

Spectacular Myrtle Beach

By Melissa Harrison

Myrtle Beach conjures images as far as the imagination can span. For area baby boomers, this southern icon evokes a sense of youthful nostalgia – summer nights along the boardwalk, beach music, southern gentleman and those “sweet Carolina girls.” For vacationers, visions of world-renowned 18-hole golf courses, sporty race tracks, family water parks, mouth watering seafood, shopping and live entertainment stir just about every pleasure-seeking sensibility. And then, there are the sandy beaches and miles of Atlantic coastline. This boom town’s rich history and diverse culture have given it a national reputation as one of the hottest travel destinations around. But just where did the phenomenon of Myrtle Beach begin?

Well before the theatres, miniature golf, historic cruises, and world-famous amusement parks, Myrtle Beach was no more than a quiet coastal fishing village. The Waccamaaw and Winyah Indians are the first known inhabitants of the area. Naming it “Chicora,” they settled amidst the natural beauty of rolling dunes, shady oaks, rich soil and clear waters. By the 1800s, this idyllic setting was under attack by pirates such as the infamous “Blackbeard” who lay claim to the swells of the Atlantic and its peaceful shore. Legend has it that even the loot of “Captain Kidd” himself is still buried somewhere near Murrells Inlet, SC.

Eventually, the captains of the sea gave way to captains of real estate who swept up the much of South Carolina’s coast. F. G. Burroughs, a visionary and shrewd

businessman from Conway, SC, recognized the area’s vast development potential. After purchasing an unfathomed 80,000 acres of coastline, he designated the land “New Town.” He swiftly built a railroad to make what was once a remote and distant beach easily accessible, and tourism began to grow by leaps and bounds. Burroughs’ wife is actually responsible for the city’s modern moniker. She hosted, and won, a contest to rename the town, which took on the title of a native shrub growing wildly along the coast – the waxy Myrtle tree.

In the 1920s, the grand Ocean Forest Hotel, along with the present Pine Lakes International Country Club (the area’s first golf club and birthplace of the magazine Sports Illustrated), made its debut in the community’s new upscale resort, Arcady. Myrtle Beach became the place to “be and be seen” among affluent society. While Hurricane Hazel devastated much of the Grand Strand in 1954, the tourist town quickly bounced back, as newer hotels, homes and attractions quickly emerged along the strip. The popularity of Myrtle Beach carried on well into the 1960s when beach music became a permanent fixture in the coast’s cultural identity.

Today, the sixty miles of coastline showcase just about every diversion imaginable. The area boasts more than 1,700 restaurants, many offering fresh seafood served in the famous Calabash or Murrells-Inlet style. Performances at Dolly Parton’s Dixie Stampede Dinner & Show and the Medieval Times Dinner & Tournament entertain audiences year after year, while

the House of Blues, The Carolina Opry and other music venues promise some of the best concerts around. At night, nightclubs, discos and beach clubs keep the city’s heartbeat alive. Outlet malls, boutiques and specialty shops offer excellent finds during the day.

For vacationers looking for a little action, the possibilities are endless. Myrtle Beach is home to more than 120 golf courses, many of which are crowned the nation’s most elite. Deep-sea fishing, racetracks, miniature golf, and water parks thrill adults and children alike, and the famous Myrtle Beach Pavilion is fun for the whole family. Located on Ocean Boulevard in the heart of Myrtle Beach, the Pavilion is the oldest theme park in the area. Its expansive growth in recent decades has made it a mecca of entertainment. Touted as an “11-acre playground by the sea,” The Myrtle Beach Pavilion features more than 40 spectacular rides, including the Hurricane Category 5, the biggest roller coaster in South Carolina. The Attic, the Grand Strand’s only “under 21” nightclub, is housed within the Pavilion, as are restaurants, shopping and more!

Find out more...

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center
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