

# Hilton Head Island

We landed at the airport in Savannah, Georgia, which is about a one hour drive from **Hilton Head Island, South Carolina**. Savannah is a wonderful destination all on its own, but on this trip south we were looking forward to a more laid back resort-type holiday with beaches, golf courses and plenty of seafood! Hilton Head boasts all three features on a world-class level. Our visit to the island was going to require a rental car as everything on the island is quite widespread. Once you arrive, walking is an excellent option for exploring the immediate area around either your rental home or hotel, but a vehicle is a necessity for touring the island.

This area is famous for its gated communities with winding streets lined with mature trees and beautiful homes. Most of these homes can be rented either by the day, week or month depending on the property owner's rental preference. Hotels are not in short supply if you prefer this type of accommodation which would include daily housekeeping and a variety of amenities on the property. Many of the larger hotels are located close to the beaches making it convenient to enjoy hours of sunbathing or a refreshing swim. Looking for a change of pace, our group chose the rental home option for our 5 day stay on Hilton Head Island where we planned to embrace the southern tranquil lifestyle.

Although the island is only 12 miles by 5 miles, there is plenty to see and do with more than 250 restaurants, 24 golf courses, over 200 stores and outlets and an assortment of tours and excursions. Our rental property was in the *Sea Pines* neighbourhood near the *Old Harbour Town* (on the south western shore of the island). We were within walking distance of the quaint Old Harbour Town and 2 of the island's golf courses.



**Hilton Head Island**  
Harbour Town Lighthouse and Pier



**Hilton Head Island**  
Golf Course



**Rental Home**  
↑Living Room & Bedroom↓



Our beautiful 3-bedroom bungalow backed onto the picturesque 11<sup>th</sup> fairway of the new Pete Dye Golf Course. We had our very own Tiki Bar on a private sundeck with a fabulous 6 person jacuzzi, a lovely shaded patio where we could relax and sip our 'mint juleps' or enjoy a refreshing swim in the private kidney-shaped pool while watching from a distance as golfers conquered the fairways.

The handsomely furnished home was equipped with bed linens, towels, TV's, radios, some toiletries, lawn furniture, pool accessories, washer/dryer, iron & board and a fully equipped kitchen with dishwasher and services included some limited housekeeping. The accommodations had a capacity for up to 8 guests and was more than ample for our small group of 2 couples. The large master bedroom had a king size bed and private Ensuite bath, a second bedroom with a queen size bed and 4 piece bath, a third oversized bedroom with 2 double beds, private Ensuite bath, walk-in closet and double door entry. Each bedroom had its own TV & telephone and featured sliding patio doors leading out onto either the pool side patio or the fenced lanai at the front of the house. Sprawling Live Oaks draped in Spanish Moss sheltered the driveway and front entrance. Loblolly Pines and Palmetto trees (that actually look like Palm trees) lined the quiet meandering street. We had found the perfect retreat!

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The two ladies in our group were looking forward to shopping, visiting the sights and exploring the area while the men were anxious to tee it up on as many of the championship golf courses as time would permit, and understandably so. Hilton Head golf courses are world renowned with many PGA/LPGA tournaments played here and avid amateur golfers welcome the challenge. Course architects have included Jack Nicklaus, Pete Dye, Arthur Hills, Robert Cupp, Robert Trent Jones, Gary Player and more! Hilton Head is the perfect location for any group looking for the ultimate 'golf getaway'.

If golf is not your game, there is no shortage of outdoor activities. Lawton Stables offers horse-back riding adventures with trail rides through the resort's Forest Preserve. Options for bike riding or jogging on more than 15 miles of paved trails, eco tours, racquet ball & tennis are all available in the Sea Pines Resort area. One of the more unique tours offered on the island is the Alligator & Forest Preserve Boat Tours on the inland freshwater lakes. The jungle safari boats take you on a journey for an up-close look at the abundant plant and animal life and, of course, the American alligator! Fishing expeditions are also available with private tour companies and professional guides. For families, there is no limit to children's activities. The Harbour Town Pool is the Sea Pines largest pool complex, there is crabbing for the kids right off the docks, or a picnic at the beach, junior golf programs, summer day camps with activities, arts & crafts, and a fully equipped playground close by.

On our shopping excursions we found some unique boutiques in the Old Harbour Town and seaside strip malls near the beach on the east coast of the island with exclusive clothing stores, coffee shops and souvenir vendors. Two large outlet malls are within a 20 minute drive from Sea Pines, the Tanger Outlet Centers #1 and #2, where we found excellent bargains on designer clothes.



↑Old Fort Pub Restaurant & View from the Dining Room↓



↑Fishing Trawler in the Harbour  
Shore Birds and Dolphins follow close behind



↓Waiting for our Harbour Cruise  
Our Cruise Vessel docked.

