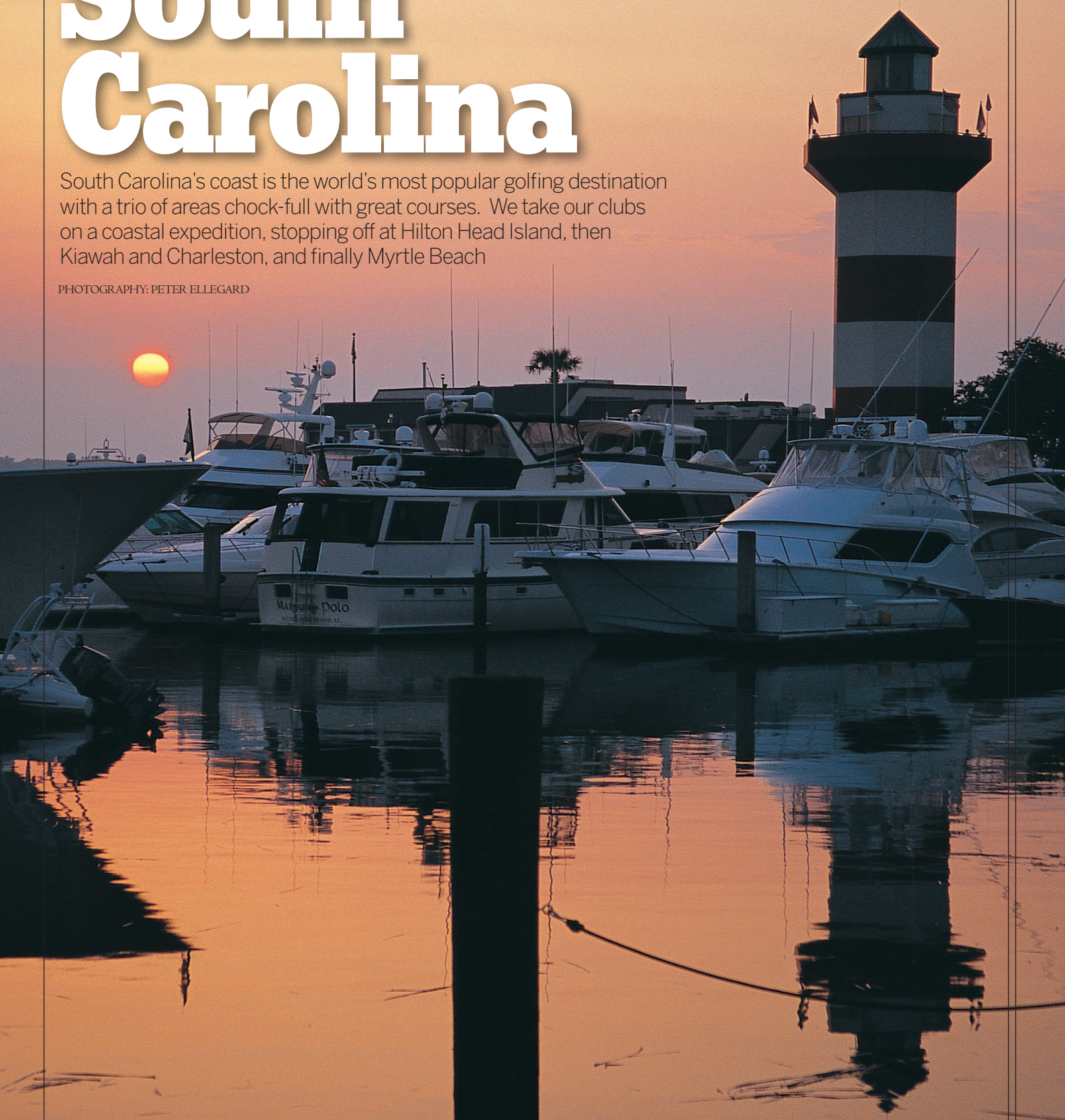


South Carolina

South Carolina's coast is the world's most popular golfing destination with a trio of areas chock-full with great courses. We take our clubs on a coastal expedition, stopping off at Hilton Head Island, then Kiawah and Charleston, and finally Myrtle Beach

PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER ELLEGARD



Harbour Town Marina: just the spot for a post-round sundowner (or two)

South Carolina
Smiling Faces. Beautiful Places.®



Harbour Town's famous 18th, with its trademark lighthouse



Hilton Head Island

Few courses are so instantly recognizable or can have had such an impact on the modern game than Harbour Town Links, in the south-west corner of resort island Hilton Head.

Harbour Town's famous red and white, candy-striped lighthouse is a landmark beacon behind the 18th green and a focal point to help you ignore the fringing coastal marshes of Calibogue Sound just waiting to grab an errant shot. Together with the dogleg par-4 16th and par-3 17th, also skirted by the tidal marshes and their golden grasses, it forms what many regard as the finest trio of finishing holes in golf on a course consistently ranked the very best in South Carolina.

Host each April to the PGA Tour's MCI Heritage tournament, it set a trend when Pete Dye first fashioned it out of the swampy marshland in 1969, with a little help from his friend, Jack Nicklaus. This was Dye's first links design and introduced golfers to his now-leg-

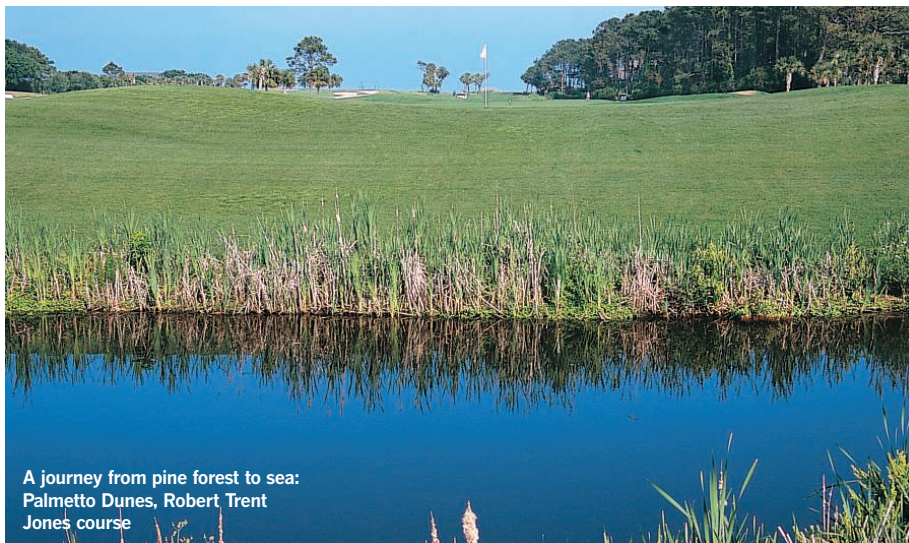
endary style — cavernous bunkers edged by railway sleepers, or railroad ties as they are known across the pond, pencil-thin fairways with strategically-placed trees and postage stamp greens. Even today, more than 25 years later and after a makeover in 2000, it still has the smallest greens on the PGA tour and brings the world's best golfers to their knees despite coming up shy of 7,000 yards.

It started a new era in course architecture,



requiring shot-making where position is all-important. And Jack himself acknowledges that the call from Dye to collaborate on the project was one of the biggest breaks he ever had. It helped launch him on his own course-building career. The rest, as they say, is history.

