

## Charleston, SC



It's no surprise that Charleston, South Carolina isn't thought of as a golf destination. There are two main reasons why. First is that it's overshadowed by two 'bona fide' golf destinations in the state—Hilton Head Island to the south, and Myrtle Beach to the north. The second reason is that Charleston offers a such a cornucopia of riches for the visitor—incredible history, amazing architecture, superb restaurants and shopping, lively downtown, nearby beaches, etc, that golf is something of an afterthought.

However there are some fine public access courses in and near the city. (Not counting Kiawah Island or Wild Dunes resorts, both of which deserve travelogues of their own.) South of the city in the 'burb of Hollywood is [Stono Ferry](#).



Hole 12 via [Stono Ferry](#)

This is a serpentine, 6,700-yard routing, with several nice holes on the opening nine, and a pastoral setting that actually includes some horses grazing adjacent to a fairway or two. However the “wow” factor increases dramatically on the inward nine.



Hole 14 via [Stono Ferry](#)

Holes 12 through 14 abut the Stono River, and offer some of the most wonderful views of any golf course in greater Charleston. The 12th is a lovely par 4 leading towards the water. It's only 360 yards from the back tee, but a wetland pinching the landing area provides some trepidation. The next is tinier still, a par 4 straining to crack the 350 yard barrier, but with another tricky tee shot and dazzling waterside scenery. The 14th is a medium-length par 3 with an angled tee box practically perched in the river. This same stretch of holes was a Revolutionary War battleground, and there are monuments posted intermittently that provide some of the details of this 1779 conflict that left some 300 soldiers mortally wounded. A full 210 years before golf balls were fired about the property, American patriots and British army forces fired upon each other in a bloody conflict eventually won by the Brits.

North of the city in the town of Mt. Pleasant are a number of fine daily fee courses, none better than [Charleston National](#). This was originally conceived as an exclusive private club, but the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Hugo in 1989 altered both the course, and the course of its destiny.



Image via [Charleston National](#)

Few if any area courses were hit as hard as Charleston National. Just a week or so before the Grand Opening, the hurricane caused a fifteen foot storm surge across the length and breadth of the property, and 7,000 trees snapped like twigs. “When I first went back there after the storm, the work of art that I had created was still in place,” reminisces architect Rees Jones, none too fondly. “But the frame, in other words the trees, was gone. Fortunately the frame has been reestablished over time.”

There are three distinct golf phases at Charleston National. The first four holes are marsh-side, and sniffing distance from the water. The course turns inland from there, and the succeeding nine holes are routed through the forest, albeit a thinner forest than what was there initially. The final five are back among the wetlands again, and the bridge crossings and mile-long views of the Lowcountry make these the most memorable holes on the property. The housing and woodlands are left behind as a series of narrow bridges wend their way between curving fairways bracketed by golden marshland. These finishing five are a radical departure from what came before, and bring the course to a crescendo that makes it among the most commendable public golf venues in the city.

Finding commendable restaurants in Charleston is as easy as collecting seashells on any of its nearby beaches. Choices are plentiful, and most visitors will run out of time long before they run out of viable options. Just for fun we’ll stick to whimsically named establishments. Try [Swig & Swine](#) for craft beers and down home

barbecue with simple ambience. SNOB (otherwise known as Slightly North of Broad) offers a more sophisticated experience in a genteel atmosphere. The **Swamp Fox** is known for southern staples like fried green tomatoes, shrimp and grits, and crab cakes. Finally, **Poogan's Porch** is a converted Lowcountry home that has great mac and cheese, alligator bites, homemade biscuits and pan seared scallops, among other gustatory delights.