LOCATION GUIDE

Coast Guard Charleston, SC

Housing, BAH, schools, check-in and Lowcountry know-how for Base Charleston, Sector Charleston and the cutter fleet.

SERIES
CONUS
PCS

FROM	TO	GUIDE
Your current duty station	Charleston, SC	Location
BRANCH	**BAH AREA**	**UNITS**
Coast Guard	Charleston, SC	Base · Sector · Cutters

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WELCOME

Coast Guard Charleston at a glance

Charleston is becoming one of the Coast Guard's largest homeports. A new Base Charleston campus on the Cooper River will support national security cutters, and the local Coast Guard workforce is expected to grow fast.

FACT	DETAIL
Base Charleston	North Charleston, on the Cooper River; a new campus is under construction
Sector Charleston	196 Tradd Street, downtown Charleston
Cutters	National security cutters Hamilton, James, Stone and Calhoun, plus Willow, Anvil and Kingfisher; Friedman is coming
Other units	Maritime Law Enforcement Academy and tenant commands
Nearby military	Joint Base Charleston (Air Force base and Naval Weapons Station)
BAH housing area	Charleston, SC
Family housing	No Coast Guard family housing; most families rent or buy off base

Getting here

OPTION	DETAIL
Charleston International (CHS)	In North Charleston, about 15–20 minutes from Base Charleston
By car	I-26 runs from Columbia to downtown; I-526 loops between West Ashley, North Charleston and Mount Pleasant
From the airport	Taxis are reimbursable under orders; Sector Charleston has no duty driver

A growing homeport

More cutters and crews are on the way. Expect more competition for rentals near the base — start your search early.

COUNTDOWN

Before you arrive

Coast Guard families in Charleston live off base, so the housing search is the biggest task. Start it the week you get orders.

As soon as you have orders 90+ DAYS OUT

- [ ] Contact your unit and request a sponsor
- [ ] Ask the Joint Base Charleston Housing Office about privatized homes
- [ ] Look up your BAH for Charleston, SC
- [ ] Enroll in Special Needs Program if needed
- [ ] Call Base Charleston Housing about barracks or a housing release
- [ ] Compare school districts before you house-hunt
- [ ] Request child care on MilitaryChildCare.com
- [ ] Join local Coast Guard spouse groups

Book the move 60 DAYS OUT

- [ ] Schedule household goods or plan your PPM
- [ ] Start the rental or home search
- [ ] Check flood zones before choosing a home
- [ ] Reserve temporary lodging at the Air Force Inns of Charleston
- [ ] Gather school, shot and IEP/504 records

Final prep 30 DAYS OUT

- [ ] Start a rough travel claim and keep receipts over $75
- [ ] Book a DEERS/ID card appointment if needed
- [ ] Pack Service Dress Blue or Tropical Blue for check-in
- [ ] Set up utilities and internet at the new address

Hurricane season: June to November

The Lowcountry floods easily, even in heavy rain. Know your evacuation zone and build a hurricane kit in your first week.

DAY ONE

Check-in and Coast Guard support

Check in with your unit's admin office during working hours, 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM on weekdays. Sector Charleston members check in on the second deck of the engineering building.

1

Sector Charleston check-in

196 Tradd Street. After the main gate, go to the engineering building, second deck, Admin Shop. After hours: Sector OOD (843) 514-4203.

2

Cutter and Base members

Your sponsor or command gives you check-in instructions. Most cutter crews check in through Base Charleston.

Coast Guard support

- CG SUPRT: free, confidential counseling and life coaching, 24/7
- Your unit ombudsman connects families to resources
- Coast Guard Exchange at Base Charleston
- Coast Guard Mutual Assistance for emergency financial help
- Work-Life staff for the Special Needs Program, child care help and relocation
- Commissary and larger exchanges at Joint Base Charleston

Key offices

OFFICE	PHONE
Sector Charleston	(843) 724-7600
Sector OOD (after hours)	(843) 514-4203
Base Charleston Housing	(843) 740-7070
Joint Base Charleston Housing	(843) 963-3858

WHERE TO LIVE

Housing in the Lowcountry

There is no Coast Guard family housing in Charleston. Most families rent or buy off base, and some qualify for privatized housing at Joint Base Charleston.

