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## GOLF DESTINATIONS

### Athlon Sports

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There are golf courses, and then there are golf adventures. With 468 holes across 11 locations, Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail redefines what to expect from a U.S. golfing experience, both in terms of quality and value. And all this can be found within a short drive of the Atlanta airport.

The Trail has been rated No. 1 for value by Golf Digest. The magazine also listed the Trail in the top 10 for quality. The Trail stretches across 300 miles from northwest Alabama to the Gulf Coast, with each stop an easy drive away from the next.

The Trail offers exhilarating championship layouts that pose major tests to golfers of all abilities. This epic layout was the crowning achievement of famed golf designer Robert Trent Jones, who died in 2000. His rationale for the trail's complexity was simple: "No one remembers easy courses."



What lodges in a golfer's mind is the one brilliant shot that (momentarily) conquers a tough hole. As those who have played them know, courses on the Trail are on the far side of challenging. But the beauty of their design and the logistics of their layouts make playing any — or all — of the Trail courses an entertaining, unforgettable experience.

Possibly the most extraordinary aspect of the Trail is how affordable it is to play. Greens fees start as low as \$43 and average \$57. To add to its convenience, there are seven hotels in operation along the trail, including a luxury hotel near Birmingham and another in Florence. The Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa in Florence ranked first among Marriotts for golf and 10th for spas. An eighth Trail hotel, the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center, opened in February 2008.

The Trail's blend of affordability and public access has garnered some high praise from the national media. The Wall Street Journal says the Trail "may be the biggest bargain in the country," and The New York Times calls it "some of the best public golf on earth."

### Praise for the Trail

In 2006, Golf Digest ranked Auburn-Opelika as the "No. 1 City in America for Golf" based on the area's access to golf, its weather and the value of its golf. It's where you'll find The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail's breathtaking Grand National.

The cornerstone of the complex is the Links Course, where the par-4 18th is without a doubt the strongest finishing hole on the entire Trail. With 12 holes hugging the shore, the Lake Course is every bit as scenic as the Links. Not only is the quartet of par 3s as good as any in the nation, the 230-yard, island-green 15th may be the single prettiest hole on the Trail. The Short Course at Grand National is 18 holes of one-shotters that might be the finest anywhere on the planet, according to some golf writers.

### The Newest Addition

Newly added to the Trail are the two renovated courses at The Grand Hotel Marriott, Resort, Golf Club and Spa in Point Clear, Ala. This historic location has been a golf destination for President Gerald Ford, Dr. Billy Graham, Bob Hope and many other celebrities. Today it is freshly updated to blend seamlessly with the challenge and beauty

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of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail.

Built in 1947, the Lakewood Golf Club at The Grand Hotel showcases fairways lined with 200-year-old oaks. The club's signature hole — the 14th on the Azalea course — is an island green surrounded by a four-acre lake that makes your approach shot to this par 5 very demanding. Recently redesigned by Bobby Vaughan, the courses lend themselves to superb conditioning year-round. The two 18-hole courses, Azalea and Dogwood, are open to Lakewood members and hotel guests and promise a memorable golf experience.

#### **Golf Statewide**

Along with the Trail, there's other great public golf in Alabama. The Gulf Coast features a plethora of layouts, including the Jerry Pate–designed Kiva Dunes and Arnold Palmer's Craft Farms. Timbercreek Golf Resort, Rock Creek and Glenlakes are just a few of the other many challenging courses across the southern part of the state.

Farther north is Limestone Springs, which consistently receives high marks in Golf Digest's annual statewide rankings. Other Alabama favorites include Goose Pond Colony, Bent Brook and Lakepoint State Park.

As more courses are built and more people discover the amazing golf experiences Alabama has to offer, the accolades continue to roll in. To plan your Alabama trip, visit [www.alabama.travel](http://www.alabama.travel).

#### **The Courses of the Trail**

##### **Lakewood Golf Club – Point Clear**

The venerable Dogwood and Azalea courses at The Grand Hotel Marriott, Resort, Golf Club & Spa have been freshly redesigned for the Trail. While the Dogwood course might seem a bit easier and the Azalea more of a challenge, both courses can play to your liking, depending on your selection from five sets of tees at each hole.

##### *Lakewood Golf Club – Point Clear*

*One Grand Boulevard  
Point Clear, AL 36564  
(251) 990-6312*

*Website: [www.marriottgrand.com](http://www.marriottgrand.com)*

*Greens fees from \$90 to \$125*

##### **The Shoals – Florence**

The Fighting Joe course was the first Trail course to break 8,000 yards, measuring 8,092 from the purple tees. Every hole keeps with the natural topography along the Tennessee River, wooded, rolling and spectacular. The Schoolmaster course will truly offer a challenging test to any golfer.

