



By Dave Weretka and Neal Kotlarek

Golf is Pinehurst. Pinehurst is Golf.

In 1895, Bostonian James Walker Tufts purchased 598 acres of land in the North Carolina sandhills for the tidy sum of \$1.25 per acre. The owner of the American Soda Fountain Company thought the property would make for a fine health club.

Today, 126 years later, Pinehurst Resort has become the ultimate remedy for golfers who travel to this expansive golf complex from across the world to play nine championship courses, highlighted by the No. 2 course which will host the men's U.S. Open in 2024, 2029, 2035, 2041, and 2047, the USGA's first anchor site for the tournament.

Known to many as "America's Home of Golf," the Pinehurst area (which most prominently includes Pinehurst Resort) is the perfect destination for a buddy trip. Given hundreds of holes of championship golf in an idyllic setting an hour's drive from Raleigh-Durham International Airport, groups heading here don't need to make elaborate

schedules complete with maps and timelines. Just create your wish list and confirm the tee times. Make sure to leave some time to eat and relax in between rounds.

The legacy of Pinehurst as a golf haven began with a search initiated by Tufts to hire his resort's first golf professional. When Donald Ross arrived in North Carolina, he had no experience in course architecture. No matter, Tufts entrusted the young Scotsman to use his background as an apprentice to Old Tom Morris to design the first four courses at Pinehurst Resort. Some 396 Ross designs later (40 in North Carolina, alone), golf architecture in America would never be the same.

The most fascinating aspect of Ross's relationship with Pinehurst Resort is that he continued to tinker with his courses throughout his life. The primary characteristics of a Ross work are crowned, rolling greens which invariably lead to vexing chip shots should the approach to a green fall

short or go long. Sometimes, a ball inches from perfection can veer back down away from the flagstick by 10 or even 20 yards. While some would call this cruel architecture, Sam Snead marveled at Ross's creativity as he felt it challenged golfers to be their best.

In 2011, the resort's classic No. 2 course underwent a dramatic transformation courtesy of Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore. While the fairways of the course maintained their original width, roughs were ripped out leaving behind irregular sandy ground dotted with wisps of wiregrass. Not very long ago, the course was 95 acres of manicured grass. It is today 50 acres of fairways and greens surrounded by 45 acres of dramatic lunar landscape. Most importantly, it is now as beautiful as it is fun.

Along with the four great Ross courses, Pinehurst Resort serves up five additional layouts designed by the likes of Jack Nicklaus, George and Tom Fazio, and Ellis

Maples. While each has a character distinct to its designer, all seemingly pay tribute to Ross.

Even if it seems improbable that a nine-course complex needs more golf, the resort expanded once again in 2017 with the fantastically enjoyable Gil Hanse-designed The Cradle short course. Called by The Golf Channel "the most fun 10 acres in all of golf," the course features 75,000 square feet of greens, seven acres of fairways, three sandscapes and zero acres of rough.

Just how fun is The Cradle? During our visit, we watched in delight as sixsomes of barefoot golfers carried beverages from hole to hole listening to music piped in around the course as they launched balls toward the greens. On one hole, we even saw a couple steer a stroller from tee to green as they presumably taught their future hall-of-famer the art of the game. And on yet another hole, we witnessed a hole-in-one which was cheered on by spectators sitting around



Cradle Aerial



No. 2 13th Hole



No. 4 2nd Hole



No. 2



Tobacco Road



Rees' Fingers No. 7



No. 8 11th Hole



No. 4 16th Hole

the course in Adirondack chairs. What a blast! While The Cradle may not offer the challenges of the No. 2 course, it is a great way to start and end your golf junket.

One of the most interesting insights we gleaned from our trip to Pinehurst was how many golfing families are influenced to make the trip. Indeed, over each of four rounds we played at the resort we were paired with father/son and husband/wife duos who wanted to share their bucket list trip with a loved one. In our 20+ years of taking golf trips, we never encountered such a delightful cross-section of fellow travelers.

Accommodations at Pinehurst Resort include villas for larger groups, the recently renovated Manor Inn (Arnold Palmer's preferred stop when he visited, the inn has dual hospitality suites that can fit groups as large as 20), as well as rooms at the four-diamond rated Carolina Hotel which is known by regulars as the "Queen of the South."

There are no less than 10 dining and breakfast options at the resort. Our personal favorite is the Pinehurst Brewing Company which pairs smokehouse-cooked meats with a

wide array of microbrews and spirits made exclusively by North Carolina distillers. Do yourself a favor and try their homemade Blackberry Habanero sauce. A little sweet and a little heat. You can thank us later.

While golf is undoubtedly the primary focus at the resort, a wide array of entertainment options and amenities abound for non-golfers. The Spa at Pinehurst serves up all types of treatments and therapies, and features a serene saline lap pool. Other activities include: carriage rides, lake sports, a fitness center, swimming pools, lawn sports, and even a BMW guest drive experience. For those who can't get enough golf, Thistle Dhu is an 18-hole putting course available free-of-charge to hotel guests. One amenity is an absolute must: a walk through the clubhouse to enjoy classic photos which capture the property's rich legacy.

Beyond Pinehurst Resort, the Pinehurst area is blessed with an array of other celebrated golf courses, including those designed by Dan Maples, Arnold Palmer and, of course, Donald Ross.

Located just minutes from the Village of Pinehurst, Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club offers one of the top golf

courses in the state designed by Ross in 1927 (and lovingly restored by Kyle Franz in 2017) and is set to host the 77th U.S. Women's Open in 2022. Along with this outstanding course, The Loop is a fun four-hole short course featuring three par 3s and a short par 4.

Mid Pines Inn and Golf Club and Southern Pines Golf Club are sister properties of Pine Needles and also serve up great courses designed by Ross. Mid Pines is celebrated as a "pure" Ross design as it was restored in 2013 to the exacting specifications of its original footprint. Over the years, the course has hosted many national tournaments, including the 2002 USGA Senior Women's Amateur Championship. The inn is a stately hotel built in 1921 and incorporates suites and multiple dining rooms. Opened for play in 1906, the 6,500-yard Southern Pines course is among Ross's earliest creations.

Tobacco Road Golf Club was literally built on land once tended to as a tobacco farm. The expansive golf course moves through multiple landscapes including a former mine and sand quarry.

Talamore Golf Resort is an all-around amazing golf experience. The Rees Jones-designed The New Course at Talamore underwent a remastering plan for its 25th anniversary which brought back original green concepts along with enhanced playability and pace of play. The New Course tops out at 6,840 yards, par 71.

Within the Talamore Resort is Mid South Club, a private golf retreat designed by "The King" himself, Arnold Palmer. 545-acres of longleaf pine forests, lakes, and gently rolling hillsides, this Carolina experience is as challenging as it is beautiful. Inching just over 7,000 yards, Mid South lets it be known that you must drive the ball 225 yards or more from the back tees in order to hit fairways.

As far as lodging goes, the Talamore Villas along with the Lodges at Mid South are both first class accommodations that are capable of handling any group size.

The Pinehurst golf area is a must-play for every golfer's itinerary. For more information about the area, visit the convention bureau's website: www.homeofgolf.com.

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