

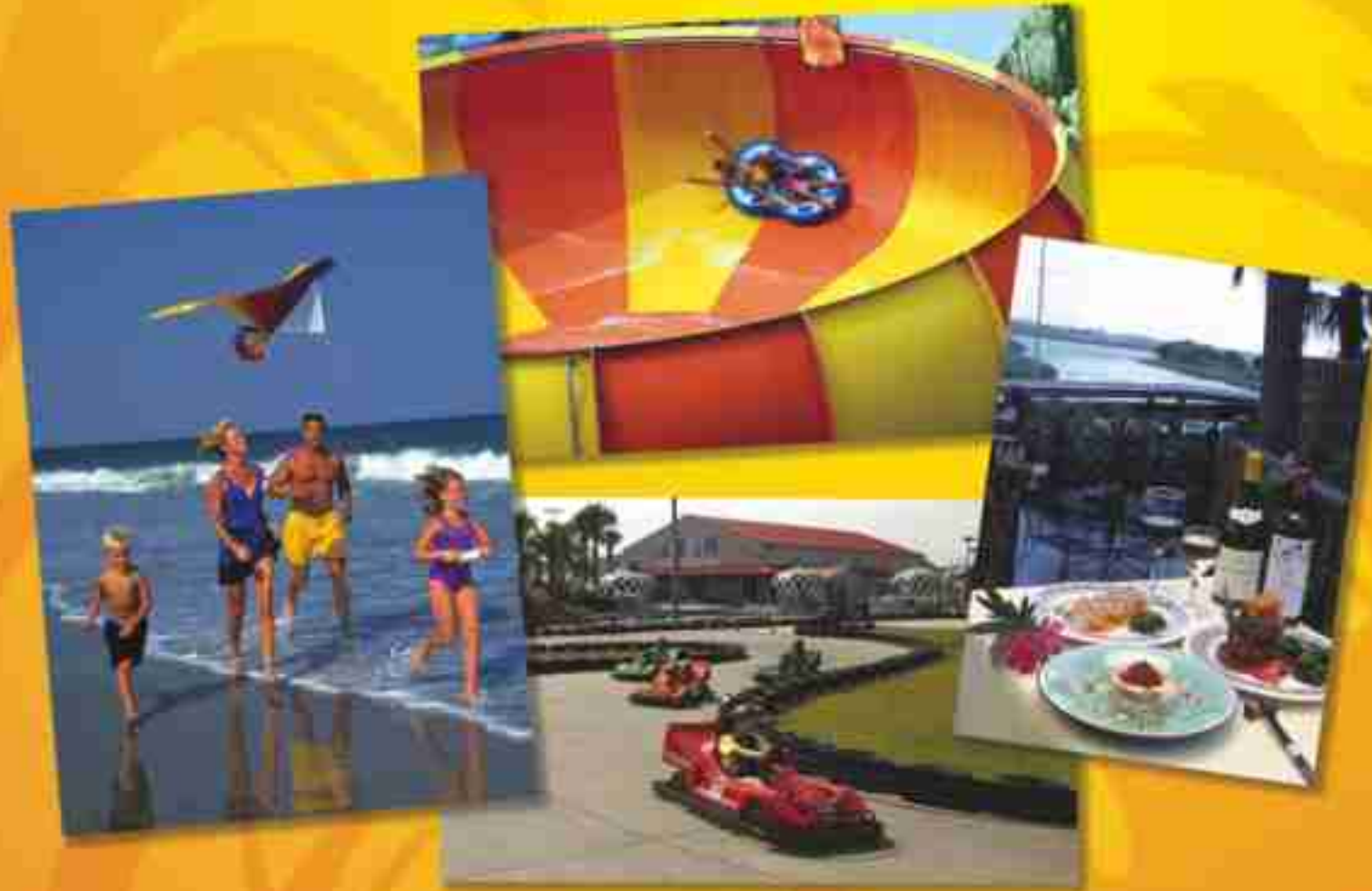
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Myrtle Beach sizzles

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MYRTLE BEACH Sizzles.

