



Kiawah & Charleston

You can battle it out on courses where wars have been fought in the Charleston and Kiawah region

The Ocean Course, Kiawah Island. Its very name is the stuff of legend. It was here, on this 10,000-acre barrier island off the South Carolina coast that battle was joined in the infamous “War on the Shore” in 1991. Bernhard Langer only had to hole a vicious six-foot putt on the final hole of the last match to retain the Ryder Cup for Europe. He missed, the match with Hale Irwin was halved and America reclaimed the trophy it had lost six years earlier.

Of course, Langer was to get his revenge on

American soil as mastermind of the victorious 2004 Europe squad. But that’s another story.

Here, on this windswept stretch of coast, it’s hard to forget the ghosts of the past as you tee up on such an awe-inspiring set of holes. A couple of other things might just weigh on your mind, though. This piece of Pete Dye golfing nirvana is one of the most brutally-difficult courses you can play. Heaven and hell, in a single package.

Exposed to relentless, shifting ocean breezes which can produce an eight-club variation for

the same hole from one day to the next, and defended by salt marshes, grass-covered dunes, lakes and vast waste bunkers, it was branded unplayable by several Ryder Cup stars. For top tournaments the tees can be cranked up from the regular 7,296 yards to an incredible 7,937 yards and it’s almost off the scale on the slope-meter, although its bite has been softened in recent Dye revamps.

Then there’s the abundant and varied wildlife. Wild being the key word.

The well-advised option to walk the course

with a caddy – for the same cost of taking a cart and having a forecaddy – allows golfers to savour its stunning setting and abundant flora and fauna. An Audubon-certified sanctuary, its eco-friendly set-up ensures all water is recycled and does not go onto the marshes while no pesticides or fertilisers are used. Nature thrives in all its forms as a result.

Before teeing off, the starter warned my three-ball group to give a wide berth to a mother alligator and her brood by the 2nd green. We needed no further bidding. Gators

aside, more than 30 species of mammals including sea otters, deer and bobcats, plus turtles, bald eagles and another 200-odd bird species call this home.

Four other golf courses comprise the Kiawah Island Golf Resort, among them early Jack Nicklaus creation Turtle Point and Gary Player's 6,875-yard Cougar Point. On a return visit I played Tom Fazio's Osprey Point, noted for its natural marsh and lagoon environment where dozens of gators can usually be seen sunning themselves. Except when it's cool and

cloudy, as when I played. But never mind, the course had enough teeth for me.

The Kiawah courses are all different in character and while the others may not quite be in the same league as the Ocean, they are eminently enjoyable challenges.

Rising above the dunes and courses, the Sanctuary is the resort's sumptuous new 255-room oceanfront spa hotel. Styled as a grand seaside mansion with high ceilings, walnut-floored lobby and elegant Southern décor – there are even oil paintings of the mythical





KIAWAH ISLAND GOLF RESORT

If you need convincing that the Ocean Course is tough, here's the evidence

master and mistress of the house hung over decorative fireplaces to give it a homely feel – the entire site was raised by 20 feet to give an unobstructed view of the ocean from the first floor. Some 400 trees were transplanted, 160 of them mature 50ft live oaks to create a centuries-old impression as guests arrive. Nightly room rates range from \$275 to a cool \$4,500 for the Presidential Suite.

Yet, like the resort courses, this is a class act without snooty airs and graces. Staff members exemplify the Southern charm and hospitality for which this region is famous.

Kiawah Island is 21 miles from Charleston, South Carolina's gracious and lively Southern Belle. The city is a treasure trove of historic architecture and has seen many momentous as well as calamitous events since it was founded in 1670. The first decisive American victory in the Revolutionary War came at the Battle for Sullivan's Island in 1776 and the first shots of the Civil War were fired on Union troops stationed at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbour in 1861. It has survived siege, military occupation, fires, earthquakes and hurricanes.

Indigo, cotton, rice and the slave trade made Charleston one of the busiest ports and wealthiest cities in America, but the loss of its wealth after it fell to General Sherman was a blessing in disguise. With little money to redevelop as other cities were doing, many old buildings were left standing. Charleston's historic district, created in 1931, was among the first in the US and the city is now one of the country's best-preserved.

