



Setting

Aiken has a population of 25,337 people and is the county seat of Aiken County, which has a total population of 146,736 people. Aiken is located near the Georgia border, about fifteen miles east of Augusta, and an hour southwest of Columbia. With US highways 1 and 78 passing through the center of the city and Interstate 20 to the north, Aiken is a small town with all of the amenities of bigger cities within easy reach. Historically Aiken has been known as an equestrian center with such thoroughbreds like Secretariat, Kelso, Summer Squall, and Pleasant Colony training there. Today Aiken continues this tradition with many estates around the town and events during the year centered around all types of horse riding. Aiken is a unique city where public and private interests meet, and work together for the good of the community. Innovative campaigns are designed to strengthen both individuals and the whole city. A current program is based on encouraging personal growth where certain character traits are espoused each month. Qualities such as faith, wisdom, virtue, and honor take precedent for a month and set the tone for the people of the community. Named an All-American City, by the National Civic League in 1997, Aiken offers its citizens a picturesque downtown, a complete range of services and is a great place to live for humans and horses alike.

Attractions

The historic downtown has plenty to do and see. There are many shops to browse in or restaurants to eat at. Aiken has something for every palate and budget, from the casual Aiken Brewing Company with great beers, to a more upscale feel at Linda's Bistro. The Aiken Center for the Arts offers exhibits and workshops in everything from yoga to traditional painting. Horse lovers will find the fall and spring steeplechases exhilarating. The annual horse show held at the 2100 acre Hitchcock Woods, in the middle of Aiken, is

the icing on the cake. Hitchcock Woods is also home to Hopewell Gardens which has miles of walking paths, sculptures, free concerts in the summer, the Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame, the Dollhouse and the Carriage Museum. For students young and old, the University of South Carolina has a branch in Aiken, in addition to classes provided at Aiken Technical College.

Drawbacks

Traffic can become unpredictable due to the town's devotion to their horses who have the right of way when crossing streets, controlling the lights through buttons on the crossing posts.

Education

Aiken's children attend Aiken High School. Out of 329 seniors, 78 percent graduated and 49 percent of seniors went on to four-year colleges, while 26 percent went to two-year colleges. Aiken's seniors scored an average of 999 on the SAT's. In comparison, the statewide average on the SAT's is 993, and an average of fifty-five percent of South Carolina's students graduate from high school.

Aiken is surrounded by several colleges in a thirty mile radius. Closest is The University of South Carolina at Aiken with a total enrollment of about 2,600 students and Aiken Technical College, which has a total enrollment of about 1,500 students. Augusta, GA has a couple of colleges as well; Augusta State University, with an enrollment of about 3,800 students and Augusta Technical College, which has an enrollment of about 2,300 students.

Housing Costs

The median home price is approximately \$100,000. A home with three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, and about 1,400 square feet, on approximately half an acre, sells for approximately \$85,000. A home with four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and about 1,800 square feet, on around an acre, will sell for approximately \$155,000.

Who Your Neighbors Will Be

Horses and their owners. Many writers and artists have made their home in Aiken. Many people in Aiken are farmers and trades people as well. Aiken is also popular with

vacationing families. The workforce in and around Aiken is very well spread out. About 24 percent of people work in education, health and social service fields, while around 13 percent work in each of the manufacturing, retail, transportation, and professional fields.

What You'll Do in Your Free Time

With average low temperatures barely hitting freezing, Aiken is the perfect spot for year-round outdoor activity with the resources for everything from fishing to hiking and horseback riding. Make sure to catch the steeplechase and other horse centered events during the year. Spend the day shopping downtown or head into Augusta, GA for some night time fun.

Medical Care

Aiken Regional Medical Center takes care of the needs of Aiken residents, and has recently undergone renovations to enhance its already sterling facilities. The Emergency Room was recently expanded from 19 to 34 beds which reduced wait time for care. The regular facilities are comprised of 230 acute-care beds. One advantage of staying at Aiken Regional is the fact that all of the rooms in the hospital are single occupancy. Aiken Regional also focuses on expert cancer care, with a center that specializes in the best of treatments for the body, as well as caring for the emotional well being and physical comfort of patients. The Cancer Care Institute of North Carolina has been designed to be as aesthetically pleasing as possible, with plenty of natural light, high ceilings and other amenities to help soothe patients and families, as they undergo care.

Getting There

Augusta Regional Airport at Bush Field is the closest airport, twenty-one miles away in Augusta, Georgia. Augusta Regional is served by Delta Connections(800-221-1212) and US Airways Express(800-428-4322). Rental car companies operating out of Augusta include: Avis(706-798-1383, 800-331-1212), Budget(706-790-6902, 800-527-0700), Enterprise(706-772-4998, 800-736-8222), Hertz(706-798-3970, 800-654-3131) and Alamo/National(706-798-5835, 800-227-7368). Columbia Metropolitan Airport is about fifty miles away in Columbia, South Carolina. Airlines serving Columbia Metropolitan Airport include: American Eagle(800-433-7300), Continental Airlines(800-525-0280), Delta Airlines and Delta Connections(800-221-1212), Northwest Airlines(800-225-2525), United Express(800-241-6522) and US Airways Express(800-428-4322).

Rental car companies serving Columbia Metropolitan Airport include:
Alamo/National(803-822-5180, 800-328-4567), Avis(803-822-5100, 800-331-1212),
Budget(803-822-8346, 800-527-0700), Hertz(803-822-8341, 800-654-3131) and Thrifty(803-
822-2300, 800-847-4389).

For More Information

Chamber of Commerce: www.aikenchamber.net (803-641-1111)

City Site: www.aiken.net