By Laura Lewis



Decade after decade, season after season, sun and fun go hand-in-hand in Myrtle Beach. That's why it's called the Grand Strand. The choices are everywhere—in accommodations, cuisine, shopping and things to do. "We appeal to everyone who wants to have fun," says Brad Dean, president and CEO of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. "The essence of the Grand Strand is to let your hair down, be yourself and enjoy the ocean."

Accommodations

Vacationers will find everything from economy inns and campgrounds to condos and four-diamond hotels. There are even RV and tent sites at Myrtle Beach and Huntington Beach State Parks. There are also the four-diamond Marriott Resort at Grande Dunes and Sheraton Myrtle Beach Convention Center Hotel for a little luxury at the beach.

More and more, the accommodations themselves are

becoming part of the entertainment, says Wanda Bellamy, long-time manager of the South Carolina Visitor Center in Little River. More hotels are offering indoor pools, lazy rivers and an array of activities to make the Grand Strand a year-round destination.

For a more nostalgic experience, "arrogantly shabby" Pawleys Island offers quaint beach houses that have welcomed generation after generation of families.

Restaurants

More than 1,800 restaurants dot the 60-mile stretch encompassing the Grand Strand. Their variety runs the gamut from traditional beachside hot dog, pizza and ice cream stands to newer themed and fine-dining establishments. Bellamy notes that many of the newer restaurants, such as Jimmy Buffet's popular Margaritaville restaurant, are themed, making them another form of vacation entertainment. But never fear; visitors will still find traditional seafood eateries

offering buffets and fare in the style of Calabash and Murrells Inlet, along with broiled, grilled and blackened variations served up by these and a growing number of new, haute cuisine establishments such as Divine Fish House.

Theaters and Shows

After a day of sand and sun, the night is filled with family-oriented venues such as The Alabama Theatre in North Myrtle Beach, which offers nightly performances of its popular "One, The Show," plus concerts such as Eddie Miles' "Salute to Elvis," the Oak Ridge Boys and beach music. The Carolina Opry, in its 21st year, stages nightly shows in addition to its "Good Vibrations" shows highlighting '60s, '70s and '80s music. Dinner-with-entertainment is on the menu at Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede and Medieval Times, Inc. More shows are to be found at The House of Blues in North Myrtle Beach, Legends in Concert with Calvin Gilmore in Surfside Beach and the Palace Theatre at Broadway at the Beach.

Shopping

Places to shop are almost as abundant as flip-flops here. One of the newest, the 1.5-million-square-foot Coastal Grand Mall on

the US 17 Bypass near Myrtle Beach International Airport, boasts three anchor stores and more than 100 shops in addition to restaurants and the 16-screen Cinemark movie theater.

The area now has two Tanger Outlet Centers on the north end of Myrtle Beach and on US 501. Plus, there is Barefoot Landing, Broadway at the Beach, Colonial Grand and Inlet Square Malls and Pawleys Island Hammock Shops.

Even More to Do

And as if that weren't enough, there are all the activities that don't fit in any one category. Broadway at the Beach features the new MagiQuest adventure, in addition to Ripley's Aquarium, Dragon's Lair Fantasy Golf, Carousel Park and IMAX® Discovery Theater. Nearby are Myrtle Waves Water Park, NASCAR® SpeedPark and Coastal Federal Field, home to Myrtle Beach Pelicans baseball.

Other popular activities include Alligator Adventure at Barefoot Landing, Family Kingdom Amusement Park, Wild Water Fun Park in Surfside Beach, Grand Prix Family Thrill Park and plenty of miniature golf courses. For day trips, there's Brookgreen Gardens in Murrells Inlet.

It's impossible to imagine a dull moment—unless you want it—in Myrtle Beach. Every age, every person finds something fun to see, do, eat or buy in the Strand we call Grand.

