

# The Grand

By Ann Cipperly



Photos provided by The Grand Hotel

**A**fter undergoing a complete renovation, the Grand Hotel Golf Resort and Spa at Point Clear on Mobile Bay truly lives up to its name, becoming part of Marriott's Autograph Collection. Nestled among majestic live oaks with sweeping panoramic view of the bay, the "Queen of Southern Resorts" on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail is now dressed for a new golden era, providing entertaining getaways for generations.

Three years ago, the resort began a transformation of all 405 guest rooms in five buildings, restaurants, bars, spa, event space and golf course. Completed in August 2018, the renovation covered details families had requested over the years. In the main building, baths were enlarged, walk-in showers added, and full beds replaced with queen or king sized, among other amenities.

Located on 550 acres, the AAA Four Diamond resort has been renovated to an

all-in-one destination, offering a variety of activities for families. Holidays are celebrated throughout the year. At Easter, thousands of eggs are hidden for children, while a fireworks show highlights the July 4th celebration.

With a storied history, the hotel has battled hurricanes and suffered from fires since it was originally built in 1847. The first hotel featured a rambling two-story building with a separate kitchen. During the Civil War, the hotel was used as a base hospital.

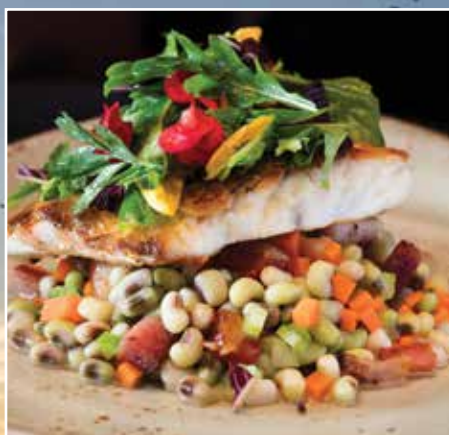
Guests traveled to the hotel by steamboats and docked at what is now the marina. In 1871 an explosion occurred as excursionists boarded the steamer "Ocean Wave." Many lives were lost, and the bar was turned into an emergency hospital.

During the 1870s, the second Grand Hotel was built much like the first, using some of the old foundations. As decades passed, the historic hotel continued to expand while battling weather and being transformed with renovations and landscaping improvements.

In 1999, the hotel was purchased by the Alabama Real Estate Holdings, which is financed by the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

The Grand's entrance welcomes guests with lush landscaping and magnificent oaks. Once in our newly decorated room with soothing colors in the spa building, we opened the door to the balcony. We settled into rocking chairs to absorb the scenery of the marina with the sun sparkling off the water, as our weekend getaway began.





## Grandeur, Grit and Glory since 1847: A Tribute to the History of the Grand Hotel

Every afternoon at 3:45 a procession starts at the lobby fireplace that leads to Cannon Park on the grounds. The presentation honors the military, veterans and their families. The event ends with the firing of the cannon.

### Daily Lagniappe

Following the cannon ceremony at 4 p.m., a complimentary lagniappe, “a little bite,” with freshly baked cookies, coffee and tea is served in the Grand Hall.

### High Tea

Since we arrived early afternoon, we decided to relax over high tea in the Grand Hall rather than lunch. From a variety of loose teas, our table chose Japanese green and bourbon vanilla tea to start, then sipped ginger peach.

Once the tea was brewed, a three-tiered sil-

ver server arrived with assorted small sandwiches, scones and desserts.

We began with savory bites of smoked salmon on toasts points, petite country ham sandwiches, crab salad in endive and fruit topped cucumber slices.

Scones were savored before indulging in chocolate macarons and petit fours.

The elegant respite was perfect for unwinding after the drive and feeling rejuvenated for the weekend.

High tea is served Thursday through Sunday from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.

### Dining

Seven restaurants and lounges are offered, ranging from casual to formal.

#### BREAKFAST

Before ordering from the menu, check out the buffet since it provides many of the menu dishes, as well as others, for one price.

The signature lump crab scramble can be ordered at the omelet-and-waffle station on the buffet.

Smoked salmon, house-made yogurt, Conecuh sausage, skillet pancake with fruit and smoothies were among our favorites.

#### JAZZ BRUNCH

On Sundays, a jazz brunch is served in the Grand Hall at 11:30.

#### DINNER

##### Southern Roots

As a brilliant sunset fell over Mobile Bay, we arrived at Southern Roots and were seated by a window to savor the views from the glass-lined, circular dining room with a show-piece light fixture gleaming with gold leaves. Laughter filled the room, while glasses clinked at the 1847 Bar.

Allow time to study the menu, as the choices are stellar with seafood, fish and steaks.



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For appetizers, our table ordered barbecue shrimp doused with tangy sauce and crab cake with apple celery slaw, recommended by our server.

Delicate diver scallops with cauliflower puree, Brussel sprouts and sage butter was flawless, as well as roasted grouper resting on lentils.

We almost passed on the tempting desserts but found the butterscotch crème brulee top-notch with a rich caramel flavor.

We lingered over dessert as a wonderful evening came to a close.

### Bayside Grill

An estate garden with 72 edibles is located outside the Bayside Grill where the culinary team picks the harvest for restaurants and bars.

While Bayside Grill provides casual dining, it offers a wide selection of options, including small plates, salads, pastas, sandwiches, hearty main dishes and desserts.

Our table sampled robust seafood gumbo and the crab and avocado toast for a lighter appetizer. For sharing, the shrimp dip is addictive with shrimp and sausage in a white cheddar sauce spiced with jalapeno. Try the garlic crostini for dipping.

While on the coast, we lean toward dining on seafood and fish. We selected a fresh red snapper and grouper with rock shrimp.

After dinner, we walked along the path by the water to where 12 firepits with seating are located. Some nights s'mores are made at the firepits.

### Pools and Beaches

Renovations to the feature, adult and indoor pools include a waterfall, two whirlpools and slide. Children will enjoy the zero entry pool and a new splash pad.

Private cabanas at the adult pool provide comfortable seating, fans, televisions, refrigerators and a pool butler to offer drinks and food.

Relax at the beach or stay active with water bikes, kayaks, sailboats, volleyball and other sports. Bonfires can be arranged.



Beachside cabanas are offered for individuals or groups.

### Golf and Tennis

The Lakewood Club courses are part of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. In 2018, the renovated Dogwood course reopened, while the Azaleas course will be renovated this year.

The "Experience" is an innovative facility that helps develop new players and improve existing players.

At the tennis center, 10 courts (hydro clay) are lighted. Private and group lessons are given.

### Lawn Activities

Updated lawn activities include a putting green, croquet, horseshoes, crafts, ping-pong and cornhole games, as well as other recreational activities.

The pier was renovated and fishing poles provided.

### Spa

The renovated 20,000 square foot European-style spa offers a wide range of blissful treatments, including massages, facials, manicures, pedicures, as well as body treatments for women and men.

The updated fitness center has cardio and weight training equipment.

### Meetings and Weddings

The 37,000 square feet of meeting space was completely remodeled.

Venues are available for an outdoor or indoor wedding whether it is a lavish affair or intimate gathering.

"Southern Living" named the Grand one of their favorite hotels and a top wedding destination.

### Festival

The 67th Annual Fairhope Arts and Crafts Festival is scheduled for March 15, 16 and 17 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The festival is free.

For more information, visit [www.grand1847.com](http://www.grand1847.com).





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