On the golfing front, Charleston is claimed to be the birthplace of golf in America, the South Carolina Golf Club first being chartered back in 1786. Club members played on a public space called Harleston Green and a clubhouse was built in 1795, although it wasn't

“ The starter warned my group to give a wide berth to a mother alligator and her brood by the 2nd green”

until 1922 that the renamed Country Club of Charleston actually got its own course.

You can easily combine a golf holiday with a stay in Charleston, using it as a base to explore the city and drive out to some two dozen courses available for public play in the surrounding area. A good option is The Mills House, a haven of antebellum charm and period antiques in the heart of the city's Historic District. Originally opened as a hotel in 1803 and later used as a courthouse, it has welcomed guests since 1853 under its current guise and its guest list reads like a veritable Who's Who, numbering Robert E Lee and Theodore Roosevelt among resident VIPs.

Charleston's French Quarter district, historic churches and public buildings, and its waterfront are all walkable from the hotel. After a day's golf you can hit the bars and restaurants in and around Market Street, then return to down a shot or two in the hotel's First Shot Bar, named after that Civil War incident.

What today is the 18th hole of the Wild Dunes Links Course on the Isle of Palms, north-east of Charleston, was where Lord Cornwallis set down 2,000 Redcoats to try to take Fort Moultrie on neighbouring Sullivan Island from the rear. They were met by a combined force of regulars, local militia and Catawba Indians and the attack was repelled. A century later, Isle of Palms witnessed another historic encounter ⇒

WHERE TO PLAY

Kiawah Island Golf Resort

The Ocean Course
7,269 yards, par 72
\$200-\$305 including cart, caddy or forecaddy

Contact: 00-1-843-768-2121
kiawahgolf.com

Replay the Ryder Cup on this brutally beautiful work of genius

Kiawah Island Golf Resort

Osprey Point Course
6,871 yards, par 72
\$113-\$205

Contact: 00-1-843-768-2121
kiawahgolf.com

Another thriller killer amid the marshes

Rivertowne Country Club

7,269 yards, Par 72
\$75-\$110

Contact: 00-1-843-216-3777
rivertownecountryclub.com

Holes sandwiched between marshes and creeks but Palmer doesn't ham it up

Wild Dunes Resort

Links Course
6,722 yards, par 72
\$115-\$170

Contact: 00-1-843-886-2164
wilddunes.com

Slice of Scotland garnished with palms

WHERE TO STAY

The Mills House Hotel

Contact: 00-1-843-577-2400
www.millshouse.com

The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island

Contact: 00-1-843-768-6000
thesanctuary.com

Charleston Place, an Orient Express Hotel

Contact: 00-1-843-722-4900
charlestonplace.com

The Sanctuary, Kiawah Island



PETER BELEGARD



Links Course
16 • 100
• 110
• 140
PAR 3

The Redcoats couldn't tame the locals and you'll struggle to conquer Wild Dunes



when Confederate submarine Hunley rammed and sank Union warship USS Housatonic just offshore – the world's first successful submarine attack in battle. The Housatonic's anchor sits outside the Wild Dunes' reception centre.

When my drive on the Atlantic-hugging I8th found yet another dune after a toiling round on Tom Fazio's 6,722-yard tour de force – imagine a palm tree-studded Scottish links – it felt as though I had been in a battle of my own. It is rightly ranked as one of South Carolina's finest tracks, and as long as you can keep it on the straight and occasionally narrow you'll stay out of the wars. Wild Dunes also has Fazio's par-70 Harbor Course, some holes bordering the Intracoastal Waterway. You can stay at the AAA Four-Diamond-rated (ie top-notch) Boardwalk Inn with its pastel-coloured "village" and beach boardwalk.

The Ron Garl-designed Links at Stono Ferry is another battlefield site. It has three Intracoastal holes and climaxes with an island green on the I8th.

