

Sandals Emerald Reef Golf Club in Great Exuma
Where Golf Meets the “Pirates of the Caribbean”
By Tim Cotroneo



There's a colorful rum cocktail on the island of Great Exuma called the Goombay Smash. The first one tastes as good as it looks. By the time you finish the second, you realize that some beauties can also be beasts. The same can be said for Great Exuma's spectacular Greg-Norman designed golf course. Sandals Emerald Reef Golf Club's front nine can lull golfers into a peaceful island state of mind. The back side, with seven holes featuring the Caribbean Sea, may leave you wondering, "Can a golf course be too good looking?"

For golfers seeking a show-stopping environment and pristine conditions, the 7200-yard Emerald Reef is as good as it gets. Your round gets even more interesting when the trade winds are blowing. On a course crafted by the Great White Shark himself, you can almost hear the theme from "Jaws" as you turn the corner and transition to the 11th hole. Your tee shot on this petite Par 3 is when golfers begin their adventure from tranquil inland golf to a potentially temperamental Caribbean Sea.

There is so much to think about on Emerald Reef's back nine. If you stick with your routine, and occasionally club down on tee shots when you know this makes sense,

then you should be able to handle golf holes that are so picturesque and rugged, that you may ponder out loud, “I’ve never seen anything like this.”

Golf’s Seven Wonders



What catches about 90 percent of the Emerald Reef golfers off guard is the fact that they’re playing on this wondrous landscape while on vacation. This usually means they’re more relaxed. This could also mean that Great Exuma’s main drawing card can be a golfer’s undoing. On any given day at Emerald Reef Golf Club, the question becomes, “Will the Caribbean Sea be your friend or foe?”

The water surrounding Emerald Reef Golf Club is “Pirates of the Caribbean” turquoise. There’s no kidding on this claim. The south end of the island is the location for the beach scenes from Johnny Depp’s movie. Now insert the creative mind of Greg Norman on this romantic island setting, and you have a golf course that might be the Eighth Wonder of the World.

Emerald Reef Golf Head Professional Rich Gibson described his course this way, “If you go to Paris, can you imagine not seeing the Eiffel Tower? For golfers vacationing on

Great Exuma, to stay here and not experience Emerald Reef is something you'll forever regret. That's how beautiful our course is."

Lessons from the Best



After 27 years as the Golf Professional at Cable Beach Golf Course in Nassau, Gibson arrived at Emerald Reef in 2013 and quickly tamed Greg Norman's Caribbean crown jewel. In fact, Gibson tied the course record with nines of 36 and 30, for a scorching 66 over 18 holes.

For golfers looking to improve their game while on Great Exuma, Gibson has a unique pedigree for fine tuning your game. "I was taught by Ken Venturi and Bob Toski," Gibson said. The long and lean Gibson confided that for one whole week under Toski, he hit nothing but wedges. The first goal was to land each golf ball within a five foot radius of the others. The second goal was to get up and down within 100 yards. Gibson regularly accomplishes this goal. Imagine Gibson teaching you what Venturi and Toski taught him.

Unconditional Caribbean



If your 2015 golf vacation budget includes just one trip, then Emerald Reef Golf Club delivers a bull market return on your dollar. Emerald Reef offers a golf trifecta of superb conditions an amazing island locale, and a closing nine deserving a place in Norman's trophy case next his two British Open Claret Jugs.

At least a half dozen major airlines fly directly into Great Exuma's International Airport. See for yourself about the relentless beauty of Emerald Reef's back nine. Experience what it's like to play golf with ocean waves crashing less than a chip shot away. For 18 holes, imagine that you're Captain Jack Sparrow, playing on location at this Caribbean paradise turned golf course.

As you sign off on your scorecard at the 18th hole, there's only one thing left to do. Stop by the clubhouse and order a tall, cool Goombay Smash. By the time you finish the second one, everyone in your group will have tamed the beauty named Emerald Reef.

<http://www.sandals.com/golf/bahamas/>

http://www.gngcd.com/course_detail.php?course_id=9

Tim Cotroneo is a Minneapolis-based writer specializing in Caribbean travel, business, and golf.