One of the highlights of our Hilton Head vacation was a fascinating 1 hr & 45 min Dolphin watching narrative tour (the ticket office is located right in Harbour Town near the pier). Our charming boat had a snack bar and restrooms on board with inside, open and shaded seating. The ship's comical Captain kept us entertained with his folklore stories, description of the area's many fascinating sights and points of interest. We were at the ready with our cameras snapping shots of bottle-nose dolphins as they playfully swam along side our boat pausing every once in a while to poke their noses up out of the water, toss their heads and chatter as if they were actually on a tour watching us! The dolphins occasionally stray from the tour boats chasing after shrimping boats in hopes of snacking on some of the overflow from the fisherman's nets. Osprey (or Sea Hawks), Herons and other shore birds are fascinating to watch as they glide along near the shoreline. We cruised across Calibogue Sound to Daufuskie Island (between Savannah on the mainland and Hilton Head Island) where we could catch a glimpse of the legendary *haunted* light house. Passing the southern tip of Hilton Head Island we were captivated by a remarkable panoramic view of the miles of white sandy beaches along South Beach. Heading back to the docks we sailed past Harbour Town Golf Links and finally back into the Harbour Town Marina. A perfect afternoon out on the waters experiencing nature, delighted by the Captain's enchanting 'tales of the sea' and discovering the local history and culture. Although we cruised mid-afternoon, the Sunset Dinner Cruises are also spectacular.

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The South Carolina **'Low Country'** is a term used to describe South Carolina's coastal counties south of Charleston including the Sea Islands such as Hilton Head and is also used to describe the region's cuisine – *'Low Country Cuisine'*. Flavourful, hearty cooking distinguish by the use of the abundant local seafood and rice with a combination of regional spices that gives the recipes a 'Caribbean' zest.

One interesting and lively eatery is the **'Crazy Crab'** serving some of the best Low Country fare in a relaxed, casual setting. We enjoyed a delightful lunch at their Harbour Town location with a perfect view of the marina (a 2<sup>nd</sup> location is at the north end of the island). The *'She Crab Soup'*, which originated in Charleston, is hearty and flavourful and the satisfying New England Clam Chowder has a fresh 'southern' twist. Enjoy several variations of shrimp, sea scallops, crab and oysters! Generous portions and reasonable prices.



**Hilton Head Golf Course**

The **'Red Fish'** Restaurant, minutes from the Sea Pines Resort, offers an upscale-casual dining atmosphere. Their unique menu, using a blend of house-made spices, fresh seafood, tropical fruits and locally grown vegetables, will tempt the most discriminating palate. The chef is also willing to create, so don't be shy in straying from the menu. The most distinctive feature of this restaurant is their award-winning wine list. You can browse through their on-site retail wine shop to find that perfect selection to compliment your dinner, or to take home with you. Red Fish was awarded the *'Best of Award of Excellence'* by the Wine Spectator from 2003 to 2008.

Travelling further north up the west coast of the island, we found a delightful gem. The **'Old Fort Pub'** Restaurant. Set on the banks of the coastal waterways, this restaurant boasts a fantastic view of the southern sunset from almost every table. Encircled by panoramic windows the dining room offers guests a spectacle that is picture-perfect with moss-draped live oaks along the shore, fishing boats and small pleasure craft drifting by. 'New South' cuisine favourites are on the menu with excellent sea food selections. Known as one of the few AAA Four Diamond Restaurants in the area, we were delighted with the ambience and the menu was superb.

While touring around the north end of the island in the area of Port Royal sound, we happened upon a quaint fishery and seafood restaurant, **'Hudson's On The Docks'**. Hudson's has been a family affair since Hudson Sr. opened the doors of the old Hudson's Oyster Factory in the 1920's when it was a seafood processing plant and still employs the largest (and one of the only two) fishing fleets on the island. We met one of their ships just coming in with their catch of the day and we were able to buy a couple of pounds of shrimp direct from the ship's captain, which we were excited to prepare ourselves in our own kitchen.

No trip to Hilton Head Island is complete unless you have taken the tour of the **'Harbour Town Lighthouse'**. The 90-foot, red and white striped tower of the lighthouse is the visual centerpiece of the popular Sea Pines. Aside from the marvelous view of Harbour Town and Hilton Head Island, visitors are treated to The *Shop At The Top* where you can purchase fine hand-made crystal, charms, and many other Hilton Head collectibles.



**Sunset at the  
Old Fort Pub Restaurant**

On our last day on the island, we packed up the car and headed out for a lovely scenic drive back to the Savannah airport - a pleasant way to bid farewell to this charming community.

*Southern comfort* is the only way to describe a vacation on Hilton Head Island. Peaceful, serene and picturesque with as many diverse activities as there are fish in the sea!

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