

Florida Panhandle



Ocean Course Hole 18

It's not quite sixty miles from Florida's Ponte Vedra Beach to the sleepy town of Palm Coast. The former is well-known in the golf world, in large part because of the so-called 'Fifth Major,' otherwise known as The Players, recently contested at TPC Sawgrass, and also due to its status as home base of the PGA Tour. The latter has a much lower profile. However there is a wonderful one-two course combination in Palm Coast at the [Hammock Beach Resort](#). The Jack Nicklaus-designed Ocean Course and the Conservatory Course by Tom Watson are two of northern Florida's finest public offerings. Grab a National Rental Car at Jacksonville International, and you'll be at this lesser-known but highly desirable destination in little more than an hour. Or if Orlando's airport makes for an easier connection, your National Rental Car will have you in Palm Coast in ninety minutes, just a shade under one hundred miles of easy highway driving.

There are more than three hundred rooms, suites and villas on site, and despite the proximity to places like Daytona or St. Augustine, the Hammock Beach Resort is entirely self-contained. There's no need to leave the property, other than to visit the exceptional Conservatory Golf Course, about fifteen minutes away. All the dining, imbibing, swimming, lounging and beaching options are close-at-hand, not to mention the comprehensive workout facility, spa, and meeting spaces. So is the Jack Nicklaus-designed Ocean Course, one of north Florida's truly enjoyable resort golf experiences.

Some of the game's most notable venues use the word 'ocean' in their names. These include Kiawah's Ocean Course, Mexico's Ocean Course at Cabo Del Sol and Bermuda's Mid Ocean Club.



Ocean Course Hole 13 via [Hammock Beach](#)

While Hammock Beach's Ocean Course is a rung below those others, it's still well worth a visit. It's the only true oceanfront course to open in Florida in many decades, and this Nicklaus Signature design features six holes with views of the Atlantic, including a stellar par-4 finisher, nearly 470 yards, running parallel to the beach.



Ocean Course Hole 11 via [Hammock Beach](#)

Lakes, dunes and forests pepper the layout, which tempts longer hitters with a mix of reachable, yet hazard-laden par-5s. Fairways are generous, and rightly so, as whipping winds off the nearby Atlantic can cause tee shots to drift well offline. Accolades the Ocean Course has

received over time include “Top 100 Courses You Can Play” as bequeathed by Golf Magazine and a Silver Medal by Golf Magazine.



Conservatory Course via [Hammock Beach](#)

The ageless Tom Watson, a five-time British Open champion, is the architect of the resort’s second golf course. The Conservatory is located some ten miles off-site from the main resort property. This is one of the longest of the thousand-plus golf courses in the state, stretching to nearly 7,800 yards from the tips. This is an atypical Florida golf course, despite the seventy-five acres of manmade lakes, and the onsite waterfall which serves as a natural water treatment system. Befitting a player-turned-architect who found so much success on links golf courses, the Conservatory features massive and extremely undulating greens.

Capacious in scope and located on more than five hundred acres, 140 bunkers dot the landscape, an average of almost eight per hole.

Millions of dollars were poured into lush landscaping, which includes nearly five hundred trees that were re-planted on the course. Live oaks, stone pines, cypress, crepe myrtle, magnolia, elm, holly, gum and maples abound, giving the course an indigenous feel, which is amplified by the dearth of housing on the property.

Appetites will be whetted after a foray to either of these golf gems, and there are excellent dining options at the resort. [The Atlantic Grille](#)’s menu has an emphasis on fresh seafood, stellar ocean views and a lively south Florida design. [Delfinos](#) specializes in rustic and regional Italian dishes done with a flair, served in an unpretentious manner.

The [Sushi Bar](#) is as simple as its name, located above Delfinos, and offering mouthwatering varieties of temaki, sashimi and chirashi. While in Palm Coast be sure to check out the [European Village](#), an open-air dining-and-retail space with numerous lively options and a welcoming ambience. Dining highlights include [Farley's Irish Pub](#) and the [Lisbon Cafe](#) for fine Mediterranean dining.