

## Santee, SC

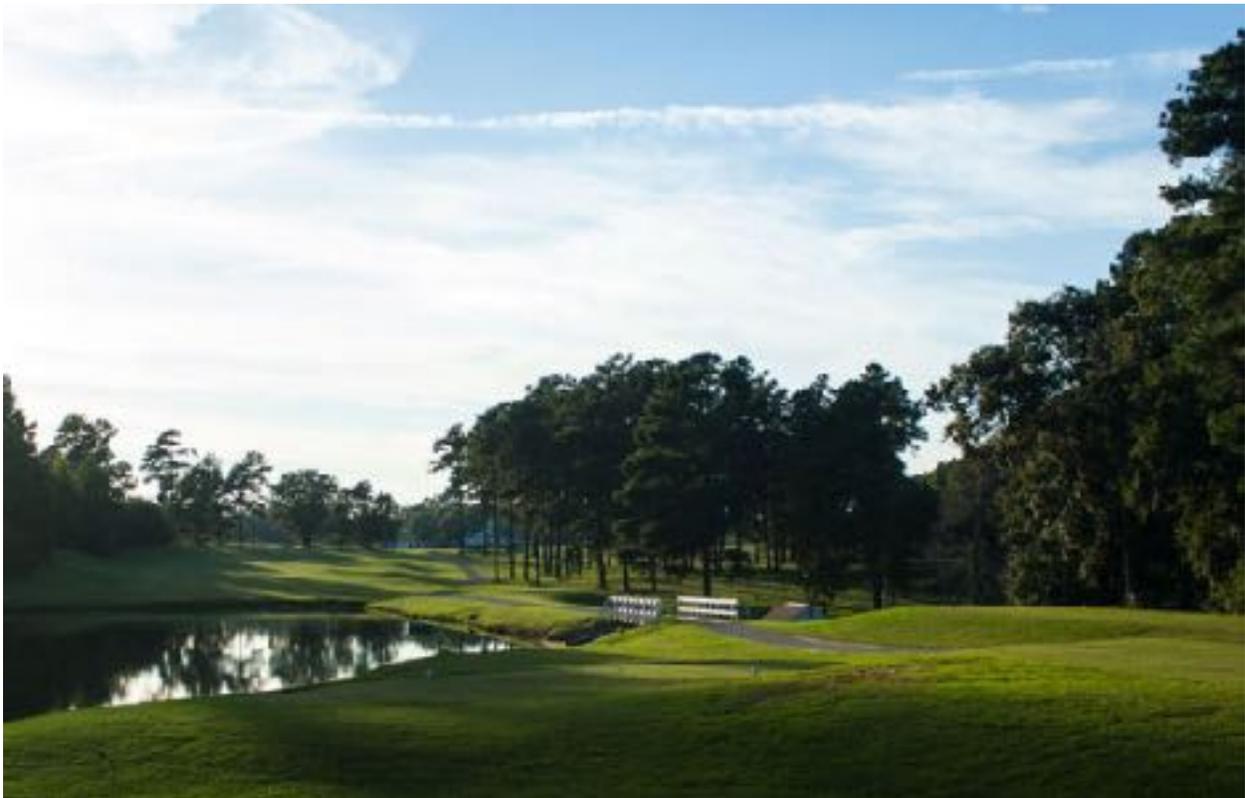


Some of the nation's most desirable golf destinations are well off the beaten path. Number one with a bullet is Bandon Dunes, on a remote stretch of the Oregon coast, with its quartet of superlative courses. But part of its allure and charm is its inaccessibility, nearly a five hour drive from the nearest major airport in Portland. One could add California's Monterey Peninsula to this list. Like Bandon, it's situated close to secondary roads and state highways, but the interstate is far afield. Here's the polar opposite: Tiny Santee, South Carolina, a wide spot in the road (with only about 800 residents, give or take) that is literally right on I-95, virtually midway between New York and Miami. Santee is not only little known around the nation, but even in the state of South Carolina it has moderate recognition compared to Hilton Head, Kiawah Island or Myrtle Beach.

While airport service isn't around the corner (about an hour from either the Charleston or Columbia airports, closer to two hours from the major hub of Charlotte, North Carolina) there are untold millions in the south, mid-Atlantic, or 'rust belt' who can make an early automobile departure from home, (perhaps in a quality car rented from National, to save mileage on one's own vehicle) and be in Santee before dark. Even Chicago is only a half day's drive.

The golf offerings are perfectly fine, and what's more, there are no traffic jams, long commutes between lodging, golf and restaurants, and no sticker shock in terms of pricing of any of the above. Santee is simple, no-frills, affordable, and a pleasant golf diversion. It may be off the radar, but it's greatest asset is that it's just off the highway.

Green fees are rarely over \$50 per round. The area gets loyal business from the Midwest and Canada as some groups return for ten or even fifteen years consecutively. It's a combination of the price point, the simplicity of the area and the caliber of courses. Local golf professionals estimate that at least 75% of the area's golf business comes via auto and not airline.



## Santee National

There are a dozen courses in the vicinity. **Santee National** is among the most popular, the outward nine fairly wide open and simplistic but the inward nine far better from a scenery and strategy standpoint, nestled nicely into the woods. The par-5 yardages look like popcorn on the scorecard—435, 451 and 454 from the middle markers. Only the par-5 18th checks in at a shade over 500 yards. But with sharp doglegs and bisecting water hazards complicating the landscape, most players will still need three shots to reach the putting surface.



Santee Cooper

**Santee Cooper** is another worthwhile venue, the oldest course in the area, dating from 1967, with an old-time country club feel. Lots of water, hairpin turn fairways and a series of staunch par-3s make it one of the area's upper-tier courses.



**Wyboo Country Club**, a Tom Jackson design, is the newest course in the area, dating from 1999. It's a bit off the beaten track, maybe twenty-odd minutes from Santee proper, accessed through rolling Carolina farm country north of town. However it is directly across the street from their friendly rival, the Players Course at Wyboo, so those who make the trek can have themselves a 36-hole day if so inclined. Wyboo CC looks and feels old school, a layout with no homes or condos around. There are minimal hazards so it's hard to lose a golf ball. The course prides itself on efficient drainage, which is always helpful in an area where long, hard rains are common. Dining options around Santee are also pretty straightforward, but a few good choices include Clark's Restaurant & Tavern for southern cuisine and aged steaks, and Sweatman's BBQ where whole hogs are roasted twelve to fourteen hours nightly.