



The Highland Course sits high in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains.

Mountaintop Masterpiece

The Highland Course at Primland epitomizes the phrase “natural wonder”

BY JOE BARGMANN

IT WOULD SEEM TO BE A GIVEN that golf courses are green — not just in color but in the environmental sense. After all, they're covered with a variety of grasses, and out-of-bounds areas are often thick with trees and populated by wildlife. But many golf resorts flout Mother Nature, maintaining their courses with copious amounts of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and water from sometimes limited local sources.

Some course operators, however, whether driven by environmental consciousness, necessity, or both, are taking a more natural approach. **The Highland Course at Primland** (866.960.7746, primland.com) opened in 2007 to rave reviews — in part, because of its setting in a 12,000-acre hunting and fishing preserve in the mountains of southwest Virginia, 83 miles from Greensboro, N.C. “It’s like a national park with a golf course and a resort inside it,” says Steve Helms, Primland’s vice president.

The resort component debuts this month, with a 26-suite lodge, spa, and restaurant in a state-of-the-art building that incorporates extensive amounts of reclaimed wood and recycled materials, including roofing tiles made from repurposed old automobile tires. The resort also features its own wastewater treatment facility. “Our mission is to continue Primland’s environmental stewardship while creating a world-class resort,” says general manager Brooks Bradbury.

The Highland Course fills the bill. Carved out of a mountaintop forest, the design is a minimalist masterpiece, guided by the lay of the land and leaving the natural areas that line the holes undisturbed. Judicious application of chemicals and the use of filtration ponds to purify surface runoff minimize the environmental impact. But being green doesn’t come at the expense of great golf. One need only stand in the fairway of the par-5 13th hole, facing an approach shot to a four-tiered putting surface framed by sycamore trees and the endless blue sky, to glimpse golf and nature at their finest.

local favorites

STAY

The Lodge at Primland. This country retreat features 26 suites ranging from 500 to 1,800 square feet, all with mountain views. Stargazers will marvel at the lodge’s observatory, with a powerful telescope that feeds celestial images directly to the guest rooms. 866.960.7746, primland.com

EAT

Elements. The Lodge at Primland’s top-shelf restaurant features New American cuisine prepared with locally sourced ingredients. The 1,500-bottle wine cellar, visible behind a glass wall, features an impressive selection from Virginia, California, Italy, France, and more. 866.960.7746, primland.com

Jimmy’s Barbecue. The small town of Lexington, N.C., 83 miles from Primland, has a population of 17,000 — and 17 BBQ restaurants. The best of the bunch might be Jimmy’s, where the regional style — chopped smoked meat with a vinegar-tomato marinade — gets a boost from Jimmy’s Hot Hot Sauce on each table. 336.357.2311

OTHER COURSES

Greensboro National. Less than 15 miles from Greensboro’s airport, this course is an often overlooked gem, with rolling terrain, expansive greens, and a stout 142 slope rating from the back tees. With greens fees at \$52 tops and solid pub food in the 19th hole, this is the ideal spot for a post-arrival or pre-flight round. 336.342.1113, greensboronat.com

Grandover Resort & Golf. Thirty-six holes by acclaimed designers David Graham and Gary Panks serve as the anchor of this 1,500-acre golf getaway, complete with hotel and spa. Nicely varied holes and meticulous grooming warrant the four-star ratings both courses have received from *Golf Digest*. Less than a 30-minute drive from the airport. 336.323.3838, grandoverresort.com

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GOLF

[DEALS & DISCOUNTS]

The Ritz-Carlton Golf & Spa Resort

Located two miles from **Montego Bay**, Jamaica, this resort takes a laid-back approach to golf with its No Clubs, No Shirt, No Shoes, No Problem deal. Resort guests pay just \$139 per person for a round on the White Witch course, which features views of the Caribbean on all but two holes. The package also includes a cart, caddie services, club and shoe rental, two sleeves of golf balls, and a Cutter & Buck golf shirt. Valid thru November 24. 876.953.2800, ritzcarlton.com/rosehall

WaterColor Inn & Resort

This beachfront resort in Santa Rosa Beach, Fla., about 60 miles east of **Pensacola**, offers a great deal for foursomes. The Golf Getaway includes unlimited golf at the renowned Camp Creek and Shark's Tooth clubs, dinner for four at the Fish Out of Water restaurant (a \$350 value), and a \$25 certificate for golf apparel per person. The rate of \$195 per person, per night, requires quad occupancy and a three-night minimum stay. No set expiration date. 850.534.5000, watercolorresort.com

Cabo del Sol

A short drive from the airport in **Los Cabos**, Mexico, Cabo del Sol set the standard for golf in the Baja Peninsula when it opened in the mid-1990s, with a gorgeous seaside setting and courses by Jack Nicklaus and Tom Weiskopf. From October 1 through December 15, foursomes booking a minimum of three nights may play both courses at the stay-and-play rate of just \$299 per person per night, including airport transportation and daily breakfast and lunch. 866.231.4677, cabodelsol.com

Fairmont Scottsdale

The AAA Five-Diamond hotel is the home of the famed TPC **Scottsdale** Stadium Course, site of the PGA Tour FBR Open. Guests who book three consecutive nights

at the hotel get a free fourth night and four rounds. (Check schedules for closures due to course maintenance.) From \$1,559 per person, based on double occupancy. Valid through December 31. 888.860.8282, fairmont.com/promo/golfpackages

Grand Biloxi Casino, Hotel, and Spa

With rates starting at about \$100 per night, double occupancy, the stay-and-play deals at the Grand Biloxi, in Biloxi, Miss., are a winning proposition. The Jack Nicklaus-designed Grand Bear Golf Course ranks among the best public courses in the nation and has a beastly 75.5 course rating from the Grizzly Bear tees. Feeling lucky? 800.427.7247, grandcasinobiloxi.com

Jared Coffin House

A busy summer vacation destination, Nantucket, Mass., quiets down after Labor Day and presents a rare opportunity to relax and enjoy the historic island (and a little golf) for less. The Tee Time on Nantucket package includes accommodations at the Jared Coffin House, plus greens fees and round-trip transportation to and from Miacomet Golf Club, a links-style gem that recently underwent major renovations. Room rates start as low as \$125 in October; add \$135 to any rate to complete the golf package. Valid through December 31. 800.248.2405, jaredcoffinhouse.com

TPC Myrtle Beach

Public golfers rarely get to experience tour-caliber courses, and almost never at a reasonable price. But the TPC Myrtle Beach — the only course on South Carolina's Grand Strand to receive a five-star rating from *Golf Digest* — is a steal, with stay-and-play packages starting around \$210 per person, per night. Offer does not expire. 843.357.3999, tpc-mb.com

Tiffany Greens Golf Club

Traveling golfers generally aren't accustomed to super-reasonable greens

fees, which is why many raise a skeptical eyebrow when they hear about the stay-and-play deal at Tiffany Greens Golf Club, a pristine haven of public golf in Kansas City, Mo. Golfers who stay at any of three nearby hotels — the Marriott Residence Inn, Embassy Suites, and Homewood Suites — receive \$10 off the already rock-bottom greens fees to play a top-notch Robert Trent Jones II

layout, and 50 percent off club rental. No set expiration date. 816.880.9600, tiffanygreengolf.com

Editor's note: Some Deals & Discounts are subject to availability and restrictions.

Getting There: All these destinations can be reached by flying Continental. To book your trip, visit Continental Airlines Vacations at covacations.com.

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