

Golf Illustrated Winter 2002/2003

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

The **GRAND STRAND** Of **MYRTLE BEACH**

Escape to the seaside golf capital of the world this winter for a dazzling array of golf courses, attractions, restaurants, amenities and miles of beautiful beaches.

By Peter Smolens

They say variety is the spice of life. If that's true, then Myrtle Beach, S.C., has a lot of life. With more than 100 golf courses to choose from, the Grand Strand has enough variety for everyone's taste, including courses from the most popular designers priced for the upscale golfer to excellent layouts at a reasonable price.

There's good reason Myrtle Beach is called the golf capital of the world. However, with such abundance of quality courses, you can be overwhelmed easily. Although it would be wonderful to try, unless you can play golf for four months on unlimited funds, forget about playing every worthy course along the Grand Strand. It's just not going to happen.

So before you make your plans for a golf vacation to the area, take a moment and decide what kind of courses you want to play. Would you like to grip it and rip it at Wicked Stick or play a P.B. Dye target-golf special like the Moorlands? Then again, you can always play a traditional course like Oyster Bay.

Knowing what you like is key when arranging your trip to America's golfing Mecca. By selecting courses that appeal to your style and pocketbook, you can have a great time at a reasonable price during a typical three- to seven-day golf junket.

Changing Times

In the past, Myrtle Beach had developed a reputation that was not to everyone's taste — the Las Vegas of golf. You had to acquire a taste for



Photo: Stephen R. Haggard/PhotoQuest

The aesthetically pleasing Oyster Bay Golf Links demands bold tee shots and intelligent approaches.



The rooftop pool at the Grande Shores Oceanfront Resort provides guests with a great view of the Grand Strand.

Location, Location, Location

For years, the Grand Strand stretched for 60 miles from the North Carolina border to Georgetown, S.C. But now, even that has changed. The Strand has grown north of the North Carolina border and stretches south

the Grand Strand. Today, Myrtle Beach is working hard to change that image. Now you have options with accommodations at upscale resorts that appeal to the discrimi-

nating golfer. Still, for golfers who want to be downtown where the action is, you can have a wonderful time enjoying an oceanside room in the heart of the Grand Strand while being close to some of the finest golf courses in the region. Either way, Myrtle Beach can accommodate you.

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The Heathland Course is built in the Scottish tradition of links-style golf.

to the towns of Murrells Inlet, Litchfield Beach and Pawleys Island.

Oyster Bay and Marsh Harbour are two fine representatives of golf in the North Carolina section of the Grand Strand. Through the years, these Dan Maples and Larry Young designed courses have matured into solid tests of golf.

To see the stunningly beautiful marsh in the golden light of the afternoon at the Oyster Bay golf course is worth the difficulties of playing around the traps that define the double-dogleg fifth hole. Then again, the uniqueness of the fourth hole features alternating greens. Depending on the day, the hole can play as a long straight-ahead or 90-degree dogleg-left par 4.

However, it is the back nine where the course shows off its true colors. The stretch starting with the 13th hole provides a six-hole feast of Myrtle Beach golf at its finest.

For many courses, the 13th would be a signature hole. But at Oyster Bay, the green that sits on top of a concrete wall is just the first course. The risk-reward par 5 with a pond in front of the green and the ocean backdrop behind the peninsula-green par-3 holes are just the appetizer for what is to come.

A 470-yard par 4 across a marsh makes for a wonderful salad in preparation for the main course — a tantalizing island green that's built on a mountain of oyster shells. Just pick your club and take your chance. The dessert of this back-nine banquet is the 18th hole. The second shot is uphill to a multi-level green that can have some diabolical pin placements.

As you travel down the road, the Marsh Harbour golf course can quietly sneak up on you. But don't miss this one. It was one of the first courses in

the area built over a low-lying marshland. One moment you're playing through deep, dark forests on a variety of wonderful holes that reward excellent shot-making. The next you're meandering back and forth across the marshlands along the Calabash River and enjoying the breathtaking views. The highlight is the 17th hole. This par 5 jumps over three peninsulas that jut out over the wetlands.

You will find the majority of the golf course layouts along the Grand Strand are combination parkland-marshland designs routed on lands that

were originally old Southern plantations. The plantations are no longer around, but what's left are rice fields, magnolias, azaleas and Spanish moss-laden live oak and pine trees that set a perfect stage for golf.

Until the early 1900s, this region was largely uninhabited. That's when the Barroughs and Collins Company began developing the area. They built the beach's first hotel, the Seaside Inn. A short time later Myrtle Beach's first golf club, the Pine Lakes International Country Club, was built. The golf course is known as the birthplace of *Sports Illustrated* magazine. In 1936 the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway was opened for boating and commercial shipping. Soon thereafter resorts and golf courses began to dot the landscape, and golf became a growing industry offering a wide selection of courses for visitors to play.

