

Atlantic City Golf Hits the Jackpot

Most of the news that we hear about Atlantic City recently has been about the closing of a few casinos, and the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy. The better news should be what excellent golf there is at the 18 courses within 30 miles of downtown A.C.

We had the pleasure of playing four courses in the Atlantic City area last October and the results were "Triple Sevens"! Not that you want to have three sevens on your scorecard, especially three in a row.

Maybe the good thing is that visitors will have more time to spend on the wonderful golf courses and fine restaurants instead of the few closed casinos. Can't beat the pretty views, the fragrant ocean air or the sumptuous meals.

The ride from Providence is just less than 300 miles and takes between five and six hours. We did not play golf the first day, but it is certainly possible. Instead, we opted to dine at The Original Irish Pub on the Boardwalk with our host Mike Charlton. Charlton is a true character and very knowledgeable about Atlantic City and the golf in the area. He is a former lounge singer at the casinos and founded GolfAC.com in 1999. The Irish Pub is the former hangout for Joe DiMaggio. They have rooms upstairs and Joltin Joe was a frequent guest. Great food and amazingly low prices make this a must stop during your visit.

We stayed at the Resorts Casino Hotel right on the boardwalk. The rooms were fine, and the sunrise over the Atlantic Ocean was a wonderful wakeup call. It was a given that I would walk down to the ocean like Nocky Thompson always did to start Boardwalk Empire. My shoes did not squish, however.

What better course to start with than **Atlantic City Country Club**? Opened 118 years ago and designed by William Flynn, the venerable layout has always been the Belle of the Ball for Atlantic City. In fact their logo is a bell. Seems the bell would ring when the last streetcar was heading back across the causeway to the downtown area. Many a golfer missed the streetcar and had to wait until the next day to get back home.

The term "Birdie" was coined there in 1903, and the clubhouse is full of memorabilia. ACCC has hosted six USGA championships and also a Champions Tour event in 1980. The course is an excellent layout with many tough holes. It is the only course I have ever played that has the first tee at the end of the huge putting green. The day we played we were followed by a couple of small red fox that were looking for, and found, a handout.

To continue our tour of fine restaurants we had dinner that evening at Tun Tavern Restaurant & Brewery located next to the convention center. Huge vats were the backdrop for fine food and excellent libations and desserts.

The next day we traveled just across the

causeway to Galloway, N.J. to visit the **Stockton Seaview Hotel and Golf Club**. Opened in 1914 and designed by Donald Ross and Hugh Wilson, there are two 18-hole championship courses on the property. We played the Bay Course that sits right up against the bay with great views of the Atlantic City skyline.

The tall fescue grass, tough bunkering and pretty water views make this an unforgettable experience. Even though it measures only 6,366 from the back tees, you will have an excellent test of golf, as the greens are small and undulating.

That evening we dined at Gallagher's Steak House at our hotel. The steaks were as good as we've had anywhere, and the sides and desserts made it even better. We were wondering how we would ever have the energy for golf in the morning after this feast. A brisk walk along the boardwalk in the morning definitely helped. Bicycles are allowed on the boardwalk from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and we saw plenty of bikes along with joggers and walkers.

Our next stop was **Shore Gate Golf Club** in Ocean View. Carved from 245 acres of pristine forest (not sure they cut down enough trees!), this was a true test of golf. Not often that you see 40-yard bunkers in front of greens, but Shore Gate has them. The first hole gives you an idea of how tough the course will be as you hit out of a chute to an undulating fairway, and then your second shot is to a very sloping green completely surrounded with bunkers.

Get by that hole and then you are faced with a carry across a pond with your drive. The more you cut off, the shorter the second shot to a huge elevated green sloping back to front. The third hole again requires you to keep the ball right to avoid the aforementioned pond, but it is a dogleg left to an elevated green.

It does get easier, but it might be the toughest start this golfer has faced in a long time. When it opened in 2002 this parkland and links-style course won a Natural Resource Conservation award and a Beautification award and was named by *Golf Magazine* as one of the "Top Ten New Courses You Can Play" in 2003. Unless you are pretty close to scratch, the middle tees at 6,175 make the best choice of tee to play.

That evening we had dinner at Chickie's and Pete's at the Tropicana. Good pub food and excellent crabs and seafood were the choices of most. It is a good place to watch a game on their many huge television screens.

Our last round was at **Greate Bay Country Club** in Somers Point. This is a private course designed by the legendary Willie Park, Jr. in 1923. Tom and George Fazio did a redesign in 1972. Greate Bay hosted the LPGA ShopRite Classic from 1988 to 1997.

It is an old-time course with greens and tees right next to each other. Tall oaks are used to divide many of the fairways. The greens are small and most have an open approach to the greens. The 12th hole might be the most difficult as it doglegs left with the second shot over a pond at this par 4.

Our last dinner was an experience. We went to Angelo's Fairmont Tavern, and we could have been at any number of fine Italian restaurants on Federal Hill in Providence. The restaurant is a favorite of Yogi Berra and Frank Sinatra was a regular customer when he was singing in Atlantic City. There are many framed pictures of Sinatra throughout the restaurant and even in the men's room. We all got different Italian dishes and shared them.



2nd hole at Seaview

we played, as each had special qualities that will long be remembered.

You will not be disappointed with a golf trip to Atlantic City. Fine and varied golf at many old and legendary courses, as well as new and exciting courses give this destination top marks for quality and fair pricing. The food is fine also. And yes, there still are eight huge casinos open for business that goes on 24 hours a day.

You can book a golf getaway to Atlantic City by going to www.PlayACGolf.com.

Atlantic City was quite a trip. There were eight of us, and when we had to choose our favorite course, each of the four courses received two votes. Amazing! That is a tribute to all the courses that

...a tee-box with a view.

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