Old plantations provide a genteel setting with a bygone flavour for several courses, including Arthur Hills' classy 6,859-yard Dunes West course by historic Lexington Plantation alongside the Wando River and those of Shadowmoss Plantation and Legends Oak west of Charleston.

Other courses worth a look include Trent Jones Sr's Crooked Oaks, one of two at Seabrook Island Resort and featuring Charleston's only bent grass putting surfaces.

River Towne Country Club, 25 minutes from downtown Charleston, is the area's first Arnold Palmer signature course and set on a former brick-making island, with 13 holes of its holes winding along the Wando River and a

Osprey Point is one of the five Kiawah Island courses



PHOTOS: PETER ELLEGARD

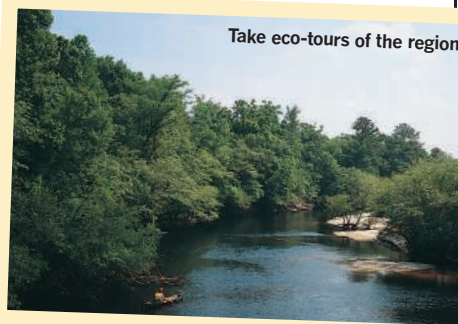
Explore Charleston's elegant Historic District



smaller creek. After a welcoming "handshake" hole, the rest of the course is as tough as the bricks which used to supply Charleston's builders, requiring long carries over marshes or water and pinpoint approach shots.

Wherever you play or stay in the Charleston and Kiawah area, you're sure of a warm Southern welcome. Just don't mention the War. Remember, they won.

Take eco-tours of the region



Charleston & Kiawah Island Facts

WHERE IS IT

Charleston is almost equidistant between Hilton Head and Myrtle Beach, both around 100 miles away. It is 200 miles from international gateway Charlotte, in North Carolina, and 286 miles from Atlanta, Georgia. Six airlines serve Charleston International with 160 flights a day to 19 cities across the US. **Kiawah Island** is 21 miles from Charleston, a drive of about 45 minutes.

KEY ATTRACTIONS

- Take a walking tour or horse-drawn carriage ride to explore Charleston's elegant and well-

preserved **Historic District**, including the Old City Market, Confederate Museum and Charleston Museum, the nation's oldest.

- Boat tours of Charleston harbour visit **Fort Sumter**, where the Civil War began, as well as Fort Moultrie, Patriots Point and Morris Island Lighthouse.
- Get a real feel of the **Old South** by visiting preserved 17th and 18th century plantation houses in the Charleston area including Boone Hall Plantation, Drayton Hall, Middleton Place and Magnolia Plantation.
- Get a taste of nature on a

barrier island eco-tour, boat expeditions through swamp parks like **Cypress Gardens** or a sea-kayaking trip to a wildlife refuge.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Charleston's **South Carolina Aquarium** offers an eye-to-eye experience with turtles, sharks, moray eels and Amazon creatures among other exhibits.
- Youngsters up to 12 and their families can get creative and explore hands-on exhibits such as a shrimp boat at **Charleston's Children's Museum of the Lowcountry**.
- Hit the beach on coastal

islands such as Folly, Edisto, Kiawah and **Isle of Palms**, where county parks also offer lots of activities

- Give the kids a taste of history at **Fort Moultrie**, site of the first American victory over the British Navy in 1776, and Civil War symbol Fort Sumter. They will also love exploring World War II aircraft carrier Yorktown and trying the on-board simulator at Patriots Point, one of the world's largest naval and maritime museums.

CHARLESTON & KIAWAH ISLAND FACTS

- Charleston's **Powder Magazine**, built in 1713 to store

the city's supply of gunpowder, is the oldest public building in South Carolina. It has 32-inch thick brick walls.

- The largest remaining virgin stand of bald cypress and tupelo trees in the world is located in the **Francis Beidler Forest** near Charleston.
- Confederate submarine **Hunley** was the first submarine ever used in warfare when it went into action in Charleston Harbour in 1863. A replica is on display at the Charleston Museum.
- The **Charleston Museum** was the first public museum in the US and was founded in 1772.