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Grand Hotel offers luxury, golf and history

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Brides scour her grounds in search of that quintessential shot. Children knock balls through wire wickets across her lawns. Shadows grow long, and couples sip mint juleps seated along her bricked-lined walkways.

And in the background of it all is the sunset along Mobile Bay.

Decades come and go, yet seasons at the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa (affectionately known as 'the Grand') have known no other place or time.

Through war, hurricanes, presidential resignations and inaugurations, the Grand has stood the test of time. In the early 1970s, CNN debuted and Graceland opened to the public.

Yet the only reports from the outside world arrived in handwritten telephone messages relayed from the front desk or with delivery of day-old news from the Mobile Press-Register.

Since that time, marriage proposals, honeymoons, dances under the stars at Julep Point, birthdays and family gatherings have continued to bring back generations back to this spot.

The resort has a remarkable history. A hotel was constructed on the site in 1847, which was used during the Civil War as a hospital.

After a devastating fire and later deterioration, a second hotel was built in 1937. A third structure was built in 1941, using some of the same timbers, and during World War II, the site served as an amphibious training base for the Army Air Force. In 1981, Marriott Corporation purchased the hotel. Thereafter, in 1999, the Alabama Real Estate Holdings (PCH), financed by the Retirement Systems of Alabama, purchased the property.

Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005, wreaking havoc on the Southern landmark.

Despite a 12-foot storm surge, PCH began a daunting year-long renovation at a cost of \$50 million. The resulting efforts have been nothing short of spectacular.

Today the 'Queen of Southern Resorts' is back in all her glory. From golf, tennis, kayaking, sailing, biking, seven elegant dining options, a 20,000-square-foot spa, indoor pool and fitness center, new guest rooms with 300-thread-count sheets, a family water complex, and ample meeting spaces, the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa quite literally has something for every guest.

Step inside

There is no scent on earth like that of the Grand Hotel.

One step through the door and the aroma of cedar intoxicates the senses. Woodsy and sweet, it welcomes back many a wandering soul or prodigal child.

Three hallways of nearly five-decades-old cedar lead to a brick fireplace that dates more than 150 years. Four stories high, the three-sided hearth forms a centerpiece for the main lobby.

Thirty acres of landscaped grounds make up the 550-acre resort. Complimentary coffee is served each morning. Daily activities include crafts, pier fishing, afternoon tea and cookies and tours of the nearby Confederate Cemetery.

Golf is legendary at Point Clear. Golf Magazine describes the game here as 'an almost mystical experience.'

The magazine also awarded the Grand a Golf River Silver Medal. Golf Digest calls the golf experience one of 'the grandest anywhere,' and rated the Lakewood Golf Shop as one of the country's top 20.

Fairways on the Azalea and Dogwood courses are lined with 200-year-old oaks.

But if golf isn't your thing, you can choose from eight rubico tennis courts, including four that are lighted, and an on-site pro shop.

Relaxation

Sensuous and utterly European, the Spa at the Grand is an oasis. Nine temperature-controlled treatment rooms, separate lounge areas, steam and sauna rooms, whirlpools, a heated indoor lap pool, state-of-the-art fitness center, full service salon, and a boutique make up this facility.

Spa services include deep tissue and warm stone massages, facials and body treatments.

The Quiet Room is pure tranquility. Surrounded by mosaic tiled walls, guests can relax and soak amid the bubbles of an oversized whirlpool. Fruit, snacks and beverages are hand-delivered.

Not surprisingly, the Spa is consistently ranked as one of the top Marriott spas for guest satisfaction in the United States.

Dining in

The grand dining room offers 'day boat' seafood paired with handpicked herbs from the chef's herb garden and produce from the Grand's own greenhouses.

An ideal spot for a sunset dinner, guests can relax beneath royal palms, while soft notes play from a baby grand. Dinner specialties of this AAA Four Diamond Award-winning restaurant include southern crab cakes with fried green tomatoes and Creole mustard aioli; pecan crusted grouper, tableside Dover sole, and Kobe beef fillet.

Diners can sip wine as they gaze out on the lights twinkling across Mobile Bay.

So whether your travels have brought you to the Grand in search of fine food, relaxation,

adventure, first-class accommodations or just to get away, you'll find it all right here.