Government options

BARRACKS AND JOINT BASE CHARLESTON

- Single members E-3 and below must clear the barracks before receiving BAH
- Leaving Coast Guard housing? Get a release from Base Charleston Housing
- Joint Base Charleston has privatized housing at the Air Force base and Naval Weapons Station
- Temporary lodging: Air Force Inns of Charleston, (843) 963-8000

Off base

PICK BY COMMUTE

AREA	FEEL	NOTES
North Charleston / Hanahan	Closest to Base Charleston; mixed prices	Short commute
Summerville	Popular suburb with strong schools	I-26 traffic at rush hour
Goose Creek	Near the Naval Weapons Station	Berkeley County schools
Mount Pleasant / Daniel Island	Highly rated schools, highest prices	Bridge traffic
West Ashley / James Island	Close to downtown and the beaches	Older homes, flood-prone areas
Ladson	More affordable, newer builds	Longer drive

Check flood maps first

Many Lowcountry streets flood at high tide and in storms. Check FEMA flood maps and ask about flood insurance before you sign.

THE NUMBERS

2026 BAH and rent vs. buy

Coast Guard members in the Charleston area use the Charleston, SC housing area. Monthly rates below.

GRADE	WITH DEPS	WITHOUT	GRADE	WITH DEPS	WITHOUT
E-1 to E-4	$2,220	$1,755	W-5	$2,880	$2,661
E-5	$2,385	$1,941	O-1	$2,421	$2,049
E-6	$2,616	$2,064	O-2	$2,613	$2,334
E-7	$2,652	$2,223	O-3	$2,721	$2,529
E-8	$2,694	$2,439	O-4	$2,904	$2,646
E-9	$2,769	$2,496	O-5	$3,039	$2,664
W-1	$2,634	$2,172	O-6	$3,060	$2,697
W-2	$2,667	$2,436	O-1E	$2,655	$2,382
W-3	$2,724	$2,508	O-2E	$2,712	$2,484
W-4	$2,790	$2,619	O-3E	$2,802	$2,607

Source: DoD 2026 BAH rates via FedRateCalc

Double-check your rate before you budget — BAH changes every January: travel.dod.mil/Allowances/Basic-Allowance-for-Housing/BAH-Rate-Lookup/

Some high-cost areas also pay CONUS COLA: travel.dod.mil/Allowances/CONUS-Cost-of-Living-Allowance/

Rent or buy?

- Charleston home prices have climbed fast; many Coast Guard families rent
- Summerville and Goose Creek usually cost less than Mount Pleasant or the islands
- Buying can work for a long tour, but flood and wind insurance add real cost
- Expect more rental competition as the cutter fleet grows

Insurance changes the math

Flood and wind insurance near the water can add hundreds a month. Get quotes before you make an offer.

KIDS

Schools and child care

There are no DoDEA schools in Charleston. Three large districts serve most families, and your address decides the school.

DISTRICT OR SCHOOL	SERVES
Charleston County School District	North Charleston, Mount Pleasant, West Ashley, James Island and downtown
Berkeley County School District	Hanahan, Goose Creek, Moncks Corner and Daniel Island
Dorchester School District Two	Summerville and Ladson
Other options	Charter, magnet and private schools across the area

Coast Guard Work-Life

Ask Work-Life staff about the Special Needs Program and school transitions.

Military Interstate Compact

South Carolina is a member — it helps with placement and graduation rules.

Colleges nearby

Trident Technical College, College of Charleston and Charleston Southern.

