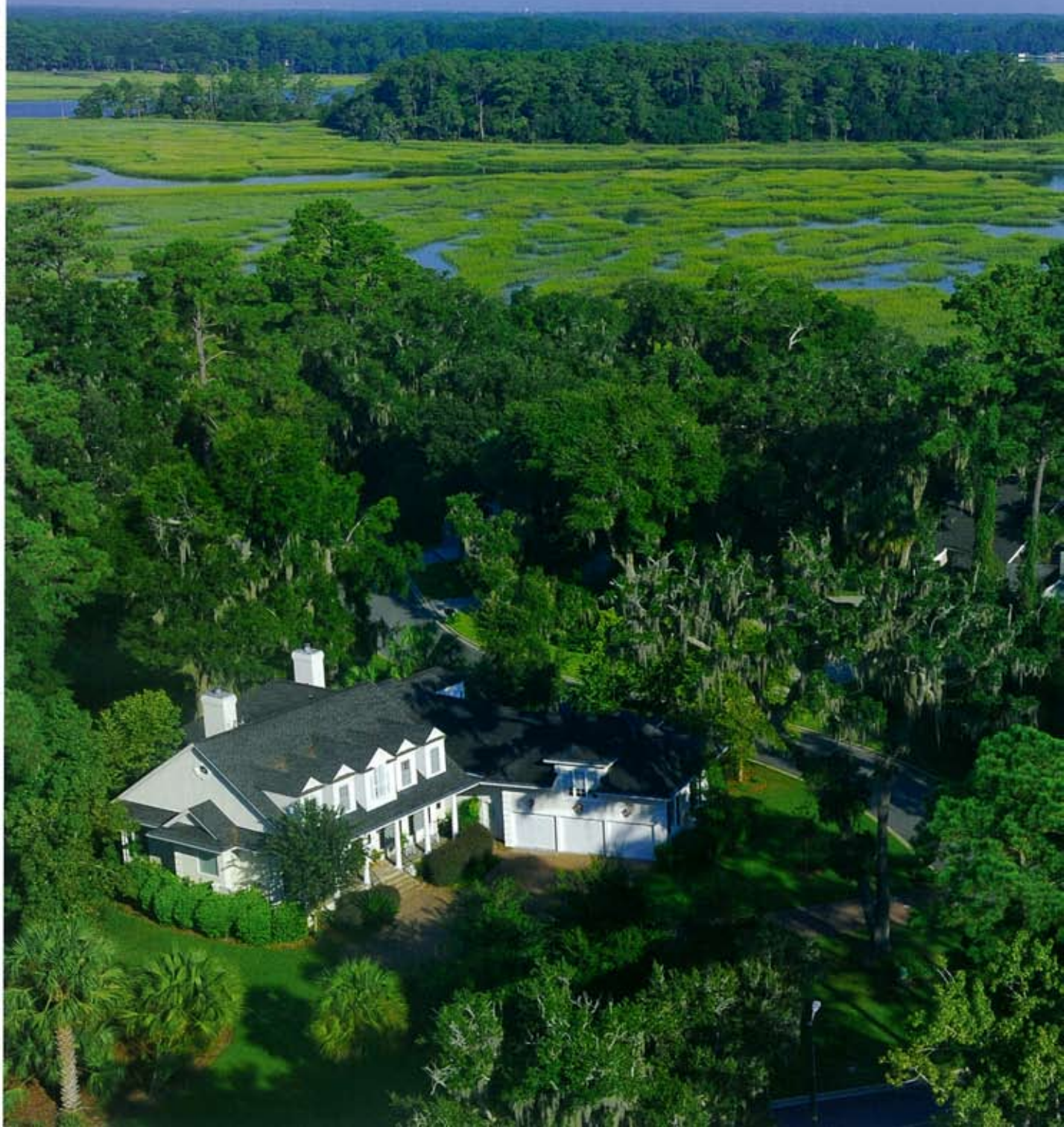


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LINKS *living*

A UNIQUE COLLECTION OF PRIVATE
GOLF COMMUNITIES AND
MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES







Bald Head Island Club

There are no cars or crowds at this pristine barrier island off the North Carolina coast, just great golf on a newly renovated course, miles of sugary beaches and a wealth of amenities

