

GOLF WRX

[Loose Leaf Notebook: 10 places for great fall golf](#)



By Michael Williams

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I love fall golf; in fact, it's by far my favorite season to play. Spring is great with the flowers and blessed relief from Ol' Man Winter, but it also features muddy fairways and ambitious mosquitos. Give me sweater weather and leaves turning anytime. No humidity, no problem. Also, many of the best courses drop their rates for the rest of the year, and the only thing as good as saving a couple of stokes on your round is to save a lot of cash.

While in parts of the Northeast the summer is doing its impression of a friend who won't leave your house party even though they see you loading the dishwasher at 3 a.m., Fall golf is right around the corner, so here's a list of 10 places that will make you feel like Mr. (or Ms.) October.

The Greenbrier



The Greenbrier Hotel and Resort

Resurrected from the scrap heap by billionaire and current Governor of West Virginia Jim Justice, The [Greenbrier](#) has become one of the most popular destinations on the PGA Tour calendar among the players that attend. The hotel has been beautifully restored, and the sprawling mansion-style structure is an attraction in itself. Great restaurant options at the Greenbrier include a steakhouse named after NBA legend Jerry West, and if you're lucky, you'll see him there. The TPC Old White Course is the best known of the four courses available to the public, but The Meadows is the local favorite and more picturesque. That thing I mentioned about cheaper fall golf does not apply here; the courses are kind of pricey in October. But you can make it up at the on-property casino that is reserved for guests only, and therefore 80 percent less skeezy than most casinos.

The Omni Homestead



The Omni Homestead

If it was good enough for Thomas Jefferson, it's good enough for me; yes, T.J. was one of the first patrons of this [hot springs resort](#) located on the other side of the mountain from The Greenbrier. It's dripping with history, and the acquisition by the Omni hotel group has made sure that antique and modern peacefully co-exist. The golf is superb, led by the Cascades course where Sam Snead caddied as a young man. Follow that with a round on the Old Course. If you need a tune-up, visit their golf school where you just might get a lesson from J.C. Snead. After walking the courses, visit the hot springs for a soak and a massage. And when you want to get your adrenaline going again, visit master instructor David Judah at the award-winning shooting range.

Primland



Primland Highland course



Observatory suite at Primland

One of the best things about [Primland](#) is that it's under the radar. Ok, close your eyes imagine that a James Bond villain decided to build a kick-ass golf resort complete with a missile silo disguised to look like...a silo? That's Primland. Tucked in the Blue Ridge mountains just over the North Carolina border, Primland is truly next level in every category that you could rate a modern resort. The rooms are the apex of comfort and high tech, a little bit country and a little bit rock and roll. Jay Hass and Fred Couples are staff pros and they spend a lot of time there so keep a sharpie and cell phone handy for an autograph and a selfie.

The property was originally purchased as a nature preserve, and you can enjoy the gorgeous landscape on foot or on one of the off-road vehicle tours. If you like sporting clays, they have a great facility where you can blast some plates. The Highland golf course is a pristine Donald Steel layout that is an excellent combination of risk and reward combined with stunning views of the surrounding mountains. If you have some disposable income and are looking for a unique experience, book the Observatory suite. You won't be sorry.

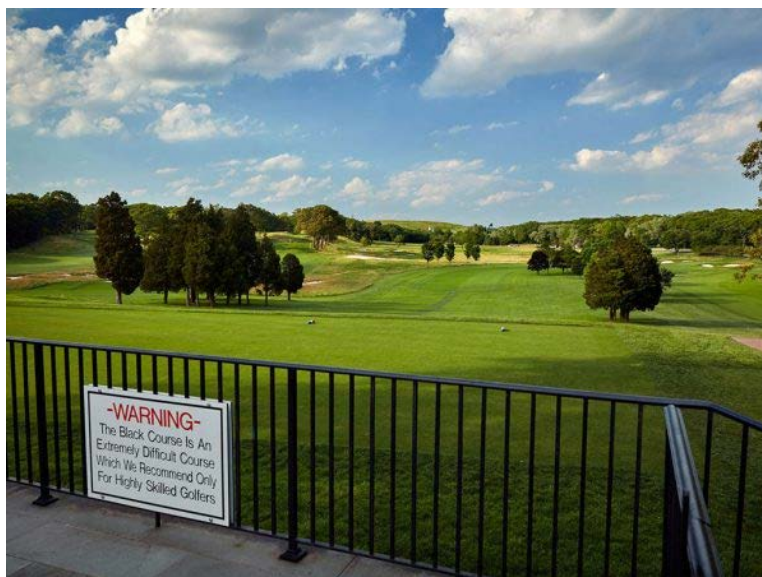
Myrtle Beach



Myrtle Beach Grand Strand

I know; saying that you should visit [Myrtle Beach](#) is like saying you should listen to some jazz; there's a lot of it and it's all very different. That said, autumn is kind of the perfect time to visit Myrtle. It's after Labor Day so the crowds are gone. Rooms and tee times are easier to get and for better prices. Not to mention that the summer heat is replaced by some cool ocean breezes. There are literally dozens of golf courses to choose from, too many to mention here, so I'll just recommend that if you haven't had a chance to play Caledonia and True Blue, make it a priority. The courses are the work of Mike Stranz, a genius who died young and left a small but stunning body of work that begs the question, "What if?". Off the course, you can find restaurants up and down the Strand that range from gourmet to Krispy Kreme. Challenge yourself to find a bar that no one had heard of.