##### *The Shoals Golf Course*

*990 Sunbelt Parkway  
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661  
(256) 446-5111*

*E-mail: [theshoals@rtjgolf.com](mailto:theshoals@rtjgolf.com)*

*Greens fees from \$37 to \$50*

##### **Ross Bridge – Hoover (Birmingham)**

Ross Bridge is a big-shouldered, muscled course measuring 8,184 yards from the back tees. The remarkable beauty includes an 800-foot waterfall that empties into a man-made lake, making Ross Bridge as beautiful as it is deadly.

##### *Ross Bridge Golf Course*

*4000 Grand Avenue  
Birmingham, AL 35022  
(205) 949-3085*

*E-mail: [rossbridge@rtjgolf.com](mailto:rossbridge@rtjgolf.com)*

*Greens fees from \$75*

##### **Cambrian Ridge – Greenville**

The Loblolly nine exudes a stately, Augusta-like quality. The Canyon nine is a thrilling stretch of target-style golf. On the Sherling nine, drama takes center stage at the ninth hole, which marches straight uphill past a deep ravine strewn with ocher boulders.

#### **Lodging in luxury along the Trail**

Renaissance Ross Bridge Golf Resort and Spa — Hoover (Birmingham)

This 259-room resort provides the ultimate in luxury, fine dining and a

*Cambrian Ridge Golf Course*  
 101 SunBelt Parkway  
 Greenville, AL 36037  
 (334) 382-9787  
 E-mail: [cambrianridge@rtjgolf.com](mailto:cambrianridge@rtjgolf.com)  
 Greens fees from \$35 to \$57

#### Capitol Hill – Prattville/Montgomery

The Senator is a traditional Scottish-style layout, with more than 150 pot-hole bunkers and bent-grass greens that provide exceptional conditions year-round. The Legislator will rival some of the more famous courses in North Carolina. The Judge plays alongside the Alabama River, providing some spectacular scenery.

*Capitol Hill Golf Course*  
 2600 Constitution Ave.  
 Prattville, AL 36066  
 (334) 285-1114  
 E-mail: [capitolhill@rtjgolf.com](mailto:capitolhill@rtjgolf.com)  
 Greens fees from \$35 to \$67

#### Grand National – Auburn/Opelika

The cornerstone of the complex is the Links course, which is without a single weakness. With 12 holes hugging the shore, Grand National's Lake course is every bit as scenic as the Links. The short course at Grand National is a thing of beauty, with more than half the holes touching the lake.  
 Grand National Golf Course

*3000 Sunbelt Parkway*  
 Opelika, AL 36801  
 (334) 749-9042  
 E-mail: [grandnational@rtjgolf.com](mailto:grandnational@rtjgolf.com)  
 Greens fees from \$35 to \$57

#### Hampton Cove – Huntsville

The Highlands course, with its Scottish Links style, is one of the gems of the Trail. Completely opposite is The River course, the only Robert Trent Jones layout without a single bunker. The River is laid out on former soybean fields in the flood plain of the Flint River. The short course at Hampton Cove is very open and Links-like, with water in play on 11 holes.

*Hampton Cove Golf Course*  
 450 Old Hwy. 431 South  
 Owens Cross Road, AL 35763  
 (256) 551-1818  
 E-mail: [hamptoncove@rtjgolf.com](mailto:hamptoncove@rtjgolf.com)  
 Greens fees from \$35 to \$50

#### Highland Oaks – Dothan

Highlands, the core nine, features a peninsula green at the sixth that has an elusive, beckoning quality. Marshwood has been made famous (or notorious) by its behemoth par-5 sixth, which stretches to 701 yards from the tips. The Magnolia's namesakes dot the higher ground, which is reached via a 1,000-foot-long wooden bridge. The short course, a nine-hole par 3, has possibly the best Bermuda greens in the South.

