The white sand of Myrtle Beach stretches for 60 miles

Myrtle Beach; an introduction to South Carolina’s premiere holiday destination

The first in a series of articles about beaches, golf, theatre and dining out

By Mike Cohen

MYRTLE BEACH – Over the next several months I will present a series of columns on Myrtle Beach (www.visitMyrtleBeach.com), dubbed “the jewel of South Carolina.” Having just returned from a fabulous week in this vacation paradise my only complaint is that seven days was barely enough time to soak in everything this place has to offer.

What follows is a brief introduction, with much more comprehensive details to come in my series. Myrtle Beach is home to world-class golf, 60 miles of sandy beaches, exciting entertainment, family attractions and Southern hospitality. The area welcomes more than 16 million visitors a year.

All 149 rooms are one, two of three bedroom condo style suites overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

There is free parking. The resort’s swimming complex features a magnificent indoor and outdoor pool area with a wide range of water amenities. There is a fitness and health centre and a gourmet restaurant called The Cypress Room. For more information call 1-800-548-0767.

Dining Out: In addition to the Cypress Room, check out Thoroughbreds Chophouse (http://thoroughbredsrestaurant.com) at 9706 N. Kings Hwy and the Aspen Grille (www.Aspen-grille.com). Since opening in 1988, Thoroughbreds has become widely known as one of the locals’ favorite fine dining restaurants after being recognized year-after-year in the categories of most romantic and best fine-dining by the locals. General Manager David Amend and his staff pride themselves in serving only the finest beef and ultra-fresh seafood. For reservations call 1-843-497-2636.

The Aspen Grille, located at 5101 North Kings Highway and owned by Chef Curry Martin, is another must stop on the dining circuit. This is a place where music and conversation fill the air. Aspen Grille is the perfect place for a quiet night out for two or a lively group event. Dishes here are based on traditional Southern cuisine, with Chef Martin’s own personal twist. The menu changes seasonally and offers simple, but flavorful dishes with ingredients sourced from the best local suppliers. You can pair any dish with a wine from a hand-selected list to create an exceptional meal. Appetizer options include escargot, fried North Carolina oysters, local shrimp risotto, sautéed. Call 1-843-449-9191 for reservations or email info@aspen-grille.com.

Golf: The Myrtle Beach area boasts more than 100 championship golf courses and 30 miniature golf courses, making it a premiere destination for golf enthusiasts and aficionados. There are approximately 3.4 million rounds of golf played annually in the Myrtle Beach area. Check out Hawaiian Rumble, where they host the Masters Tournament of mini golf every October.

A Safari Experience: T.I.G.E.R.S. (stands for the Institute of Greatly Endangered and Rare Species) and this once in a lifetime experience (www.myrtlebeachsafari.com) and www.tigerfriends.com/RSF.html) was a major highlight from our trip. The owner Doctor Bhagavan Antle started out training animals for movies and TV and they wanted a place where many went to essentially retire. They now offer a guided safari like experience through a 50 acre preserve where there are tigers, wolves, leopards, chimpanzees, orangutans and other endangered species. Info: Email tigersmbsafari@yahoo.com.

Helicopter Rides: There is nothing like a helicopter ride to truly see all of what Myrtle Beach has to offer. Ocean Front Helicopters (http://oceanfronthelicopters.com) provides some of the best deals and we can personally vouch for an amazing experience. Formerly known as Huffman Helicopters, every one of their tours take you along the coast for gorgeous
Enjoy the spectacular views from The Sky Wheel

views of beautiful, sunny beaches. They have over 40 years of experience in the aviation industry, having maintained a perfect safety record from day one. Our pilot Nick told us that on some days they take as many as 400 trips. For more information call 1-843-946-0022.

Alabama Theatre: For my family, no holiday is complete without a live show and that is exactly what we got at the Alabama Theatre (www.alabama-theatre.com). There is good reason why this is recognized as the number one entertainment venue in the area. Located at 4750 Highway 17 South next to popular Barefoot Landing, the theatre currently features ONE - The Show six nights a week through the end of October and a prominent guest artist once a week. A big Christmas show will grace the stage in November and December.

Besides an incredible mix of musical performances, there is also hilarious stand up comic Ricky Mokel and ventriloquist Todd Oliver with his talking dog Irving. Info: 1-800-342-2262 or online.

Other Attractions: Check out the SkyWheel (www.skywheel.com) for what promises to be a very enjoyable eight to 10 minute flight and viewing of Myrtle Beach, then check out the 1.2 mile-long Oceanfront Boardwalk and Promenade. Located at 300 Ocean Boulevard in the heart of Myrtle Beach, Family Kingdom (http://www.family kingdomfun.com/?r=familykingdom) is an amusement and water park.

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Myrtle Beach is a fine couples destination

TRAVEL PLANNER

My recommendation is to avoid the 16 hour drive and fly directly via Plattsburgh International Airport (www.flyplattsburgh.com) on ultra-low cost Spirit Airlines (www.spirit.com). We left a day early and checked in at the Comfort Inn (www.plattsburghcomfortinn.com), spent a few hours at the Champlain Mall and enjoyed a nice dinner at the Butcher Block Restaurant (www.butcherblockrestaurant.com). It was the right decision for we did not have to worry about being held up at customs and got to sleep in a little before our 2 p.m. flight. We landed at 1 p.m. on the return home and following a stop for groceries we were home for supper.

I look forward to elaborating on each of these topics so stay tuned!

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