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Official Publication of the Georgia State Golf Association as a Service to its 75,000 Members

GOLF GEORGIA

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019 | \$4.95

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Bucket List Territory

A trip to Hilton Head Island offers plenty of memorable — even unforgettable — experiences on the golf course.

BY STAN AWTRY

Standing in the 18th fairway at Harbour Town is a pretty cool deal. You've watched the scene for many years on television as players come down the stretch for the PGA TOUR's RBC Heritage, so to stand there with a club in your hand and have that iconic lighthouse staring at you from behind the green, it seems so familiar.

The best part is that anyone can stand in that same spot — although the fairway would probably be a little more to your liking — because Harbour

Town is a public facility, a resort that is open to anyone. And even if you yanked a second shot on that iconic hole into the Calibogue Sound, just to have the opportunity is high on any golfer's bucket list.

And Harbour Town can be an attractive centerpiece for a family vacation or buddy trip to Hilton Head Island, S.C. Whether you've got a couple of days or an entire week, there's enough golf, food and fun to fill your planner.

Hilton Head is easy to reach. It's about 45 minutes away from Savannah and Delta can drop

you off at the airport in less than an hour. It's about a five-hour drive from Atlanta and worth the effort once you arrive at one of golf's truly great destinations.

Most of the golf courses on Hilton Head carry great pedigrees, were built by top-name designers and can be enjoyed on a near year-round basis. Here is a look at a handful of the top Hilton Head destinations.

Harbour Town Golf Links is capable of being enjoyed by golfers of all skill level. Professionals embrace the course each year like an old friend and appreciate its low-key, laid-back

approach — especially since the tournament falls the week after the pressure-packed Masters. Average Joes and Janes will find the **Pete Dye** layout playable, regardless of their skill level.

There are actually 54 holes available at the Sea Pines Resort — Harbour Town, Heron Point and Atlantic Dunes (formerly known as the Ocean Course). The Plantation Golf Club learning center is a great place to take a lesson or attend a golf school, particularly if you're fortunate enough to get time with director of instruction **Tim Cooke**.

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Harbour Town is where Pete Dye became an architect and laid the foundation for his life's work. The course is very playable and doesn't fit today's blueprint of bomb-and-gouge. The trees that line the fairways ensure that players work their way around the course or risk a big number. This is where Pete Dye made railroad ties a staple in course construction, which is notably on display throughout the round.

Don't miss a chance to visit the new Harbour Town clubhouse, which has an expansive pro shop and luxurious locker room — complete with jars of jelly beans and cookies — and the Pete Dye Room, which features artifacts, memorabilia and video presentations that honor the legendary designer.

Palmetto Dunes has been setting high standards for four decades. There are three courses, one each by **Robert Trent Jones**, **George Fazio** and **Arthur Hills**.

The Jones course, designed by Robert Trent Jones, has wide fairways, big greens and plenty of sand. This track is fun to play and features a par-5 10th hole that will have you putting out with the Atlantic Ocean as a backdrop, one of two ocean-front holes on the island. The Jones course should be on your short list of courses when you come to Hilton Head.

Palmetto Dunes is also home of the SwingFit club-fitting service. You can make an appointment to see **Chris Wycoff** to go through a process to determine the ideal club and shaft combination. Wycoff has more than 20,000 combinations and will hook you up with the proper mix after going through a computer-driven process.

The Fazio course is considered the most demanding course on the island and the Hills course is more rolling, with swales and mounds and water hazards.



PALMETTO DUNES, JONES COURSE



OYSTER REEF

Oyster Reef is part of The Heritage Collection that includes Shipyard's three courses (Clipper, Brigatine and Galleon) and Port Royal's three courses (Robber's Row, Planter's Row and Barony). Oyster Reef has a vibe that makes you feel at home, from the golf staff to the restaurant staff to the crew that greets you at the front door.

The **Rees Jones** design is fun to get around and the par-3 sixth is a lovely hole set against the background of the sound. Jones finished a redo in 2018, a project that included rework-

ing the greens and cutting the number of bunkers by more than half. What remains is more playable and more enjoyable.

Golden Bear Golf Club at Indigo Run roams through the oaks and pines to create a memorable round. The course was designed by **Jack Nicklaus** and opened in 1993. The course has a parkland feel and has a great variety of different holes.

WHERE TO STAY

If you have a choice, book yourself into the Westin Hotel at Hilton Head. The ocean-front property features three

pools and four restaurants. Each room features a private balcony, many of them on facing the Atlantic. It makes for a peaceful, quiet place to relax after a long day on the golf course. Guests at the Westin also have to the Port Royal Golf and Racquet Club. If you prefer another type of experience, Palmetto Dunes Oceanfront Resort offers vacation home and villa rentals — many with views of its three championship courses.

For information on planning your golf trip visit HiltonHeadIsland.org/golf. 