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July 2015

# Globility Global Traveler

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DESTINATION **p. 21**



**BUNKER BLUES:** True Blue Golf Club

PHOTOS: ©TRUE BLUE GOLF CLUB

# On the Grand Strand

So much golf, so little time in Myrtle Beach, home to more than 100 courses. BY DALE LEATHERMAN

**G**olf outings to Myrtle Beach are a rite of spring. And summer. And fall. And even winter, when daytime temperatures seldom dip below 50 degrees. The sun shines more than 200 days a year — pretty good odds for a pleasant golf vacation any time of year.

The area's main attraction, of course, is 60 miles of wide, family-friendly beach — and the Southern hospitality along U.S. 17, which parallels the ocean and the Intracoastal Waterway. By the numbers, the Grand Strand impresses: 425 hotels; 1,700 restaurants; 300 outlet stores; eight live theaters with more than 11,000 seats; 100 golf courses; and 30 miniature golf venues.

Every warm-weather sport imaginable is practiced on the Strand, but all pale by comparison to the 3.4 million annual rounds of golf. Courses by notable architects are scattered all along the Intracoastal Waterway among the lakes, marshes, oak and pine forests and on ancient rice and indigo plantations. In this golfers' paradise, the courses lie so close together it's almost criminal not to play 36 holes a day, fortified between rounds by Lowcountry cuisine in one of the golf clubhouses. With so many choices, anyone can find a course (or package) to match his or her golf handicap and budget.

Golfers are drawn to Myrtle Beach from far and wide. Julie Johnson and Mark Fugett, who live more than 1,000 miles away near Milwaukee, Wis., visited for the first time this year and played 13 rounds in eight days. It was my first visit, too, and now I know what all the fuss is about.

"We were great fans of the Golf Channel's *Big Break Myrtle Beach* reality show," says Johnson, "so we decided on a golf vacation at the Barefoot Resort & Golf Club where it was played. The contestants raved about the four courses there, and the thought of staying on the property was appealing."

She also says planning was easy. "As soon as I contacted Barefoot Golf Vacations and Myrtle Beach Golf Holidays, information on all the courses started coming in. When we got there, everything met our expectations, and more. Our golf package was an excellent deal, the accommodations were top-of-the-line, and our tee times worked out perfectly."

Johnson adds, "Myrtle Beach spoiled me. When you plan to play 36 holes a day, it's nice to have a good course selection and not have to drive an hour to get to your destination."

In fact, you can drive the length of the Strand in an hour, and



none of the courses are far off U.S. 17. Among the designers represented: Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Robert Trent Jones, Rees Jones, Davis Love III, Tom Fazio, Greg Norman, Gary Player, Pete Dye and P.B. Dye. Working with somewhat similar terrain, they all produced distinctive designs. Here's a look at some of the most popular courses:

**THE DUNES GOLF & BEACH CLUB** was created in 1948 by newcomer Robert Trent Jones. He became a master and the course, a classic. The layout has been renovated by his son, Rees, and remains true to the design. It has hosted PGA, LPGA, USGA and Champions tour events and is highly ranked by every major golf publication. Almost without exception, the greens are large and elevated, with massive bunkers set into slopes below the putting surface. The signature Hole 13 ("Waterloo") is a par 5 doglegging around Lake Singleton to a severely tiered green. Alligators lounge along the banks of the lake.

**AT GRANDE DUNES GOLF CLUB**, seven holes of this Roger Rulewich links-style design play along the scenic Intracoastal Waterway, and 34 acres of lakes present watery challenges on almost all of the other holes. The water is unforgiving, but the fairways are generous and the greens manageable. At 7,578 yards from the tips, it's one of the longest routes in the area, and wind off the nearby ocean can present an issue. The pièce de résistance is the par-3 14th hole, playing across a water-filled gully to a well-bunkered green above the Intracoastal Waterway.

**IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT** at Caledonia Golf & Fish Club. The entrance to Caledonia runs through a lane of live oaks draped in Spanish moss leading to a clubhouse straight out of the Old South. The course rivals

## LODGING

### INLET SPORTS LODGE

This boutique hotel features attention to detail with its 34 deluxe studios and lovely courtyard. Nearby is Murrells Inlet's lively Marshwalk. *4600 Business Highway 17, Murrells Inlet* \$\$\$

### MARINA INN AT GRANDE DUNES

The centrally located resort offers 200 guestrooms and suites with terraces overlooking the marina or Intra-coastal Waterway. Golfers mingle with yachters at the marina's casual Anchor Café. *8121 Amalfi Place, Myrtle Beach* \$\$\$

### NORTH BEACH PLANTATION

Accommodations in the 7.5-acre complex range from cottages to beachfront condos in 18-story towers with easy access to pools, spa and restaurant — and expert golf concierges. *719 North Beach Blvd. Suite 3, North Myrtle Beach* \$\$\$

## DINING

### ASPEN GRILLE

Chef/owner Curry Martin's experience in Paris and California goes well with Carolina cuisine, especially the memorable seared sea scallops with wild mushroom risotto and fried spinach. *5101 N. Kings Highway, Myrtle Beach* \$\$\$

### BISTRO 217

Everything is made from scratch or fresh from the sea. The shrimp, scallops and grouper in basil-Parmesan cream sauce over fried eggplant is sublime. *10707 Ocean Highway, Pawleys Island* \$\$\$\$

