

Arrowhead, one of 117 top courses in a 60-mile stretch



Myrtle Beach

Welcome to GolfTown USA. With courses at every turn, many of them of the highest order, Myrtle Beach can claim to be golf capital of the world

The folks in Myrtle Beach aren't backwards in coming forward about their golf. This fun and fast-growing seaside resort styles itself the Golf Capital of the World.

That's a pretty bold claim. But there are 117 courses along a 60-mile stretch of coast and the golf is of the very highest order, with lists of America's top 100 courses always including at least half a dozen from the area.

While such lists may be subjective, the statistics speak for themselves. Of the 13 million-plus visitors who come to this fast-

growing holiday destination each year, one million are golfers and they play more than four million rounds on its courses.

They come not only for the sheer volume and quality of golf but also because it offers superb value. Green fees and accommodation prices are unmatched by virtually every other US golf destination. Add to that the wealth of hotel and self-catering options, nearly 1,600 restaurants, extensive recreation facilities, exuberant nightlife and wide, sandy beaches and it isn't hard to figure out why you'll never run out of fun things to do in Myrtle Beach. ⇒



Beyond the boundaries of Golftown USA itself, golf is sprinkled all along the Grand Strand, which runs from just across the border in North Carolina down to serene Pawleys Island.

Myrtle Beach had its beginnings in 1927, with the construction of one of the most extravagant oceanfront resort hotels along the mid-Atlantic coast, Ocean Forest Hotel. It was accompanied by the first golf club. Originally called the Ocean Forest Club, Pine Lakes Country Club is affectionately known as The Granddaddy today. Its stately, colonnaded 62-

“You’re treated to a Mimosa at the 3rd hole; halfway round and a chef tempts you with home-made clam chowder cooked on an open fire”

room clubhouse stands tall over a 6,700-yard course. Nine holes remain from the layout crafted by Robert White (the first president of the PGA of America) with none other than Donald Ross as adviser. The club was also where American publishing institution Sports Illustrated was born in the 1940s, out of a golfing getaway by Time Life executives.

Memorabilia lines the clubhouse walls and there’s a strong feeling of tradition, but with a friendly Southern twist. When you arrive your clubs are taken by caddymasters decked out in white gloves and Scottish tartan kilts who tell you that the only time you handle your clubs is while you’re playing with them.

In warm weather you’re treated to a mimosa – what we call Buck’s Fizz – as you reach the 3rd tee. On cooler days you get hot chocolate. They are served by the genial Perry “Big Dog” Bellamy, an eccentric club fixture who announces himself with his trademark double bark. Halfway round and a chef tempts you

with home-made clam chowder cooked on an open fire.

Sadly one thing not in keeping with tradition is that you are not allowed to walk – unlike a number of other courses in the area.

Golf was slow to take off in Myrtle’s early days. Robert Trent Jones Sr came along in 1948 to fashion The Dunes from a former deer and wild turkey hunting ground which became a wartime aerial target range. The signature 13th hole is a glorious par-5 which arcs around Singleton Lake and dares you to take on the large green in two. Its name, Waterloo, is a hint as to what often happens if you do. The course hosted the annual Senior PGA Tour Championship from 1994 to 1999 and is acknowledged as one of America’s best, golfing great Lee Trevino describing it as “one of the best I have ever played.” Although a private club, it is possible to play it and walking is allowed. The greens have recently been restored by the creator’s son, Rees Jones.



The Dunes, an early Robert Trent Jones layout seen as one of the best in America

Coastal South Carolina



DICK DURRANCE/PGA TOUR/WIREIMAGE.COM

The TPC of Myrtle Beach is known for top-class welcome and service



SLEAR SHOTZ

Another 12 years was to lapse until the next course was built and the momentum then picked up. But even 20 years ago Myrtle Beach had less than 50 courses and was little more than a small regional resort.