Harbour Town is Hilton Head's star attraction and one of three courses on the Sea Pines Resort, a self-contained vacation playground and community which spans the island's entire southern end and has shops, bars and restaurants, charter fishing and sailing boats, dinner cruises, tennis and even stables. It was here in the 1950s that the seeds of Hilton Head Island as a holiday haven were first sewn with the development of homes unobtrusively set in the natural environment. Tourists soon followed and the first golf club, the Ocean Course, opened in 1961. Rebuilt in 1995 by ex-Tour pro Mark McCumber, its signature 15th hole offers panoramic views out over the Atlantic. Both Ocean and the other member of the



A journey from pine forest to sea:
Palmetto Dunes, Robert Trent
Jones course

WHERE TO PLAY

Harbour Town Golf Links

6,973 yards, par 71
\$165-\$200 includes cart
Contact: 00-1-843-842-8484
seapines.com/recreation/golf/
courses/harbourtowngolflinks.
asp

*Dye's trendsetting links
masterpiece is still a shining
beacon*

Arthur Hills Course

6,615 yards, par 72
\$65-\$115 includes cart
Contact: 00-1-843-785-1140
palmettodunes.com

*It may be short but you'll need
balls to take on the water*

Robert Trent Jones Course

7,005 yards, par 72
\$65-\$125 includes cart
Contact: 00-1-843-785-1136
palmettodunes.com

*A seaside classic mixing pine
forests, lakes and beach-front
holes*

Hilton Head National

3 nines: 6,655-6,718 yards, par
72/71

From \$50 including cart
Contact: 00-1-843-842-5900
golfhiltonheadnational.com
*Subtle greens and undulating
fairways call for plenty of strategy
on this threesome*

WHERE TO STAY

Marriott Hilton Head Resort

Contact: 00-1-866-446-6252
hiltonheadmarriott.com

Inn at Harbour Town

Contact: 00-1-843-363-8100
innatharbourtown.com

The Sea Pines Resort

Contact: 00-1-843-785-3333
www.seapines.com

**“Book into this 60-room boutique hotel
and you could be forgiven for thinking
you had stumbled upon a little bit of
Britain marooned in the US”**

Many people's pick of
the Palmetto Dunes
trio, the Arthur Hills



threesome, Sea Marsh, are Certified Audubon Co-operative Sanctuaries for their natural settings and environmental friendliness.

Accommodation in this part of the island includes the Inn at Harbour Town. Book into this 60-room boutique hotel and you could be forgiven for thinking you had stumbled upon a little bit of Britain marooned in the US. Styled on the lines of a small luxury English hotel, each floor has its own tartan-clad butler, mostly British and European girl students, on duty 24 hours a day. The English theme extends to choral music playing on your room's CD system when you arrive and a country house-style lounge and library. You half expect to look outside and see Morse's Jag.

The hotel overlooks Harbour Town Links and you can walk to the clubhouse. But you do need a buggy, included in the \$200 green fee, because the 18th finishes some distance away from the clubhouse.

It's worth driving back to Harbour Town ⇒



after your game, or you can cycle on a rental bike. Walk round the marina to watch the sun sink behind the lighthouse or to ogle the moored floating gin palaces while the sound of live music wafts out from one of the harbourside bars. Then climb to the top of the lighthouse for marvellous views over Dye's creation as well as the boats out in Cabilogue Sound. It was actually built at the same time as the course but houses a museum showcasing the area's rich and often-violent history.

Your toils on the course soon melt away as you sip beer or cocktails in the cooling sea breezes, and the upstairs Quarterdeck restaurant dishes up the island's best sunsets to accompany its tasty seafood.

Besides the Anglicised spelling of Harbour Town, another nod to the Mother Country can be found on Hilton Head in the form of roundabouts. It is one of the few places in the US to have them, although they are known here as circles and cause great confusion among drivers unfamiliar with such "quaint" motor-ing fixtures.

Hilton Head's golf development has been measured. Although there are more than 20 public courses it's a case of quality rather than quantity and golf is very much a part of the complete holiday experience.