Child care

- Request care on MilitaryChildCare.com as soon as you have orders
- Joint Base Charleston Child Development Centers may have space
- Coast Guard child care subsidy can help with off-base care
- Plan backup care around cutter deployment schedules

FAMILY LIFE

Spouse, family and South Carolina rules

Spouse support

- The Coast Guard Spouse Employment program and Work-Life staff help with job searches
- South Carolina offers licensing help for military spouses
- Charleston has a strong job market in health care, tourism, tech and the port
- MyCAA can fund certificates for eligible spouses

Family programs

- CG SUPRT for counseling and support, 24/7
- Coast Guard Mutual Assistance
- Unit ombudsman program
- Special Needs Program through Work-Life

South Carolina rules for military families

TOPIC	WHAT TO KNOW
State income tax	Nonresident service members stationed here aren't taxed by South Carolina on military pay
Spouse income	Spouses who keep another legal residence may be exempt under MSRRA
Driver's license	Service members and dependents with a valid home-state license can keep it
Vehicle registration	Nonresident service members can keep home-state registration
Hurricanes and flooding	Season runs June to November; tidal flooding happens year-round downtown

Deployment-ready families

Cutter crews deploy for long patrols. Connect with your ombudsman and other cutter families early — they're your best support.

OFF DUTY

Living here

You'll need a car. I-26 and I-526 carry most commuters, and rush hour into North Charleston can be slow.

Climate

Hot, humid summers, mild winters and a long hurricane season.

Shopping

Coast Guard Exchange on base; commissary at Joint Base Charleston. Tanger Outlets in North Charleston.

Outdoors

Beaches, kayaking, fishing and boating all year.

Day trips

DESTINATION	DRIVE	WHY GO
Downtown Charleston	~15 min	Historic streets, food and the waterfront
Fort Sumter	~20 min + ferry	Where the Civil War began
Patriots Point	~20 min	USS Yorktown and naval museum
Folly Beach	~30 min	Laid-back beach town
Isle of Palms / Sullivan's Island	~30 min	Family beaches and seafood
Angel Oak	~30 min	A centuries-old live oak on Johns Island
Beaufort	~1.25 hr	Historic town and Hunting Island State Park
Savannah, GA	~2 hr	Historic squares and riverfront
Myrtle Beach	~2 hr	Beaches and family attractions

KEEP THIS HANDY

Key contacts

Phone numbers change — call ahead to confirm hours before you drive over.

OFFICE	PHONE
Sector Charleston	(843) 724-7600
Sector OOD (after hours)	(843) 514-4203
Base Charleston Housing	(843) 740-7070
Joint Base Charleston Housing	(843) 963-3858

OFFICE	PHONE
Air Force Inns of Charleston	(843) 963-8000
CG SUPRT (24/7)	(855) 247-8778
TRICARE East	(800) 444-5445
Nurse advice line	1-800-874-2273

Add your own

BASE CHARLESTON ADMIN

WORK-LIFE OFFICE

OMBUDSMAN

CLINIC

Links

Sector Charleston · CG SUPRT · Coast Guard Mutual Assistance · BAH Rate Lookup · Plan My Move

Sources: USCG Sector Charleston Welcome Aboard; Live 5 News (Jan 2024) on the Base Charleston campus; DoD 2026 BAH rates via FedRateCalc.

READY FOR THE FULL PLAYBOOK?

Go step by step with the kits.

Worksheets, trackers and a complete binder setup for every stage of your move.

pcslikeapro.org

hello@pcslikeapro.org

WORKSHEET

Plan your landing

My housing budget

ITEM	AMOUNT
My monthly BAH	$
Rent or mortgage	$
Utilities (estimate)	$
Renter's or homeowner's insurance	$
Left over (BAH minus costs)	$

Neighborhood comparison

AREA / ADDRESS	RENT OR PRICE	COMMUTE TO UNIT	SCHOOL DISTRICT	NOTES

First-week checklist

- [ ] Check in with your unit admin
- [ ] Update DEERS; get dependent IDs
- [ ] Turn in your travel claim
- [ ] Set up child care
- [ ] Meet your ombudsman
- [ ] Enroll in TRICARE
- [ ] Enroll kids in school
- [ ] Build your hurricane kit