The choice for golfers now is mind-boggling. You could spend three months playing every day and you still wouldn't fit in the 95 publicly accessible courses, and by that time they might have added several more. There are four courses alone at 2,377-acre Barefoot Resort, all by top-name architects and all of which allow walking. The quartet of Davis Love III, Greg Norman, Pete Dye and Tom Fazio conspire to dish up a veritable feast of exciting and challenging golf to get your teeth into.

Love set out to create a visually striking layout which is fun to play for any level of golfer thanks to its wide landing areas. It's no push-over at over 7,000 yards from the back, though. And just for garnish he added the replica columned ruins of an old plantation house, sandwiched between the 4th and 6th greens.

The Fazio Course is slightly shorter and uses sculpted bunkering, large waste areas and water hazards for visual effect, notably on the par-3 16th. Large waste areas and extensive use of natural vegetation come into play on the Norman Course, as does the Intracoastal Waterway which borders seven holes. Golfers in these parts call the waterway the world's longest water hazard.

The Intracoastal features heavily at both Grande Dunes and Arrowhead as well. Play at the weekend and you'll see lots of expensive boats being flaunted by their rich owners. Though when I played Grande Dunes the sound of the speedboats and cruisers was ⇒

WHERE TO PLAY

Arrowhead Country Club

3 nines: 6,568-6,668 yards, par 72
\$46-\$108

Contact: 00-1-843-236-3243
arrowheadcc.com
Ray Floyd treat alongside the Intracoastal Waterway

Barefoot Resort & Golf Club

Love Course: 7,047 yards, par 72;
Dye Course: 7,343 yards, par 72;
Fazio Course: 6,834 yards, par 71;
Norman Course 7,035 yards, par 72
\$80-\$145

Contact: 00-1-843-390-3243
barefootgolf.com
Awesome foursome, but not everyone may Love the mock ruins

The Dunes Golf and Beach Club

7,165 yards, par 72
\$150, cart \$20

Contact: 00-1-843-449-5914
dunesgolfandbeachclub.com
Try not to meet your Waterloo on this early Trent Jones favourite

Myrtlewood Golf Club

Palmetto Course: 6,953 yards, Par 72; PineHills Course: 6,646 yards, Par 72
\$49-\$79; walking in December only

Contact: 00-1-843-449-5134
myrtlewoodGolf.com
Blend of old and new architecture at one of the Grand Strand's top facilities

Grande Dunes

7,618 yards, par 72
\$74.50-\$150

Contact: 00-1-843-449-7070
grandedunes.com
Golf on a grand scale with sweeping Intracoastal views

Myrtle Beach National

King's North Course
7,017 yards, par 72
\$75-\$150

Contact: 00-1-843-448-2308
mbngolf.com
Arnold Palmer sensation fabled for its Gambler hole. Well, do you feel lucky?

Litchfield Plantation and its avenue of oaks

PETER ELLEGARD





drowned out by the drone of Harley Davidson motorcycles from the distant freeway. My May visit had coincided with the annual Myrtle Beach Bike Week, one of the biggest rallies in the country, and the town was full of brightly-coloured and souped-up contraptions mounted by Easy Rider wannabes – an image made more convincing because they don't have to wear helmets in South Carolina.

Grande Dunes is grand in every sense, from the sweeping views of the semi-private golf and marina village as you cross the gatehouse-topped entrance bridge to the enticing scene of the hacienda-style clubhouse fronted by a lake and fountain for your approach to the 18th. Not to mention its 7,618-yard length. But you can choose from six tee positions.

Arrowhead's 27 holes are partly the work of Ray Floyd and play amidst hardwood forest and wetlands. The 5th hole of the Waterway nine has tees right by the water's edge. So close you could almost hop aboard passing craft.

Tidewater, on bluffs overlooking the Intra-coastal and Atlantic has been labelled the Pebble Beach of the East. While Arnold Palmer's Kings North Course, one of three at Myrtle Beach National, is famous for its par-5 6th, The Gambler, offering the ultimate risk and reward option with an island fairway shortcut, as well as a par-4 18th guarded by a lake and 43 bunkers.

