

**Sea Island Golf Club-Seaside Course
St. Simons Island, Georgia**

Designer: Harry Colt/Charles Alison (1928), Joe Lee (1973), Tom Fazio (1999)

Tees	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Blue	70	6657	72.6	139
Green	70	6323	71.1	135
White	70	5980	69.4	132
Gold (W)	70	4978	69.1	123

Overview:

Golf development at Sea Island has a long history, it began in 1926 when Howard Coffin bought Sea Island and the Kings Retreat Plantation with the thought of creating a vacation retreat for the wealthy. The sight of one of the regular tour stops in the wraparound season, pros with strong resumes like Zach Johnson, DL III, and Kooch have taken up residence at Sea Island because of the idyllic setting and the family friendly atmosphere.

The original Seaside Course was the combined work of the front nine by Walter Travis, a reputed champion of the day, and back nine by Harry Colt and Charles Alison one of the most accomplished designing duos of the Golden Age. Colt and Alison collaborative work included contributions at Pine Valley, Sunningdale, Muirfield, and Royal Portrush among others. The back nine they created still stands as the centerpiece of the Sea Island Golf Club. In 1999 Tom Fazio was brought in to update the course and he combined the Colt/Alison nine with holes from the Marshside course created by Joe Lee in 1973 to assemble the Seaside Course we play today.

Despite it's name the sea does not really come into play but the course does present a unique test of trajectory control and shot shape. Though not playing through tree lined corridors the challenge is similar to what you get at the Harbour Town Links in Hilton Head, influenced by the marshy surrounds and the ever present wind. The outward nine stretches out in a counterclockwise direction around the marsh and the inward nine takes the opposite path around marsh and sandy scrub. The holes cover all four directions on the compass so you are going to negotiate the wind in every conceivable direction through the day. The low hilly terrain combined with sweeping bunkers and sprawling tightly mowed green surrounds gives you a sense that successful play is often negotiated close to the ground.

The front nine starts simply enough with plenty of elbow room but step on to the tee at the second and the scale of the day's challenge becomes readily apparent. Marsh grass left and water up the right all the way make drive position tactical to try to challenge a tricky cape style green complex set the water to the right. What follows is the first of the four stunning three pars you will encounter through the day. Pay close attention to the pin of the day relative to the lone bunker in front-it is important to be below the hole on your second shot on all the par threes.

The dogleg left par four fourth is a look you will see repeated all day-tight fairway and approach areas flanked by the marsh and sand with an endless horizon beyond the green-it can be very intimidating to your scorecard if you do not stay focused on the preferred lines of play. With the reverse setup up on equally technical fifth it is apparent that moving the ball both ways is a requirement if you are to position yourself favorably off the tees and into these challenging green complexes. Maybe the best scoring opportunity of the round is from five through nine but that does not mean these holes are easy-danger lurks wherever you see marsh grass or the glint of water.

After a banana and a power drink at the halfway house the true challenge begins on the inward half. The tenth appears simple enough to the eye but there is no room for wayward dispersion in either direction off the tee. The green is stepped and possibly obscured from your approach line so make sure you have enough club in hand to get to the correct tier. After a difficult par four in the same direction a long par three turns back 180 degrees playing into a undulating putting surface with little frame of reference. Beware of the false front left and it's proximity to the marsh-a timid approach with too much draw can get sucked back into the hazard.

From here to the house the course presents one unique challenge after the other. The thirteenth is the #2 handicap hole with marsh left, sand right and another endless look to a green set against the horizon. My favorite hole of the day is next as you stand on the tee trying to discern a fairway landing area hovering against the horizon. You have to hang something no longer than 250 yards between the aiming post and the right corner of the fairway and trust it will feed forward to the left end of the fairway inside of 150 yards. The shot into the green sitting perched up on the hill surrounded by marsh left and behind and terrarium on the right is the Harbour Town challenge without the tall trees.

Two good scoring opportunities on the hopscotch technical holes at fifteen and sixteen where you either stay within the chalked boxes or you get to start over with two shots rung on the register. This brings you to a very underrated and difficult finish. The par three seventeenth can be as short as 150 yards but the diagonal set of this very long and shallow green behind two gaping bunkers makes it likely that you will be pitching back toward the hole trying to save your par.

The finishing hole is an intimidating sight requiring a long and straight tee shot into a narrowing landing area between bunkers to set up a long approach into a very tight green complex. If you are out of position off this tee a lay up to 85 yards right of the hazard is the intelligent option. Even with a short club in your hand from there getting it below the hole on the steeply ramped pinched putting surface is a major challenge. A couple of dropped shots on these last two is more the norm than the exception.

There is something classic about the way you have to work yourself around this course as well as the entire presentation of the facility. From the eclectic décor of the Lodge Hotel that houses the golf shop and the fine eating facilities right down to the signature wicker basket flag sticks that just seem right bobbing in the sea breezes, take the time to soak in the full golf experience when you are here. Sea Island is a first class golf resort with a first class track in the Seaside Course.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis (Green/White)

#1 Par 4 392/376 yards

The day starts with a tame dogear left where the best drive should be inside corner of dog leg just left of aiming post off the two sprawling fairway bunkers.. The green is nestled in front of the marsh slightly raised with big bunker front left. Missing side is short right which would leave a pitch and a putt for an opening par.

#2 Par 4 388/353

First marsh hole...that did not take long. Drive across pretty marsh grass to center off the bunker on left. The playing line turns right and you face a carry into cape green stuck into the water on the right. The shot in sets up for a draw working off the water up a long green with a manicured surround. They were thoughtful enough to provide a buffering bunker between the green and the water short right. If you are out of position off the tee-code word for in the rough-laying up to 60 yards is a credible option. Honestly it is too early in the round to take on great risk so act accordingly.

