

## The Outer Banks ~ First Flight

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I'm actually a bit embarrassed to say that this past fall was my first venture to an East Coast destination well known for a laid back lifestyle and a three letter moniker that has become synonymous for the area. My many friends who make an annual pilgrimage to the Outer Banks of North Carolina get all gooey when they talk about it. At the top of their lists of reasons for traveling there is always the fact that the Outer Banks, henceforth OBX, remains an ideal place to really kick back, soak in the sun and just chill. Compared to other seaside destinations, this thin strip of sandy coast has remained consistent and is not overwhelmed with progressive growth. Sure, the region has seen its fair share of development but most of that has been on the residential end. You won't see an glut of hotels here and a majority of the restaurants are locally owned institutions. Little did I know that my initial excursion to the OBX would not only be for a bit of relaxation but for some quality golf.

The golf selections are concentrated at the north end of Currituck County. This convenient feature makes going to and from courses easier for the vacationing golfer. It never seemed like a far drive between any of the facilities that we played. I was joined by five other golf writers for this tour which always provides considerable debate when deciding which course we like the best. Compared to other journalists, I tend to lean toward the notion that there is always something good about EVERY golf course. The buffet of courses that the OBX features all have one common trait. Defined by the forces of nature, the OBX is a golf destination like no other. The chief challenge that you'll face is the wind. This area is the same one that Wilbur and Orville chose to make aviation history because of the uniform winds that blow here. The Wright Brothers National

Memorial at Kitty Hawk recounts and dramatizes those first flight events. Accordingly, you will have to adjust your game to the unwavering wind and the sea-level elevation.

Three courses actually call the barrier island home, and the breezes and gusts will constantly test your game here. The granddaddy of Outer Banks



golf is Sea Scape Golf Links in Kitty Hawk. Designed by former Masters champion and hole-in-one legend Art Wall, Sea Scape opened in 1965 and is a delightful Scottish links-style course with surprising elevation changes due to the many sand dunes and bluffs you will play over. Measuring just over 6100 yards from the tips, the par 70 plays longer with its GPS



location just a block from the ocean. The Scottish flair continues at Nags Head Golf Links, a Bob Moore design from 1998 that is highlighted by several holes right on the Albemarle Sound. Nags Head is another course that is somewhat shorter than today's golf standard but will meddle with every player's game as constant coastal winds and 12 holes with water come into play. Built through hundreds of beach homes, the ample fairways provide plenty of breathing room. The par 3 fifteenth will literally blow you away, with its window seat location along the water. The last course that calls this island home is The Currituck Club located just up the main drag (Highway 12) in Corolla. The U.S. Open doctor, Rees Jones, carved out a real beauty at Currituck. Immaculate conditions are one of the main reasons this layout has secured multiple awards. No less than seven holes play along the Currituck Sound, including the usual suspects of sand dunes, wetlands, and maritime forests adding to this exhilarating course.

We navigated inland, west over the bridge where three more courses complement the OBX golf landscape. You'll still find natural aspects here similar to those found along the shore but just not as extreme. Locals will tell you that The Pointe Golf Club may have the most player-friendly layout. Architect Russell Breeden's easy flowing design glides along superb Bermuda fairways and terrific A-1 bentgrass greens. The Pointe,



like a majority of the courses, fits quite well into the category of resort courses. Each course in the OBX area has comfortably positioned tee boxes for all skill levels, especially cognizant of seniors and ladies. Breeden and Moore teamed up in 1998 to create The Carolina Club,



Pointe



Carolina

noted as the longest course of the lot and signatored by a par-3 island green. The Carolina tips at 7000 yards from the championship tees and has just the right mixture of hazards to challenge you without beating you up. I like that in a resort course! The last thing I want

to do on a golf vacation is lose a ton of golf balls. Exquisite would be my one word description of Kilmarlic Golf Club, consistently lauded as one of the top courses in the entire state of North Carolina. Situated on a massive 605 acre site with 15 acres of coastal ponds and lakes, Kilmarlic mixes towering hardwoods and wetlands to create a scenic golf adventure. Architect Tom Steele uses five par 5's and five par 3's to provide loads of scoring opportunities. Since its 2002 opening, Kilmarlic has added an on-site golf cottage that sleeps up to eight. This roomy bungalow is dead solid perfect for a buddies' golf trip.



Kilmarlic



The Outer Banks has 130 miles of the wildest, most natural, undeveloped beaches in the country. Sure, you can relax there, watch some unbelievable sunsets, and dine at some local seafood houses. But, you can't forget the sticks. OBX is a terrific seaside golf destination. The wind and water await your beach golf adventure. 🏌️

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