Lord of the Rings and *Harry Potter* fans will feel at home on two magical creations conjured up by Dan Maples – the Witch and the Wizard. And you might need some sorcery to tackle the

WHERE TO STAY

Avista Resort

Contact: 00-1-843-249-2521
avistaResort.com

Embassy Suites at Kingston Plantation

Contact: 00-1-843-449-0006
kingstonplantation.com

Grande Shores Resort

Contact: 00-1-843-692-2397
grandeshores.com

Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort

Contact: 00-1-843-449-5000
kingstonplantation.com

Kingston Plantation

Contact: 00-1-843-449-0006
kingstonplantation.com

Litchfield Plantation

Contact: 00-1-843-237-9121
litchfieldplantation.com

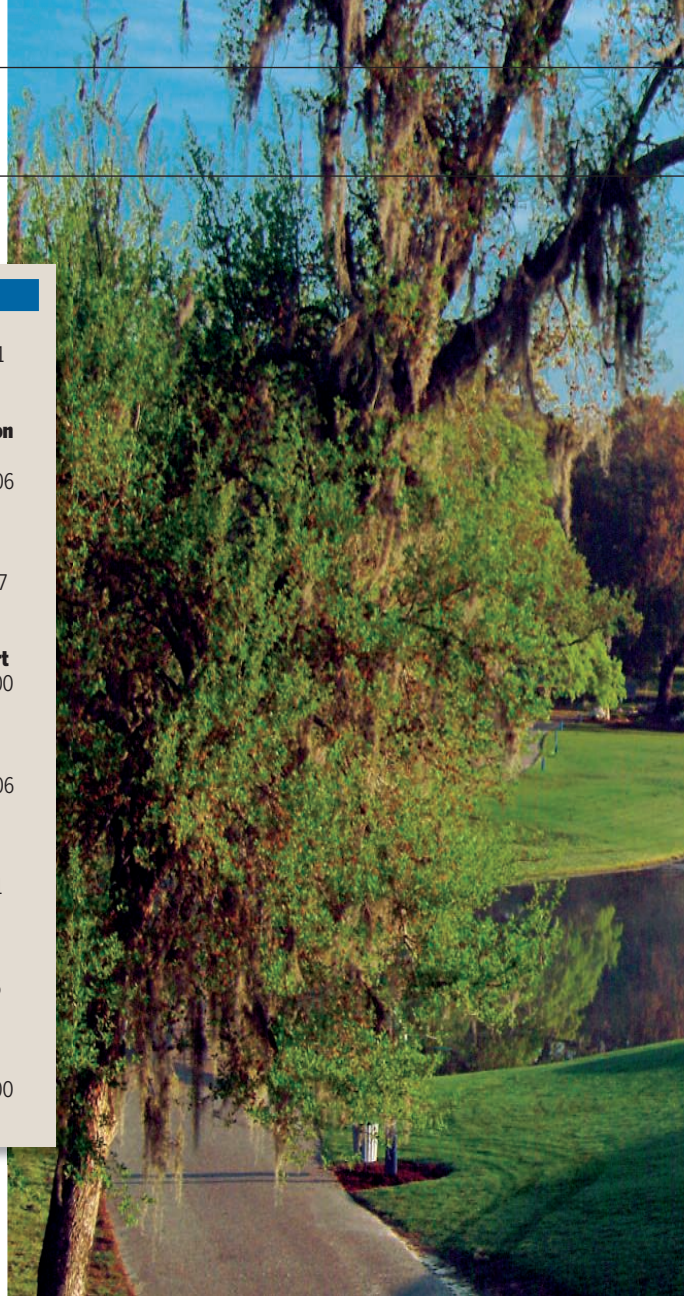
Myrtlewood Villas

Contact: 00-1-843-315-7916
myrtlewoodvillas.com

The Breakers Resort

Contact: 00-1-843-626-5000
breakers.com

Right: Willbrook Plantation, carved from the wetlands
Below: TPC 18th hole and clubhouse



SLEAR SHOTZ

back-to-back island greens of the third of Mystical Golf's trio, Man O'War.