#3 Par 3 190/175

The three pars are all beautiful and this first one sets the theme. It is a carry across furry sand wasteland to a green that tilts 11 to 5 with one bunker to the left creating a feeling of imbalance. Bail out is to the right that will leave an upslope pitch to a green leaning your way.

#4 Par 4 411/392

Now we are getting serious. A stupendous look in the #1 handicap hole. Dogleg left around the marsh which you can ignore off the tee as you drive at right bunker. Green is seamless to the back drop and looks like an endless pool coming out of the horizon. I like the right to left approach into an angled green 1 to 7 with one bunker buffering marsh on the left. The green has a 270 degree tightly mowed pitching surround which will make up an up and down a full tool box affair.

#5 Par 4 365/340

A kitchy dogleg right around the marsh. Option one is a shorter club off tee to fat area in fairway on left in front of left bunker at the elbow or the alternative is hit driver at three trees through the fairway. A 35 yard deep green complex is guarded by the marsh on right and behind so it looks like a fade approach. Fall off chipping area left of the green offset by one bunker far right. This is a scoring opportunity in wolf's clothing.

#6 Par 3 137/125

There is something fascinating about this cool par 3-a stunning look with strategic nuance. Short pitch over sandy waste to a green with the marsh behind. The segmented cusped putting surface wraps around lone front bunker with a high spot in back center separating the green into two lobes. Real precision is required to get this approach close to the hole. Like the earlier one a bail out area right of the green.

#7 Par 5 520/483

Just your basic marshside Zig Zag five par. Hit the fade drive off the terrarium left to avoid the water on right followed by a draw lay up between bunker right and bunker left. The green sits perched behind waste area on right. Careful execution leaves you a birdie opportunity for sure.

#8 Par 4 338/315

Another short one where you play less than driver across marsh into area between confining fairway bunkers. Tee ball play is to 110. Anvil shaped green slopes toward you sitting behind one seriously deep bunker front right.

#9 Par 4 400/390

A very interesting finishing hole for this side. Your tee ball comes out of a chute to left center off the aiming pole. This will set up an approach as the hole zags and zigs around one fairway bunker on left. The water is up the right all the way on a long second shot into accessible green with water right and one bunker left. Green tilts 10 to 4 with fall off back right so a courageous counter shaped draw will work nicely if you have the scorecard chutzpah to play it.

#10 Par 4 385/373

The back side begins with a straightaway Par 4 that demands you hold the line off the tee-anything wayward can lead to a big number. With a concealed marsh area in play on right and fairway bunkers on right a draw to left center leaves look into a stepped green with one big bunker on the right and a fall off back right.

#11 Par 4 396/355

Cool hole with hop scotch sand static on both sides all the way up the hole. Drive to center between fairway bunkers which leaves a fade second into opening in front of green between two bunkers. This is a small green that falls off back right and the marsh is not far behind so do not be aggressive to a back pin.

#12 Par 3 195/183

To the eye this is a simple looking longish par 3 but the green setting is unique. Kind of bare looking presentation in front but the false front left that beards the green will feed timid approaches on left into the marsh. You must carry approach into center of green that tilts 1 to 7 and has a big apron surround. Good chance you are in three-putt aversion mode even if you hit this green.

#13 Par 4 388/372

From here in the challenge ramps up. The #2 handicap hole this one dog ears left around the marsh. Drive at aiming pole or right tower in the distance and avoid the sandy waste area and bunkers up the right Fade

second must carry to a sprawling green slightly raised with one bunker in front and marsh peeking at you from the left. A pitch and a putt for par is likely your best chance here.

#14 Par 4 364/354

Probably the coolest hole of the day for me, just a great use of the land at hand. Dexterous right to left drive turns to the aiming pole and must avoid marsh left to area between right bunker and small treed waste station on the left. Green above with no bunkers stuck back to the right between waste area right and the encroaching marsh on the left. This green is actually surrounded by marsh left and back but there is a small grass retaining moat behind that can contain a ball too long.

#15 Par 5 527/511

From the tee it is not obvious what this sharp dogleg left 3-shot hole is about. Drive to right center at right bunker in the landing area below. Now lay up through the trees that frame the fairway to a narrowing landing area with water encroaching on the left. Tiered green sits raised behind two bunkers so you need to make sure the approach gets to the right level for today's pin.

#16 Par 4 363/342

Another cute short one that calls for acumen off the tee and the approach. Drive carries marsh/canal on left to narrow landing strip in front of right bunker. This green is tucked slightly to the right raised behind a bunker. The big hitters will be tempted to hit the big dog off the tee right at the green to reach a fat landing area just short of the putting surface. Again he provides a 270 degree pitching apron around this green which can give you a little hedge on the approaches.

#17 Par 3 154/141

The last of the short holes is a little out of character to the rest in that you cannot see the landing area. This is a narrow ramped ribbon of a green draped at a 2 to 8 angle behind to very large fronting sand features. You would think this is a scoring chance because this is a short shot but the green is so shallow that it is likely you are using the chipping area behind and left of green on your next one. Par is a good score here.

#18 Par 4 410/400

The day ends with a stiff finishing hole that is all about the drive position. Drive straight to center between collaring fairway bunkers-any wandering makes the next one really difficult. What is left is a long approach across impinging water last 100 yards on left. If you have a decent stance hit a strong fade second to green sandwiched between bunker front right and back left. Otherwise lay up to 80 yards on the right and count on your pitching to give you one last par save.