If variety is what you like, then head a few miles off Route 501. In its own little world, the Legends Resort (1-800-503-1983) is a beautiful 1,300-acre golf destination resort providing peace and refuge from the craziness of Myrtle Beach. From the exquisite golf villas located alongside the Park-

MYRTLE BEACH, SC

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land golf course's spacious fairways to a 42,000-square-foot Scottish-style clubhouse that embodies the tradition of Scotland's Royal and Ancient Golf Club in St. Andrews, everything about this resort says first-class golf value. Stunning in grandeur and style, the impressive clubhouse greets you upon your arrival and stays with you as a visual landmark while you're playing the courses.

Within a short iron shot from the clubhouse are three completely different courses. The Moorlands is a Dye signature course that represents the ultimate in target-style golf. If you want to play a true Scottish links course, look no farther than the Heathland. The Parkland course is built in the tradition of Augusta National and Pine Valley.

During the midday, the sounds of a Scottish bagpipe can be heard serenading golfers with traditional music from the birthplace of golf. This is quite appropriate, as the Heathland course located directly behind the clubhouse is built in the tradition of links-style golf from the "Old Country." Open and spacious with deep pot bunkers and plenty of mounding, the Tom Doak designed course can make you feel like you're playing golf with old Tom Morris himself.

On the other end of the golf spectrum is the Moorland course. This P.B. Dye original design is like many PGA stadium courses with elevated tees and greens. Course management is a must when playing the Moorlands. Putting the ball in play is more important than length. Many holes require pinpoint accuracy when approaching the green, making for a lot of dramatic shots. The shot-making is key here. Otherwise, Dye's hazards will reach up and grab you before you can say "mulligan."

On the second and third holes, the approach can be challenging, as each green is braced by railroad ties (a Dye family tradition). Any ball missing the green will find a watery grave. When traps have names like "Big Bertha" (on the fourth hole) and "Hell's Half Acre" (on the 16th hole), you know these are places to avoid. Large, sandy waist areas around both par 3s on the back nine demand accurate shot-making and give this course unique character.

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Cut through deep woods and providing beautiful tree-lined fairways, the Parkland course is modeled after Augusta National and Pine Valley.

Parkland course is modeled after Alister MacKenzie's Georgia masterpiece. The newest course at the Legends is cut through deep woods, providing beautiful tree-lined fairways. The pristine woodlands make for a picturesque course with a premium on shot-making. Wide, rolling landing areas allow plenty of room off the tee, but a soft touch is required when approaching the massive and often multi-tiered greens. Guarding those landing areas and greens are deep bunkers to capture wayward shots.

Although most people think the exquisite par-3 13th is the signature hole with its seven bunkers around the green, it's the risk-reward par-5 11th that will remind you of the 15th at Augusta National.

The Legends Resort also features one of the best practice facilities in the region. With free Thursday evening clinics, the golf school has all sorts of packages to help you improve your game.

After your round, you can have a bite to eat in a real Scottish pub located in the clubhouse. If you prefer an early tee time, you can stay right along the golf course at the Legends Resort in one of the luxurious and spacious two- or three-bedroom accommodations. Upscale in value, each villa features at least four full-sized beds, full kitchens and magnificent views of the course.

For those who want to stay in a more centralized location downtown, the Sands Resorts (1-800-845-2202) offers seven sparkling beachfront settings to choose from. Depending on the location, you can stay in efficiencies, villas and executive suites. These high-rise properties are easy driving distance from more

than 80 golf courses. Being right on the beach also means you have time to take that early morning swim or walk on the beach before your round to stretch your muscles. For a more serious exercise, many Sands Resorts hotels have a health club right on the property.

All the options are just one of the reasons people have continued to come back to Sands Resorts for the past 15 years. Groups can play a selection of great Myrtle Beach courses for a very reasonable price. The golf coordinator from the Sands Resorts will help ensure your golf outings suit your budget and ability level.

"We often get groups from a club or association," says Jim Fite, director of golf marketing for the Sands Resorts. "They want to come down and stay in a comfortable hotel while playing good golf courses. Our job is to help put together a good combination of golf courses that fit in their price range."

Located only minutes south of the Myrtle Beach International Airport, Condotel South (1-866-433-4203) also offers a great variety of golf packages and can book advanced, guaranteed tee times on more than 100 courses to fit both your game and your budget. Condotel's accommodations are full-sized second homes comfortably furnished for your golf vacation pleasure. These luxurious condominiums provide spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean from your own balcony and have all the comforts of home. Choose from one-, two- and three-bedroom oceanfront condominiums or fully furnished golf course fairway villas with daily housekeeping service.

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MYRTLE BEACH

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