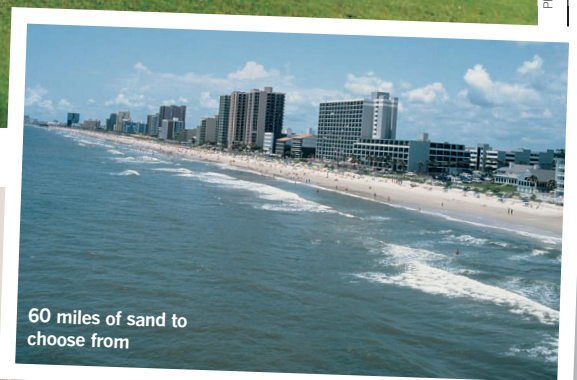
It's worth venturing down to Pawleys Island. This was a favourite retreat for rich planter families escaping the malarial mosquitoes of the swampy mainland and many built large vacation homes, several of which still stand.

It's a great place to take a quiet stroll along the pristine beach or above the fragile dunes and sea oats on wooden boardwalks. Buy a traditional Pawleys Island rope hammock, too.

A number of courses grace this southernmost part of the Strand, close to the historic port city of Georgetown. Caledonia Golf & Fish Club is built on the site of a working rice plantation while Willbrook Plantation was carved through the waterways and wetlands of two plantations. Pawleys Plantation, a 7,026-yard par-72 winding through forest and marsh, is Jack Nicklaus at his absolute best and one of the region's most popular courses. And The Heritage Club takes golfers past 300-year-old oaks, marshes and giant magnolias in its setting on two Waccamaw River plantations. ⇒



PHOTOS: SLEAR SHOTS



60 miles of sand to choose from

Myrtle Beach Facts

WHERE IS IT

Myrtle Beach is just over 150 miles from Raleigh/Durham and 175 miles from Charlotte, both of which are in North Carolina and have daily flights from the UK. Driving time is three to four hours. Several airlines operate domestic flights into Myrtle Beach International Airport from East Coast US gateways.

KEY ATTRACTIONS

■ **The beach** – all 60 miles of it along the Grand Strand, stretching for 60 miles from Pawleys Island in the south to just across the North Carolina border.

■ The historic port of **Georgetown** was founded on the indigo dye and rice industries in 1730. Wild indigo plants can still be seen growing

alongside roads each spring.

Nearby **Pawleys Island** is said to have been America's first resort area.

■ **Myrtle Beach** comes alive at night with its theatres, beach clubs, bars and nightclubs.

Clubs in the northern part of town specialise in the **shag** – South Carolina's state dance.

■ **Brookgreen Gardens** is an outdoor sculpture garden set in 9,000 acres of an 18th Century indigo and rice plantation. It showcases the works of nearly 250 American sculptors.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

■ The 50-year-old **Myrtle Beach Pavilion Amusement Park** will suit kids of all ages with its thrill rides and traditional seaside entertainment, while aquatic fun is on offer at Myrtle Waves

Water Park.

■ Everything from the bizarre to the unbelievable is on display at **Ripley's Believe It or Not!**

Ripley's also has a haunted mansion attraction and an aquarium with a moving walkway taking visitors through a transparent tunnel in a shark tank.

■ Get close-up snaps of the South's fearsome marsh monarchs at **Alligator Adventure**, where you can even get to wear a real boa.

■ **Myrtle Beach Motor Speedway** has plenty of high-speed and high-octane race track action, or you can take the wheel of go-carts and scaled-down race cars capable of 50mph at the Myrtle Beach Grand Prix family park.