### NEW YORK PRIME

There's fresh fish on the menu, but the restaurant is known for USDA prime steaks (top 3 percent of all beef) expertly seared — and outstanding wines. *405 - 28th Ave. N., Myrtle Beach* \$\$\$\$\$

**ON THE WATER:** *Grand Dunes Golf Club (left), and Barefoot Resort's Fazio Course (right)*

PHOTOS: © FOUNDERS GROUP INTERNATIONAL, © FRANCIS X. GALLAGHER







**NATURAL CHARM:** *Caledonia Golf & Fish Club (top), and Glen Dornoch Waterway Golf Links (bottom)*

PHOTOS: © FRANCIS X. GALLAGHER, © GLEN DORNOCH WATERWAY GOLF LINKS

Augusta with its azaleas and bright pansies but, unlike the Masters venue, sports lazy gators sunning themselves. Built on an old rice plantation, the layout is rife with forced carries, and the greens are often small targets — holes 9 and 18, for example. The par-3 ninth crosses a waste bunker to an elevated, shallow green. The par-4 finishing hole borders a former rice field. The tee shot must set up a water carry (under the gaze of diners on the clubhouse porch) to another shallow green. This may be the only course anyplace where you're offered a cup of seafood gumbo at the turn.

**LIKE NEIGHBORING CALEDONIA,** True Blue Golf Club is the work of the late Mike Strantz, but the two tracks could not be more different. The designer had Pine Valley and Pinehurst No. 2 in mind as he crafted the wide fairways and sculpted greens punctuated with native grasses. Laid out on the grounds of a former rice and indigo plantation, the track has a natural feel except for the aggressive bunkering, deep enough to require steps. Case in point: The par-3 third hole is a slender island green marooned in sand. The finishing hole is a nail-biter in which the fairway wraps around water, demanding a brave tee shot.

**AT GLEN DORNOCH WATERWAY** Golf Links, designer Clyde Johnson put the natural 35-foot elevation changes to good use, creating a narrow track dodging lakes, marshes and mature oaks, pines and magnolias, with several holes on the Intracoastal Waterway. He spiced things up (a nod to Donald Ross' birthplace in Dornoch, Scotland) with deep, grass-faced pot bunkers. There's a rousing finish, beginning with a marsh crossing on the par-4 16th. The par-3 17th hole features another green surrounded by heavy vegetation, with a deep bunker and intrusive tree on the right. On the par-4 18th hole, the green (shared with Hole 9) is guarded by a lake on the front and right and overlooks the Waterway.

**KEN TOMLINSON'S CREATION,** Tidewater Golf Club, occupies a hilly peninsula bordered on the east by the Cherry Grove saltwater marsh and ocean inlet and the Intracoastal Waterway on the north and west. Wetlands and water features — plus Tomlinson's huge bunkers — conspire to make this a pretty but challenging track that winds through a large community of magnificent homes. The signature hole is the 12th, a par 3 playing across a marsh and a necklace of bunkers. Behind the

## INFO TO GO

Myrtle Beach International Airport sits a mile off the beach and receives flights from more than 350 destinations. Regional airports include Conway-Horry County Airport, Grand Strand Airport-Ramp 66 and Loris-Twin Cities Airport. Rental cars are readily available. Interstates 95 and 20 connect to a modern network of highways leading to U.S. 17, the main artery of the Grand Strand.



### ONLINE EXTRA

Jump to [gtravmag.com/mb](http://gtravmag.com/mb) to read about activities beyond golf in Myrtle Beach.



green lies the Waterway. It will have you testing the wind and pondering your club choice.

**THE BAREFOOT RESORT & GOLF CLUB** features four tracks by Davis Love III, Tom Fazio, Greg Norman and Pete Dye. The Fazio and Dye layouts vie for “most difficult” honors. The Love is the most popular because of its wide fairways and avoidable bunkers. The Norman gets a bad rap because the housing is somewhat intrusive, but it’s an interesting course to play. Our favorite — and that of our playing partners, Julie and Mark — was the visually daunting but fun Dye Course. It’s long — more than 7,300 yards from the back — and riddled with pot bunkers, many set into the faces of mounds. The 471-yard, par-4 finishing hole is a gauntlet with water along the left and bunkering on the right, but the landing area is generous and the front of the green is invitingly open.

**Aspen Grille**

[aspen-grille.com](http://aspen-grille.com)

**Barefoot Resort & Golf Club**

[barefootgolf.com](http://barefootgolf.com)

**Bistro 217**

[bistro217.com](http://bistro217.com)

**Caledonia Golf & Fish Club**

[fishclub.com](http://fishclub.com)

**The Dunes Golf & Beach Club**

[thedunesclub.net](http://thedunesclub.net)

**Glen Dornoch Waterway Golf Links**

[glensgolfgroup.com](http://glensgolfgroup.com)

**Grande Dunes Golf Club**

[grandedunes.com](http://grandedunes.com)

**Inlet Sports Lodge**

[inletsportslodge.com](http://inletsportslodge.com)

**Marina Inn at Grande Dunes**

[marinainnatgrandedunes.com](http://marinainnatgrandedunes.com)

**Myrtle Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau**

[visitmyrtlebeach.com](http://visitmyrtlebeach.com)

**New York Prime**

[newyorkprime.com](http://newyorkprime.com)

**North Beach Plantation**

[northbeachrentals.com](http://northbeachrentals.com)

**Tidewater Golf Club & Plantation**

[tidewatergolf.com](http://tidewatergolf.com)

**True Blue Golf Club**

[fishclub.com](http://fishclub.com)