



Boardwalk Empire Strikes Back

Atlantic City overcomes economic and natural disasters and rolls the dice on its future by highlighting golf and grub



By Adam Stanley
TravelLife Contributor

ATLANTIC CITY — New Jersey's favourite son Bruce Springsteen once growled: *"Everything dies, now that's a fact, but maybe everything that dies, some day comes back."* It seems that despite going through some tough times (a weak economy, competition from other gambling meccas, Hurricane Sandy) Atlantic City — the town for which Springsteen's song is named — is indeed showing signs of a comeback.

Perhaps leveraging some of the success of the HBO show *Boardwalk Empire*, the state, in 2011, implemented a five-year plan and injected \$20 million (U.S.) into a new tourism campaign for Atlantic City.

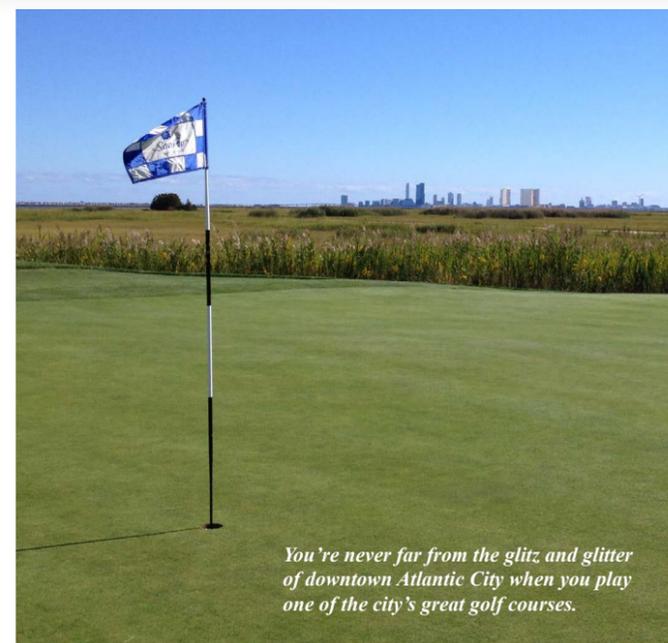
But the focus has become less on bright lights and the city's

historic boardwalk (which was completely rebuilt after being washed away by Hurricane Sandy), and more on birdies and bistros — that is, golf and fine dining.

There are 19 golf courses within a one-hour drive of downtown Atlantic City. I squeezed in six rounds during a five-day visit. The shoulder seasons — late September or early May — are great times to visit because the weather remains fairly temperate. One course owner even said his facility stays open all year.

Here are some of the highlights of my Atlantic City golf tour:

Atlantic City Country Club: Iconic. Beautiful. Memorable. The Atlantic City Country Club is just 15 minutes from downtown. It opened in 1897 and is known as the birthplace of the golfing term "birdie." It has hosted many pro and amateur events and celebrities such as Bob Hope, Arnold Palmer, Willie Mays and Julius Erving have walked its fairways. The layout offers views



You're never far from the glitz and glitter of downtown Atlantic City when you play one of the city's great golf courses.

of downtown Atlantic City and presents a windswept terrain that will challenge all comers. The men's locker room is a step back in time with its leather-bound couches and benches marked from the metal spikes of past visitors.

Shore Gate Golf Club: A Carolina-inspired course that was once named one of America's best new courses by both *Golf Digest* and *Golf Magazine*, Shore Gate is just 30 minutes from downtown, nestled among 245 acres of pristine forest. Trees and large bunkers force golfers to play smart. Because of its southern shore location, it stays open all year round. It's a unique combination of parkland and links-style golf. The hardest hole is the par-5 9th which measures a beastly 648 yards from the back tees and features a large pond that runs up the entire left side of the hole.

Twisted Dune Golf Club: With a layout reminiscent of a desert or prairie golf course, Twisted Dune claims to be "Scottish golf, Jer-



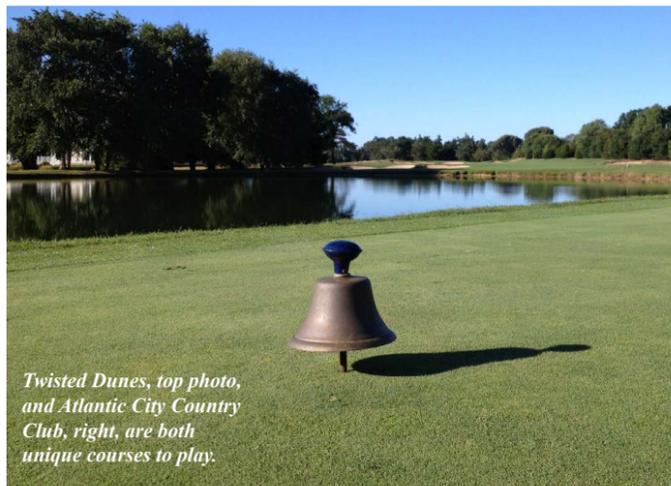
sey style.” You feel like you’re alone on the golf course, even if it’s a busy day, because of the way the dunes conceal neighbouring holes. It’s rated one of the top three courses in New Jersey, and is only 20 minutes from downtown. It’s another links-style course with twisting landscapes — true to its name — dramatic elevations and contoured fairways. Just make sure you’re accurate, because the course also features more than 100 bunkers.

I also played the picturesque Seaview Golf Club (host of an LPGA event), the immaculate Blue Heron Pines (owned by former NFL star Ron Jaworski), and the very fun McCullough’s Emerald Golf Links.

With all that golf, I was happy to fuel up at some of Atlantic City’s fine dining options, such as Chickie’s and Pete’s in the Tropicana Hotel, which caters to golfers and sports fans with hundreds of televisions. I highly recommend the “Crabby Ale.”

If you feel like an authentic Italian meal in the state where TV mob boss Tony Soprano once ruled, then check out Carmine’s. The food is fresh, homemade and served “family style,” and the portions were gigantic.

There are also plenty of steakhouses, like the high-class Old Homestead, or legendary family eateries like the Oyster Creek Inn Restaurant & Boat Bar.



Twisted Dunes, top photo, and Atlantic City Country Club, right, are both unique courses to play.

After golf and dining, the revitalized Boardwalk remains a friendly enough place where you can enjoy the entertainment or just listen to the waves come ashore.

It’s nice to see Atlantic City is back, and that’s a fact. •



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