MYRTLE BEACH & GRAND STRAND FACTS

■ Pirates operated from hidden bays on the area's coastal

barrier islands to prey on vessels carrying rice, textiles and other precious cargoes. Some 2,000 ships are said to have flown the Jolly Roger there including **Blackbeard**.

■ **Waccamaw Gold**, a highly-prized rice crop, brought huge riches to the area and opulent plantation mansions were supported by estates with 500 or more slaves.

■ Besides its 120 full-size golf venues, Myrtle Beach also has **50 miniature golf courses**.

■ The beach community of **New Town** became Myrtle Beach as a result of a naming competition by local

newspaper the Horry Herald. The winner was the wife of the resort's founding developer, who chose it for the many wax myrtle trees growing wild along the shore.

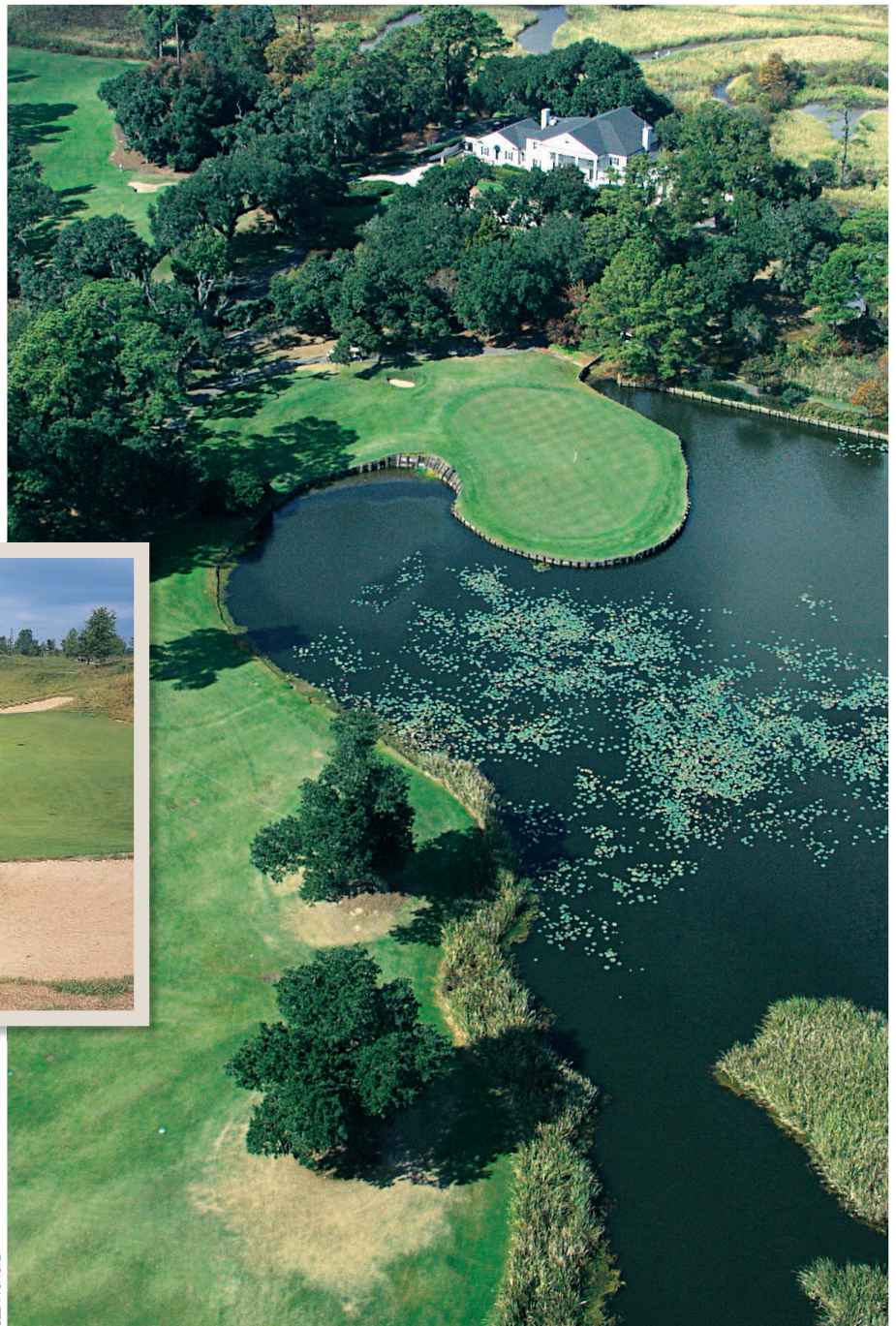
■ **The Gray Man ghost** appears on Pawleys Island whenever hurricanes loom. Another local apparition, Alice, was the younger sister of the Hermitage plantation owner. She is said to have died of a broken heart when he disapproved of her engagement and cast her ring into a nearby creek. She now combs the creeks looking for her ring.