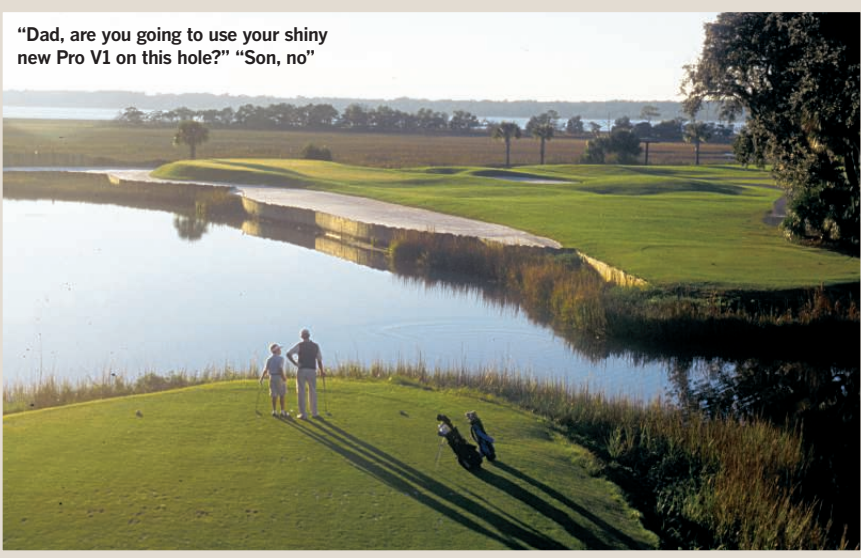
Palmetto Dunes, in the centre of the island, has been labelled top family resort in North America by one leading US family magazine. This beach and golf resort extends across 2,000 acres and has three miles of Atlantic beach as well as a 25-court tennis club, biking and kayaking, deep-water marina and free kids' activity programme. Judging by the number of mums and dads I encountered in the corridors and lifts of the Hilton Head Marriott, all toggged up for the beach and offspring in tow, it is obviously a family favourite.



SEA PINES RESORT

Take on one of America's most celebrated layouts at Harbour Town

"Dad, are you going to use your shiny new Pro V1 on this hole?" "Son, no"



SEA PINES RESORT



If you base yourself at on the beach-front hotel you are also right on the doorstep of 90 holes of golf by some of the best names in the business. There are three walkable Palmetto Dunes courses and two more at Palmetto Halls, nearby.

The 7,005-yard Robert Trent Jones Course, by Jones the elder, is a recently renovated classic which takes you on a seaward journey from pine forest out to the 550-yard par-5 10th, where the green sits right on the edge of the wide, sandy beach. Pelicans drift by in formation as you try to shut the murmuring waves out of your mind and concentrate on putting. Go too long here and you'll have a long putt back on a fast, sloping green. If your ball isn't basking on the beach. For the return journey you'll need to guard against slicing as a long series of lagoons protect the right flanks of most inward holes.

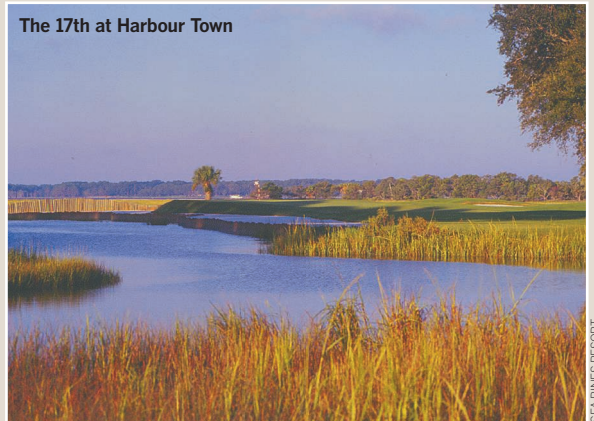
Completing the Palmetto Dunes trio are the 6,873-yard George Fazio and 6,615-yard Arthur Hills courses. Don't be put off by the Hills' shorter length. This is many people's pick of the three and uses natural dunes to create a rolling layout. There are no fairway bunkers or rough, but lagoons come into play on 10 holes and you'll need lots of balls, quite literally, for the demanding 18th. Palmetto Halls has a second, equally curvaceous Hills course, which winds through moss-draped live oak trees, pines and lakes. The island's most unusual course is the other Palmetto offering, the 7,079-yard Robert Cupp course. It features bizarre angular, geometric shapes throughout, including trapezoidal mounds – having been drawn up on computer and faithfully reproduced in the flesh, as it were. Its 149 slope rating from the tips would terrify a Borg.

