



DANIEL

Reynolds Plantation Abounds In Options

Nestled among the tall Georgia pines, on the shores of tranquil Lake Oconee, is one of the state's best-kept secrets

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GREENSBORO, Georgia – Nestled among the tall Georgia pines, on the shores of tranquil Lake Oconee, is a golf retreat that is as beautiful to the eye and demanding of your golf game by day as it is soothing to the soul by night.

Reynolds Plantation, in many ways, is the state's best-kept secret. Located halfway between Atlanta and Augusta, Reynolds has 117 holes of signature golf by some of the world's best-known and most highly regarded architects – Jack Nicklaus, Tom Fazio, Rees Jones, Bob Cupp and Jim Engh. There's enough golf – and high enough quality – to cater to just about any taste.

The draw to Reynolds Plantation is golf, but it is first and foremost a real-estate play with 3,800 homeowners on property. Sales associates would love nothing more than to interest you in a homesite on which you could build a custom home. But while you're looking at property – or if you just want a long weekend getaway – Reynolds offers plenty of amenities to short-term visitors.

The 251-room Ritz-Carlton Lodge on the property was redecorated and refurbished last spring and reopened in April. The attached cottages and Presidential House also were renovated and reopened in October.

The Lodge also has a 26,000-square-foot spa. And there are plenty of cottages and condos in Reynolds' rental portfolio that can give you the feel of home-away-from-home during your visit. Reynolds Plantation was developed in the late 1980s on 90 miles of Lake Oconee shoreline and currently has 5,000 undeveloped acres. The company struggled to sell real estate during the housing slump and wound up operating under bank-appointed receivership for more than a year.

MetLife, the largest U.S. life insurer, bought Reynolds Plantation in 2012 and Daniel Corp. is developing and managing the property. Once MetLife assumed ownership, the company stepped up with millions of dollars in renovations to the six golf courses, including a new clubhouse at The National.

But golf is the main attraction at Reynolds and it has more than its share of top-drawer courses. Great Waters is not the oldest course at Reynolds Plantation but it is the best known. Designed by Jack Nicklaus and built in 1992. Great Waters is one of the most acclaimed resort courses in the country and is on a number of top-100 lists. It hosted the PGA Professional National Championship in 2008. And, though most people don't realize it, Great Waters from 1995-97 hosted regional matches in the Anderson Consulting World Championship of Golf, which was the precursor of the WGC-Accenture Match Play.

The course winds its way around a peninsula and is a unique blend of tree-lined holes coupled with a back nine that is situated almost entirely along Lake Oconee. The 14th, a par-3 of 186 yards from the back tees, plays to a green bordered by water. It is one of the most memorable holes on the course. Big hitters might take a shot at the 349-yard, par-4 11th from the tee and the adventurous could think long and hard about reaching the water-lined, 540-yard, par-5 18th in two. The greens complexes were remodeled in 2009 to restore them to original specs and were replanted in MiniVerde Bermuda grass, one of the first courses to use what is now a popular green surface in the Southeast.

The National was built in 1997 and designed by Tom Fazio and today boasts 27 holes of signature Fazio. The Ridge and Bluff nines were the original and the Cove nine opened in 2000. In Fazio fashion, the holes at The National feature elevation change, dramatic, fingered bunkers and big greens with lots of movement. There are ponds and streams that come into play and a number of holes border the lake. The National is currently undergoing a renovation, under Fazio's direction, and all the green complexes are being reworked and regressed with Champion Bermuda, another popular putting surface in this part of the country. The National is scheduled to be ready to reopen in the spring.

The Oconee is an underrated and underappreciated course, except to those who have played it. The Rees Jones design opened in 2002 and while there are only a couple of lake views, the course plays through trees as well as over and around some interior water features. The par-3 holes are the most memorable at The Oconee and you hardly see the same hole twice. Last fall, the course underwent a renovation in which some of the tree canopies on a few of the holes were moved back, giving the holes a more generous look off the tee and making them more playable in the bargain. All 18 greens were renovated and regressed with Champion Bermuda.

The Landing was the original course at Reynolds Plantation, designed by Bob Cupp and opened in 1986. Holes 2 through 5 run along the Lake Oconee shoreline and the remaining holes wind through trees and elevation change, making The Landing one of the more challenging courses at Reynolds. The second host course of the 2008 PGA Professional National Championship, The Landing underwent a major renovation in 2013, directed by Cupp.

Cupp also designed The Plantation, which opened in 1988. Built with a lot of dirt moved, The Plantation is hilly with severely sloping fairways along with large greens. Cupp came back in 2005 for a major renovation and The Plantation remains the only course at Reynolds with bentgrass greens.

The Creek Club is the only private club at Reynolds Plantation and is also the newest. Jim Engh designed the Creek Club, which opened in 2007. The course features the most rolling terrain at Reynolds and the most interior of the sites. There is an abundance of elevation change, along with dramatic bunkering and some pretty severe movement in the large greens. Engh built three greens at the signature par-5 18th, giving players a different look with each location. And while it might be a different look, the Creek Club - along with the rest of Reynolds Plantation - is worth well more than a second look.