You can even stay in a historic plantation mansion. Litchfield Plantation, one of the oldest rice plantations on the Waccamaw and dating back to 1740, now operates as a luxury country inn set in 600 acres. Four suites are in the old mansion building, the pick of them being the first-floor Ballroom Suite with its own wooden balcony complete with rocking chairs. From here you gaze back down the quarter-mile avenue of live oaks and dream you are lord of this manor.

All you can hear at night is the sound of the marsh critters. Yet there are three golf courses right next door and 10 within five miles. Myrtle Beach city is also less than an hour's drive.

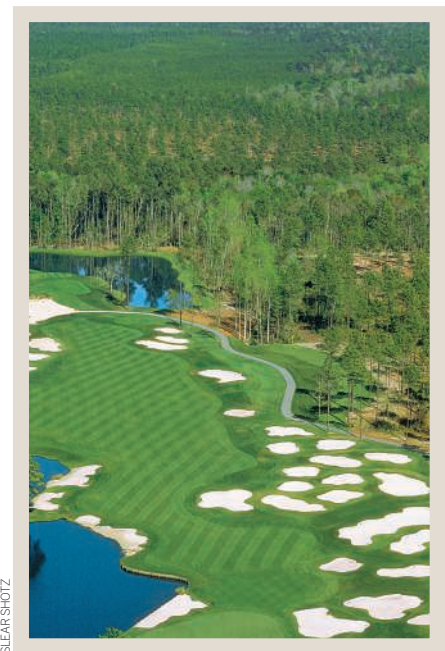
You can have the bright city lights and pizzazz when you golf Myrtle Beach. But you can also be a world away from it.



300-year-old oaks, marshes and magnolias grace The Heritage, not far from Georgetown



There are four top courses at Barefoot, each one by a top-name designer, such as the Norman



Count the bunkers? 43, on the 18th at King's North

COASTAL SOUTH CAROLINA FACTS

GETTING THERE

Charlotte, Raleigh/Durham and Atlanta are the main international gateways for direct flights to the South Carolina coast. Daily flights are operated from the UK to Charlotte by **US Airways** (usairways.com; 0845-600-3300), to Raleigh/Durham by **American Airlines** (aa.com; 0845-7789-789) and to Atlanta by **Delta**

(deltaairlines.co.uk; usairways.com; 0845-600-3300) and **British Airways** (ba.com; 0870-850-9-850). **Continental** (continental.com/uk; 0845-60-767-60) also serves the region

GENERAL INFO

Time difference: GMT -5
Climate: South Carolina's coast is sub-tropical with mild winters and

warm summers, ideal for year-round golf. Daily maximums range from about 14°C in January to about 32°C in July.

Information: CoastalSC.com is the region's comprehensive resource
brochure line: 0800-783-1172

For information on holiday packages contact 3D Golf: 08701-200 300; 3dgolf.com