With its laid-back lifestyle, choosing which golf course to play could well be your only worry on Hilton Head. The original 18 Gary Player holes at Hilton Head National, just over the bridge from the mainland, have been supplemented by another nine from Bobby Weed. Hilton Head Plantation has yet the work of yet another master, Rees Jones' 7,023-yard Oyster Reef, its signature par-3 6th ending in a green set against a backdrop of Port Royal Sound. And Port Royal Plantation, on the island's north-west elbow, has three more on offer. Among them are two George Cobb designs including the 6,675-yard Robber's Row, newly-redesigned by that man Dye.

The golf boom has also spread across to Dafuskie Island, only accessible by boat, and the mainland, referred to locally as the Low-country. Here, you will find such nuggets as Arnold Palmer's marshland-traversing Crescent Pointe and Davis Love's risk-and-reward beauty, Eagle's Pointe.

They like their golf here. They also like tipping their hat to Olde England. Pointe taken.

The 17th at Harbour Town



SEA PINES RESORT

Hilton Head Facts

WHERE IS IT

Hilton Head Island is at the southernmost tip of South Carolina, an hour north of Savannah. It is just over 250 miles from international gateways Atlanta and Charlotte, and just under 290 miles from Orlando. Savannah International Airport is served by Continental, Delta, United and US Airways with convenient connections from several UK and Irish cities.

KEY ATTRACTIONS

■ The remains of three Civil War forts on the island's north end include **Fort Walker**, captured by Union forces in the war's early days and now located inside the gates of Port Royal. Access to these sites is limited. Check with the **Coastal Discovery Museum** for scheduled tours.

■ Take a ferry trip over to neighbouring **Dafuskie Island**, only accessible by boat. Once rich with plantations, it is now home to a hideaway resort with two championship golf courses.

■ Visit historic mainland town **Bluffton**, perched on high bluffs overlooking the May River and source of the famous Bluffton oysters.

■ Explore the 600-acre **Sea Pines Forest Preserve** at the island's southern end, then watch the sun set from the top of Harbour Town's candy-striped lighthouse. Entry to Sea Pines costs \$5 per vehicle.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

■ Help the kids build sandcastles on the **12 miles of beach** on Hilton Head Island, all of which are public. The beaches can be accessed at five points.

■ Go on a **dolphin-watching cruise** from one of the island's marinas.

■ Biking, canoeing, horse-riding, tennis and water sports are some of

the **non-golf activities** the whole family can enjoy on the island.

■ Kids programmes are offered at a number of Hilton Head resorts. Golf and tennis **academies** also offer junior as well as adult lessons.

HILTON HEAD ISLAND FACTS

■ Until the D-Day Normandy invasion, the **Battle of Port Royal** fought in 1861 just north of the island was the largest organised assault in US naval history.

■ Colleton River Plantation's golf course was used extensively in the filming of movie **The Legend of Bagger Vance**.

■ Hilton Head Island takes its name from English explorer **Captain William Hilton**, who was despatched to the Carolina coast in 1663. First discovered by the Spanish, it was then claimed for France in 1562 and named Ile de la Riviere Grande.

■ The ocean waters off Hilton Head are the calving grounds of the endangered **right whale**, which grows to 50 feet in length

■ More than **50,000 Union troops** were stationed on Hilton Head's north end during the Civil War while over 1,500 freed slaves lived in Mitchelville, a series of purpose-built barracks-style buildings.

Go sailing and boating at Hilton Head



SEA PINES RESORT