

Mississippi's Gulf Coast



Grab your National rental car at the Louis Armstrong Airport in New Orleans, and take the easy drive towards the Mississippi gulf coast. You'll be in the Magnolia State in little more than an hour, and able to indulge in the delta blues, barbecue, and down home hospitality. There are also some fine golf courses to be enjoyed, from Bay St. Louis to Biloxi, and points in between.



The Bridges Golf Course

The Bridges is a fine Arnold Palmer design located on the grounds of the Hollywood Casino in Bay St. Louis. The course takes its name from the more than twenty wooden bridges that dot the property, winding over wetlands and marsh. This is one of the prettiest courses in the region, albeit fraught with danger at every dogleg. It's set among six hundred acres of moss-draped live oaks, stately pines, magnolias and sweeping vistas of saltwater marsh. It isn't particularly lengthy, but there's plenty of trouble to be found in the wetlands, water and yawning bunkers. The Bridges is the first resort golf course in the world to obtain Audubon International's Certified Silver Signature status which displays one of Palmer's greatest design strengths of working in harmony with nature.



Grand Bear Golf Course

Speaking of nature, be sure to visit the [Grand Bear Golf Course](#), a remote joy located a full six miles off of the highway in the Desoto National Forest in the town of Saucier. While the aforementioned Bridges keeps you within a driver's distance of civilization, here the feeling is of rusticity and remove. There are natural cypress wetlands and towering pines, with packed pine needle rough, championship greens and deep bunkers set over six hundred and fifty acres of rolling land in piney woods. Though the Jack Nicklaus designed course is just fifteen years old, it looks like it's been sitting there for fifty, so naturally do the holes fall upon the landscape.



Windance Country Club

[Windance](#) is a tough little Mark McCumber design in Gulfport. The course, which debuted in 1986, is less than 6,700 yards from the tips,

but has at least incidental water on all but three holes. The architect has chosen to crown virtually every putting surface, so only a well-struck and accurate approach shot will hold the green. Balls that hit the green but are tailing, fading or hooking will bounce into either the collection areas, or the ever-present hazards. Owing to its status as a former Nike Tour stop, Windance has been conquered by some of the biggest names in professional golf, including Jim Furyk, Tom Lehman and Loren Roberts.



Fallen Oak Golf Course

Finally, a visit to [Fallen Oak](#), associated with the mega-glitzzy Beau Rivage casino, is a must. Hardwoods abound throughout, but the tree cover would have been thicker had Hurricane Katrina not leveled the landscape during latter stages of construction a decade ago, uprooting or knocking over a minimum of four thousand trees before crews lost count. Consequently, most any tee ball can be played and advanced, and though stymied lies are still possible, they are a rarity. While the original plan called for wall-to-wall hardwoods obscuring adjacent fairways, now golfers can catch a glimpse of other players on adjoining holes, not necessarily a bad thing. Fallen Oak is also the site of a popular Champions Tour event, with a roster of champions that includes Fred Couples, Jeff Maggert and Tom Lehman.

There are as many great dining spots in the area as there are blades of grass on a Fallen Oak fairway, so consider this list cursory at best. BR Prime, in the Beau Rivage, is a steakhouse that would hold its own in New York or Chicago. The Reef Biloxi features an excellent array of

seafood options. Finally, the Shed, with locations in both Ocean Springs and Gulfport, is synonymous with astonishingly good ribs. Their motto says it all: “Adam was willing to give up a rib to get a woman. Clearly, he didn’t try ours.”