Located at the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean, Intracoastal Waterway and the Cape Fear River two miles off North Carolina's southeast coast, Bald Head Island

was a strategic military outpost in both the Revolutionary and Civil wars. It also contains the state's oldest lighthouse, "Old Baldy," which dates to 1817 and was commissioned by Thomas Jefferson. Although the lighthouse is no longer operational and the only battle strategy these days is found on the sporting greens, Bald Head remains a key destination for anyone looking for a relaxing but fun lifestyle in a beautifully natural setting.

At the center of it all is Bald Head Island Club, which offers tennis, croquet, a beach club and pool, as well as four restaurants in the Shingle-Style clubhouse, which recently underwent a \$7 million renovation. The heart of the club, however, is the just-restored golf course by Tim Cate, who breathed new

life into the tired layout, making it much more natural looking and challenging. The course is so aesthetically and strategically pleasing now that, other than the routing, it's almost a completely different course. In addition to new Miniverde greens, new bunkers and a

ABOVE: A par at the 208-yard 13th is well earned.

BELOW: In addition to the course, the clubhouse was also renovated not too long ago.

OPPOSITE: The 356-yard 1st exemplifies the beautiful bunkering found on the rest of the holes.





ABOVE: Civil War-era skeletons were found underneath the green of the 511-yard 7th.

RIGHT: Before the 430-yard 9th was redone, balls used to kick into the lakes that border the hole.



new irrigation system, Cate transformed 35 acres of rough into sandy areas with native grasses.

"If it looks like the rest of the island now, well, that was the plan," says General Manager Robert Norton, citing features like the new dunes planted with sea oats behind some of the greens. "It's an extension of what you see on the beach."

Originally designed by George Cobb, who's best known for creating Augusta National's Par 3 course with Bobby Jones and Clifford Roberts, the 6,823-yard course opened in 1974. The years and rounds had taken their toll, so the club brought in Cate in 2010 to complete a \$4 million renovation that is one of the most remarkable makeovers you've ever seen. Before,

it played and looked like a bland parkland course; now, it's more reminiscent of another great Carolina course, Pinehurst No. 2, minus the pushed-up greens.

"We just wanted to bring the golf course in balance with the beauty of the island," says Cate, who lives in North Carolina. "We wanted to naturalize the look of the holes and install new greens, which were really needed."

Members couldn't be happier with the changes. Not only is it a much better test, but the new elevated tees give players much better sightlines of the landing areas, hazards and ocean.

"I never tire of playing it," says Win Stevens. "I just love the greens and the green complexes. The bunkers are so much more interesting and challenging. It's also much more visually appealing and much more fair."

Previously, there were seven blind water shots, along with crowned fairways that kicked the ball into the hazards, so Cate widened and recontoured the landing areas on 10 holes and reshaped 12 lagoons.

The club has also opened up the course by clearing away a lot of the ball-gobbling brush that lined the holes routed through the maritime forest. "The course just has so much more beauty and character," says Head Professional Justin Van Heukelom. "The green speeds are a lot more consistent and there's just a lot more shot variety. The members are really proud of it and see the value in the money spent."

Nature abounds on the 5.8-square-mile refuge, which is the northernmost semitropical island on the East Coast and the farthest north where sabal palms grow naturally. Real-estate options set along the beach, golf course, tidal creek, forest or harbor, are also plentiful. One thing there aren't a lot of is cars, which you leave behind at

the ferry in Southport, along with your cares. Transportation is limited to golf carts, bikes and walking.

"You really escape and go back in time here," says Norton. "People are on 'turtle time.' You can't be in too much of a hurry. The speed limit's 18." ■

Bald Head Island Club

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PAR: 72 YARDAGE: 6,823
YEAR FOUNDED: 1974
ARCHITECTS:
George Cobb, Tim Cate

BELOW: Dunes, like those behind the 187-yard 16th, now make the course look like the rest of the island.