Bethpage State Park



Bethpage Black

I started my golf life operating golf courses in national parks, so I have always had a soft spot for [Bethpage](#). I watched with envy as a public/private partnership turned a frog into a prince. The Black course gets most of the ink and deservedly so; it is one of the difficult courses in the world, but it is also one of the most ingenious. Every hole is interesting, many of them memorable. You can't help but think about the major championships that have been played on the ground under your feet as you make your way around the course. Caution; it is also a very difficult course to walk and they don't allow carts. But even the out of state rate is a bargain at \$135 on weekdays and the Red course is almost as good and easier to walk and afford. Save plenty of time to have a beer and a dog on the terrace at the back of the clubhouse to enjoy the changing colors of the trees and the equally red faces of golfers coming up #18 on the Black.

Silvies Valley Ranch



Silvies Valley Ranch



Not all of the great fall golf is on the East Coast, and [Silvies Valley Ranch](#) is proof of that. In just a few short years of operation, Silvies has gone from zero to Top 100 among golf destinations. With a reversible 18-hole track (known as Craddock in one direction and Hankins in the other) and two fun short courses, Silvies offers a satisfying golf lineup. And where else are you gonna find goat caddies? But SVR also offers fishing, off-road driving, shooting, biking and a brand-new state of the art spa facility. Set on a huge ranch next to a national forest, the colors are beautiful during the day and the stars are just as beautiful at night. Bring an appetite, because the family-style meals are super large and super delicious.

Big Cedar Lodge



Big Cedar Lodge



Top of the Rock

The brainchild of Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris, [Big Cedar Lodge](#) is positioning itself to be the number one golf destination in the country; you read right, number one. Morris gave his team an unlimited budget and they have exceeded it in creating a family vacation fantasyland. The golf courses now include tracks by Fazio, Coore-Crenshaw, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player and in 2020 Tiger Woods. You can stay in individual rooms or multi-bedroom cabins, with a ridiculous variety of places to eat and play when you aren't golfing. Heck, the man built his own state pate and his own natural history museum... 'nuff said. If you are the romantic type, stop by the chapel where my friend/arch-nemesis Matt Ginella got married.

Williamsburg, VA



Colonial Williamsburg

If history is your thing, [Williamsburg](#) is your place. It's one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country, bringing to life America's colonial past. But the golf is mighty good as well. Golfers can choose to partake of the Golden Horseshoe Golf course, a gorgeous Robert Trent Jones course that was recently renovated under the supervision of his son Rees. The course is in immaculate condition and gives you a look at holes that are reminiscent of the work that RTJ did on the back nine at Augusta. On the other side of the city, Kingsmill Resort offers a championship River course that is among the toughest tests on the LPGA Tour. Play a bunch of golf, but do tour the historic part of the city.

Reynolds Lake Oconee



Ritz-Carlton at RLO

Built on the shores of a massive man-made lake halfway between Atlanta and Augusta in Georgia, [Reynolds Lake Oconee](#) is blessed with a beautiful natural setting where almost anything would be a pleasure. Fortunately, golf has been a big part of the plan from the start at RLO. The resort offers comfortable cabins and houses for rent but live a little and stay at the Ritz-Carlton hotel on the property. Before you go out to play, stop by the Reynolds Kingdom of Golf presented by TaylorMade, an equipment and practice mecca where you could find guys like Justin Rose or Jason Day tweaking their driver or working on their swing in the bay next to you.

There are six championship courses at RLO, led by the freshly renovated Great Waters, a Jack Nicklaus signature track that is one of his most enjoyable. Fazio, Rees Jones, and Bob Cupp have bylines at RLO as well and all of them are in superb condition. If you know somebody who knows somebody, you can get on the ultra-private Creek Club. Boating, hiking, biking and one of the best sporting clay facilities in the world highlight the outdoor activities.

Traverse City/Petoskey Area, Michigan



Bay Harbor Club

People on the coasts are beginning to discover what Midwesterners have known for years, that life is good on the shores of Lake Michigan. With miles of shoreline and acres of pristine forests, The Traverse City area is one of the most popular summer destinations in the country for residents of Midwestern cities. And the golf is none too shabby, with some of the top-rated courses in the county within a short drive of the local airport. My favorites include [Boyne golf](#)'s Bay Harbor Club, which features three nine-hole courses that can be fashioned into an 18-hole round (all their options are good, but the Links/Quarry combo is exceptional).

A short drive away is [Forest Dunes](#), where you can stay and play the Forest Dunes 18 and the much talked about Loop, reversible 18 that will challenge the limits of your short game prowess—or lack of the same. While you're in the area, stop by Belvedere Golf Club and enjoy a classic golf course that has tested players from Walter Hagan to Tom Watson (who called the par-4 16th one of the best holes in the world). Off the course, craft breweries and cherry pies will keep you happy or take a walk by the lake and try to find a Petoskey Stone.