

SEA ISLAND GOLF CLUB

Sea Island Golf Club is located on the ruins of Retreat Plantation, an antebellum cotton plantation. The plantation produced long-lint Sea Island cotton and was highly prized for making fine linen. Originally part of a colonial land grant to James Spalding Esq., the land was held by several individuals until it was purchased in 1926 by Howard Coffin, inventor of the Hudson automobile and founder of Sea Island Company and The Cloister Hotel.

In 1926 Walter Travis was commissioned to design the first nine holes for Sea Island, and on June 20, 1928 Plantation opened for play. Meanwhile, a tabby barn dating back to 1835 was converted from its original use as a storehouse for corn into a clubhouse. This historic structure served as the clubhouse and pro shop until a new golf lodge was constructed in 2001.

A second nine holes was designed by Harry S. Colt and Charles Alison and was named Seaside. Shortly after its opening in 1930, Bobby Jones played the course while vacationing between victories of his Grand Slam and praised the course as, "one of the best nine holes I have ever seen." Two subsequent nine hole tracts were added in later years: Retreat Nine was designed by Dick Wilson in 1960, and Marshside Nine was designed by Joe Lee in 1973.

During the late 1990s the four separate nine-hole tracts were combined into two championship 18-hole courses. In 1998 Rees Jones combined Travis' Plantation Nine with Wilson's Retreat Nine to form the Plantation Golf Course, a par 72 Parkland-style course with small greens and tight fairways lined with large live oaks draped with Spanish moss. Vistas of the St. Simons Sound and Atlantic Ocean abound from every hole on the back nine.

Plantation plays 7,058 yards from the back tees. The course is planted in Tifway and TifEagle-sprigged greens. While 85% of the tees are Tifway, the remaining 15% are planted with El Toro zoysia for better coverage in heavily shaded areas. The greens are overseeded for year-round splendor with a mix of *Poa trivialis* and bentgrass while the tees, fairways and roughs are overseeded with a blend of perennial ryegrasses.

In 1999 Tom Fazio combined Colt and Alison's Seaside with Lee's Marshside to form the Seaside Golf Course. Seaside is a Links-style course with sand dunes scattered throughout its deep roughs. The dunes are planted with sea oats, muley grass, dune sunflower, spartina and other native plants. There are also salt marshes lining the fairways or in play areas on 10 holes. Each of Seaside's par 3s plays to a separate point of the compass; the back nine unfolds counterclockwise while the front nine plays in a clockwise direction.

Seaside plays 7,005 yards from the back tee and is planted in Tifway with TifEagle putting surfaces. However, Seaside also features TifEagle tees and TifDwarf chipping swales around the greens. During the cool season Seaside is overseeded wall-to-wall with a blend of perennial ryegrasses, and the greens are overseeded with a mixture of *Poa trivialis* and bentgrass. The tees and chipping swales are overseeded with *Poa trivialis* to give them an exceptional contrast with the surrounding turf and superior winter color.



Plantation #12, par 4 385 yards, is a driver for some and a fairway wood for others wanting to avoid trouble. A second shot to this green is difficult with bunkers short and left and a lake over the green. Phil Petit, GCS.

In 1975 Sea Island Company reacquired a parcel of land from developers who had built a golf course but had fallen into bankruptcy. The St. Simons Island Club, while owned and operated by the Sea Island Company, never carried the Sea Island name and was operated as a separate entity. However, after work on Seaside was complete in 2000, the St. Simons Island Club was officially brought under direction and operation of Sea Island Golf Club. The original layout designed by Joe Lee was completely redesigned by Davis Love III and reopened with the addition of a new clubhouse in 2001 as The Retreat Course. This course is considered a favorite of the members: challenging enough for a pro yet comfortable enough for the casual player.

Like Plantation, Retreat is a Parkland-style course but features large, undulating greens. The Retreat fairways are lined with a pleasing blend of tall majestic pines and magnificent live oaks. Superbly fitted to its environment, this course features a unique 14,000 ft² green on the par 4 #6 hole. Retreat plays 7,106 yards from the back tee. Like Plantation and Seaside, Retreat has TifEagle greens. The tees, fairways and roughs were planted with the newly developed TifSport bermudagrass. To maintain continuous color during the winter months, the greens are overseeded with a mix of *Poa trivialis* and bentgrass, the tees are overseeded with a special mixture of perennial ryegrass and *Poa trivialis* and the roughs and fairways with a blend of perennial ryegrasses.

Complementing their 54 holes of championship golf, Sea Island also provides a state-of-the-art Learning Center with a Practice Range located directly on the St. Simons Sound. The Sea Island Golf Learning Center is the only facility in the US with three of *Golf Digest's* America's 50 Greatest Teachers. The Learning Center has 300 yards of teeing area, target greens and

short game areas all with TifEagle greens. The entire practice facility is overseeded with winter grasses identical to the mix used on the golf courses.

The Sea Island Golf Club is home to several PGA touring pros, including Davis Love III, Jonathan Byrd, Lucas Glover, Paul Claxton, Matt Kucher, Brandt Snedeker and Brent Schwarzrock. Sea Island has also been host to a wide variety of tournaments and events including the G-8 Economic Summit (2004), the UBS Cup (2002, 2003), the US Mid-Amateur Championship (2004), the SEC Championship (2001–06), the Western Junior Championship (2004) and the US Senior Women's Amateur Championship (1971, 1980, 1988, 1994, 2000, 2006).

The Sea Island Golf Club also has world-class amenities to complement their golf courses. The Lodge, a Mobile Five Star facility, houses the Plantation/Seaside pro shop, a number of fine restaurants and a total of 38 rooms, 36 of which face the ocean and the St. Simons Sound. A little known but much loved tradition of The Lodge is the ceremonial close of the golf courses. A lone bagpiper plays nightly at sunset. He walks down the 10th fairway of Plantation, with the ocean as a backdrop, for the guests gathered on the Lodge terrace. Also available to members and guests is The Cloister Hotel. It was originally built over 75 years ago as a temporary structure but has become an enduring favorite among both past and present visitors.



Retreat #18, par 4 368 yards, features a slight dogleg left with a lake running down the entire left side of the hole. A long bunker on the left side protects the green. Jason Sperring, GCS.

In addition to the three golf courses that make up the Sea Island Golf Club, the Sea Island Company also owns and operates three additional golf courses: The Ocean Forest Golf Club, a private golf course and host of the 2001 Walker Cup; the Frederica Golf Club, a private course designed by Tom Fazio that opened to rave reviews in 2005; and the Cabin Bluff Golf Course, which is situated on a 40,000-acre hunting and fishing resort and is truly a sportsman's dream.

Multiple publications have ranked the Sea Island Golf Club as the Country's Best Golf Resort. These accolades are only possible through the hard work and dedication of the entire staff. I would like to thank all the superintendents, assistants, and all the golf maintenance employees for their continued commitment to excellence. ●