Shop at Robert Mills, located at 1616 Blanding St.  
**Time:** Allow 75 minutes minimum.  
**Hours:** Guided tours are offered Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., Sun. 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Closed major holidays.  
**Cost:** \$8 (adult), \$6 (ages 65+ and active military and college students with ID); \$5 (ages 6-17). Combination and group tickets are available.  
**Phone:** (803) 252-1770 ext. 23 **Email:** [Reservations@historiccolumbia.org](mailto:Reservations@historiccolumbia.org) **Website:** [HistoricColumbia.org](http://HistoricColumbia.org)

- The **Hampton-Preston Mansion & Gardens**, one of Columbia's oldest homes, explores planter-class life in 19<sup>th</sup>-century South Carolina, as well as urban slavery and the site's evolution over time. The property features a regionally-acclaimed antebellum garden that contains a remarkable collection of native varieties and plants from around the world.
  - Tickets are issued at the Gift Shop at Robert Mills, located at 1616 Blanding St.  
**Time:** Allow 75 minutes minimum.  
**Hours:** Guided tours are offered Tues.-Sat. at 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., Sun. at 2:30 p.m. Closed major holidays.  
**Cost:** \$8 (adult), \$6 (ages 65+ and active military and college students with ID); \$5 (ages 6-17). Combination and group tickets are available.  
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- The **Woodrow Wilson Family Home** examines the reconstruction era through the lens of Woodrow Wilson, his family and other individuals who worked and lived at the site. This distinctive circa-1871 Italian villa-style residence is the only museum of Reconstruction in the nation and the only presidential home in South Carolina.
  - Tickets are issued at the Gift Shop at Robert Mills, located at 1616 Blanding St.  
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- The **Mann-Simon Site & Outdoor Museum** takes guests on a journey through the challenges, adversity and perseverance of one African American family who lived on the property for nearly 130 years. The new exhibits at the site, which debuted in the fall of 2016, explore the role race played in shaping the capital city – from antebellum Columbia, to the Civil War and Reconstruction, to the Jim Crow era and into the early civil rights years.
  - Tickets are issued at the Gift Shop at Robert Mills, located at 1616 Blanding St.  
**Time:** Allow 75 minutes minimum.  
**Hours:** Guided tours are offered Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., Sun. 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Closed major holidays.  
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- The **Modjeska Monteith Simkins House**, built between 1890 and 1895, is one-story Columbia Cottage and home to Modjeska Monteith Simkins, considered the matriarch of South Carolina's Civil and Human Rights movement. Home to Simkins, this cottage was used for lodging and as a meeting space for local and national civil rights leaders and NAACP lawyers such as Thurgood Marshall during a time when blacks were excluded from city hotels.
  - This site is not currently open for daily tours and is only available for groups of 10 or more with advanced registration.

**Q: How is the house tour set up?**

A: Tours at the Robert Mills House, the Hampton-Preston Mansion and the Modjeska Monteith Simkins House are fully guided by trained Historic Columbia guides. Tours at the Woodrow Wilson Family Home and the Mann-Simons Site are semi-guided, which allows for combination of a traditional tour guide-led experience with the opportunity for visitors to explore at their own pace.

**Q: What are the options for bus and walking tours?**

A: Driving and Bus Tours

Guided driving tours offer your group insight into the central section of Columbia. For driving tours visitors must provide own transportation. Prices vary according to the driven-tour itinerary. Step-offs at various sites may be arranged.

- **Historic Heart of Columbia**

See the important downtown sites in the central core of Columbia. The tour offers informative and entertaining stories about the Palmetto State's capital. A few of the landmarks on the tour are the Robert Mills Historic District, the State House, the Governor's Mansion, the University of South Carolina's Horseshoe (the original campus), historic churches, Historic Columbia Foundation house museums and the Vista, an area of restored train stations and warehouses. Allow approximately 60 minutes for this tour.

- **Homeplaces, Workplaces, Resting Places: An African-American Heritage Sites Tour**

From the Mann-Simons Site, home of Celia Mann, a free-black mid-wife in antebellum Columbia, to the North Carolina Mutual Building, offices of the largest African-American owned life insurance company in the United States, this tour explores houses, businesses, cemeteries, and other sites important to the African-American community. Largely comprised of sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this tour features locations that illustrate important events and little-known facts about Columbia's African-American community. Allow approximately 90 minutes for this tour.

- **Columbia's Civil War: From Homefront to Battleground Tour**

Columbia's antebellum and Reconstruction era structures, including churches, hospitals, armories, governmental buildings and private homes offer testimony to this tumultuous chapter in our nation's history. Learn about Columbia during the early years of the war and about the fateful night of February 17, 1865 when thirty percent of the city's structures were lost to fire. Step-off at the State House and count the iron stars marking where Union cannonballs hit the building. Allow approximately 75 minutes for this tour.

A: Walking Tours

- **Main Street Columbia: From the Capitol to the Courthouse**

Offering more than one hundred and fifty years' worth of architectural trends, Columbia's Main Street is a physical legacy of its citizens' aspiration and accomplishments. Come see the city's oldest "skyscraper," an IBM-punch-card-inspired office building and the State Capitol. Walk through Columbia's first indoor shopping mall and learn how an old department store became an art museum. Allow approximately 60 minutes for this tour.

- **Historic Heart of Columbia**

This tour begins in the University neighborhood and travels through the University of South Carolina's original campus, the Horseshoe, dating to the first half of the 19th century. Hear about the antics of the students in the early days of the school. Continue your walk to view Trinity Episcopal Cathedral and its historically important cemetery. Learn about the construction of the

State House and view the monuments. The tour ends in the Congaree Vista. Allow approximately 75 minutes for this tour.

- **Sacred Sites**

Columbia has a rich religious history with congregations dating from the early nineteenth century. Six historic churches and one former synagogue are featured on this walking tour. Visit the burial sites of six former South Carolina governors and the parents of President Woodrow Wilson. Discover which Columbia church was based upon York Cathedral in England. Allow 90 minutes for this tour.

- **Happy Hour History Tour**

Raise a glass to history while learning about Columbia's past. Main Street boasts architectural styles spanning three centuries that speak to the tastes, interests, and aspirations of persons living and working in South Carolina's second state capital. This guided tour offers insight into the history of Columbia focusing on the progress seen through the life of its Main Street and downtown corridor. Participants will stop at historic sites and receive two free beverages and appetizers along the way. Participants must be 21 or older. Price is \$20 per participant. Program is approximately 90 minutes. All tours meet on the Gervais Street side of the State House.

**Q: Is motor coach parking available?**

A: There is ample un-metered street parking near at all Historic Columbia sites. Motorcoaches drop the visitors off at the gates to each site when they arrive and most often park on the same block.

**Q: Is there a group discount for tours?**

Yes, groups of 10 or more receive discounted admission. Customized one-day and two-day group tour packages are available.

**Q: How do I book my tour?**

A: Historic Columbia is happy to arrange a private guided tour for your group of 10 or more with advance registration. We suggest booking tours 30 days in advance, but can usually accommodate groups within two weeks of the proposed tour date. For group reservations, please email [Reservations@historiccolumbia.org](mailto:Reservations@historiccolumbia.org) or call (803) 252.1770 X 23.

**Q: Are there tours for students?**

A: Yes, Historic Columbia offers numerous school tours that meet South Carolina education standards for various grade levels. For more information about visiting Historic Columbia with your students, call 803.252.1770 x 26 or call [education@historiccolumbia.org](mailto:education@historiccolumbia.org).