*Highland Oaks Golf Course*  
 904 Royal Parkway  
 Dothan, AL 36305  
 (334) 712-2820  
 E-mail: [highlandoaks@rtjgolf.com](mailto:highlandoaks@rtjgolf.com)  
 Greens fees from \$35 to \$45

12,000-square-foot full service spa. Perfect for a relaxing getaway, golf outing or corporate meeting, the Renaissance Ross Bridge Golf Resort and Spa has the ambiance of an aristocratic Scottish manor house, in tribute to the game's birthplace of Scotland. [rossbridgeresort.com](http://rossbridgeresort.com)

#### Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa — Muscle Shoals

Located minutes from the Trail's Shoals courses, the Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa features 200 luxurious guest rooms and seven spacious suites. For upscale dining, the revolving tower restaurant offers remarkable cuisine and amazing views of the Tennessee River. The 6,000-square-foot European-style spa and salon helps make the Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa the premier resort in the Tennessee River Valley. [marriottshoals.com](http://marriottshoals.com)

#### Grand Hotel Marriott Point Clear Resort & Spa — Point Clear

Imagine yourself in a place steeped in history, on 550 secluded acres along the shimmering waters of Mobile Bay. Just minutes from the airport. Where superb dining, legendary Marriott service, and more ways to relax than you ever dreamed of become reality. [marriottgrand.com](http://marriottgrand.com)

#### Battle House, a Renaissance Hotel — Mobile

Treat yourself to a classic hotel establishment in the heart of the South. This historic landmark is the premier choice of Mobile hotels for a new generation of guests. This four-star hotel provides classic Southern charm in the heart of historic downtown Mobile. The Battle House is just one block from the Mobile Convention Center and 20 minutes from the Trail courses at Magnolia Grove. [rsabattlehouse.com](http://rsabattlehouse.com)

#### Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel — Mobile

Located along the scenic Mobile Bay waterfront, this 375-room downtown Mobile hotel has recently undergone a \$55 million renovation. A new fitness center, swimming pool, restaurant, and bar will make Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel a favorite for golfers and corporate travelers. The hotel is located in the heart of downtown Mobile. [riverviewmobile.com](http://riverviewmobile.com)

#### Auburn Marriott Opelika Hotel and Conference Center at Grand National — Auburn

Nestled in 2,000 acres along the Trail, this hotel embraces nature at its finest. Six hundred acres offer abundant fishing, kayaking and hiking along the shores of the Saugahatchee Lake. Whether in the Grand National Ballroom, one of the meeting rooms or outside under the

Magnolia Grove – Mobile

The main track at Magnolia Grove is The Falls course, characterized by large, liberally contoured greens and massive cloverleaf bunkers. The Crossings, which doubles across railroad tracks, is a shot-maker's layout. Most of the holes on the short course call for forced carries over marsh to liberally sloped greens.

*Magnolia Grove Golf Course*  
7001 Magnolia Grove Parkway  
Mobile, AL 36618  
(251) 645-0075  
E-mail: [magnoliagrove@rtjgolf.com](mailto:magnoliagrove@rtjgolf.com)  
Greens fees from \$35 to \$57

Oxmoor Valley – Birmingham

The Ridge, with its rolling fairways, heavy tree cover and precipitous 150-foot elevation changes, is incredibly photogenic. The Valley is dotted with picturesque lakes and beautiful rolling fairways. The delightful short course boasts severe elevation changes — and a listing in Golf Digest's Places to Play as one of the nation's Great Value courses.

*Oxmoor Valley Golf Course*  
100 Sunbelt Parkway  
Birmingham, AL 35211  
(205) 942-1177  
E-mail: [oxmoorvalley@rtjgolf.com](mailto:oxmoorvalley@rtjgolf.com)  
Greens fees from \$35 to \$57

Silver Lakes – Anniston / Gadsden

The Heartbreaker nine is considered the most challenging nine on the Trail from the tips. The Backbreaker nine offers beautiful views of the Appalachian foothills. The Mindbreaker nine, although a tad easier, demands precision shot-making. The short course is arguably the most demanding collection of one-shotters on the Trail.

*Silver Lakes Golf Course*  
1 SunBelt Parkway  
Glencoe, AL 35905  
(256) 892-3268  
E-mail: [silverlakes@rtjgolf.com](mailto:silverlakes@rtjgolf.com)  
Greens fees from \$35 to \$50

magnificent skies, Auburn Marriott Opelika Hotel and Conference Center at Grand National will suit your style for conducting business. [marriottgrandnational.com](http://marriottgrandnational.com)

Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel and Conference Center at Capitol Hill — Prattville

Overlooking the Senator Course at Capitol Hill and offering 90 luxury guestrooms and two, eight-bedroom executive villas with pool tables, flat-screen TVs and galley kitchens, this is a popular destination for both golfers and executives seeking meeting space surrounded by nature and luxury. The Judge course at Capitol Hill was recently named in the top 50 courses in the country by the Zagat Survey, compiled with ESPN, alongside such heady company as Pebble Beach, Spyglass Hill and Pinehurst. [marriottcapitolhill.com](http://marriottcapitolhill.com)

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