

Bluffton, SC



There's a reason that The Heritage is consistently rated as one of the most popular stops on the PGA Tour. Simply put, come springtime, there's nowhere nicer than Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Here's the secret though: The discriminating golfer need not set foot on the island itself. There's plenty of quality options in the gateway town of Bluffton, just west of the island's bridge. Bluffton offers much easier access for the traveler either from either I-95 or the lovely, mellow Savannah Airport, just 25 miles away. One will barely have a chance to settle into and get truly familiar with their vehicle from National Car Rental before arriving in Bluffton. Now the dilemma is where to tee it up first.



Island West Golf Club

One of the first courses you'll come upon is sporty **Island West**, designed by Fuzzy Zoeller, who won the Heritage in 1983. However his more enduring Lowcountry legacy is as the designer of this underrated, affordable, yet very pleasant daily fee club, located some 15 minutes from the Hilton Head Bridge. A long-time favorite of residents and vacationers, Island West features beautiful rolling fairways, elevated tees, carefully preserved natural marsh areas, and large live oaks.



Eagle's Pointe Golf Club

Unlike the housing sensibility that pervades so many golf-real estate communities in the southeast, **Eagle's Pointe**, designed by five-time Heritage champion Davis Love III, has just a smattering of on-course

homes, and those that do exist are for the most part located well away from the playing corridors. There are dozens of area courses where an egregiously sliced or hooked tee shot could end up in somebody's patio-side martini pitcher, but not here. A round of golf at Eagle's Pointe seems to take place almost entirely in the woods, particularly through most of the outward nine. The feeling of serenity is enhanced because there are few parallel fairways; it's a relatively rare occasion to view groups other than the ones directly ahead or behind.



Crescent Point Golf Club

Eagle Pointe's 'sister course' is [Crescent Pointe](#), designed by Arnold Palmer, the winner of the inaugural Heritage, back in 1969. This is undoubtedly one of Bluffton's tougher public tracks. Golfers are by definition a masochistic lot. Why fritter away half the day, and hard-earned cash besides, trying to master a game that will invariably disappoint you in the end? As envisioned by one of history's most macho golfers, Crescent Pointe is proof positive. The fairways are rife with bunkers, swales and water hazards. Lush stands of ball-swallowing fescue grasses are interspersed at the most inopportune moments. It's exhilarating but exhausting, and nowhere in greater Hilton Head does a beer taste any better than in Crescent Pointe's 19th hole.



May River Golf Club

One of the most magical golf experiences in greater Bluffton is at Palmetto Bluff, which is one of the largest undeveloped land tracts on the east coast, fully two-thirds the size of Hilton Head itself. The **May River Golf Club** designed by Jack Nicklaus, Heritage champ in 1975, is one of the most tranquil and beautiful golf experiences in the south. And as an adjunct to the Inn at Palmetto Bluff, a posh Auberge Resort, certainly one of the priciest. The other courses mentioned here are in the \$55–\$80 range, but May River, only accessible to overnight guests, will cost about ten times that amount, which includes a night at the Inn. Is it worth it? It all depends on the mindset. Some prefer Paris, Texas. Others Paris, France. Many of us drive Fords, fewer drive Ferraris. If one is inclined to indulge, suffice it to say it will be a memorable day on a stunning venue.



Bluffton BBQ

Post-round sustenance need not be nearly as indulgent. Mi Tierra is known for its flavorful and affordable Mexican food. Bluffton BBQ offers messy-but-tasty smokehouse standards. And no visit to beautiful downtown Bluffton would be complete without stopping in at the Squat & Gobble. This is a kitschy, breakfast-and-lunch joint, specializing in Greek and southern cuisine. The menu isn't quite as off kilter as the eatery's name, but it's close.