

## Beyond the Boardwalk

An oasis of art and beauty in splashy Myrtle Beach

ANNE BOKMA

More than one million Canadians travel to Myrtle Beach every year in search of sunshine, surfs, shopping and the sweet feel of swinging a golf club on one of its celebrity-designed courses.

Not too many come to look at gardens and art. That's because most tourists aren't aware the area boasts one of the top horticultural attractions in the U.S., a stunning 550-acre public garden with the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of American figurative sculpture, set in a mythological landscape with hundreds of ancient southern live oaks dripping in Spanish moss. It's the kind of place where you can wander dreamily for hours, suffused in sunlight and captivated by the natural beauty of native plant life, from magnolias to palmettos, and the creative works of famous sculptors such as Daniel Chester French, who created the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Brookgreen Gardens is 30 kilometres from the tourist hustle of Myrtle Beach, with its manufactured attractions such as the Hollywood Wax Museum and Ripley's Believe It or Not!, as well as the mile-long Boardwalk lined with noisy arcades and kitschy souvenir shops. Spring break revellers and paunchy seniors flock to this vacation resort, known as the hub of the Grand Strand, a 100-kilometre string of beaches on the Atlantic Coast of South Carolina. It's not as hot as Florida — the average year-round temperature here is 24 C — but you'll shave six hours off your driving time.

And Myrtle Beach is keen to keep Canadians coming its way — its CanAm discounts, offered until the end of April, help make up for the low Canadian dollar with deals of up to 55 per cent off on many hotels and up to 30 per cent off selected attractions and restaurants.

On the drive to Brookgreen, stop for lunch in the quaint fishing village of Murrells Inlet, one of 14 distinct communities that make up the Myrtle Beach area. Dine on crab cakes and fried green tomatoes at the Dead Dog Saloon (named for the hundreds of photos of dearly departed canines customers have pinned on the walls), and watch pelicans swoop into the nearby marsh for some lunch of their own. Brook-



COURTESY OF BROOKGREEN GARDEN



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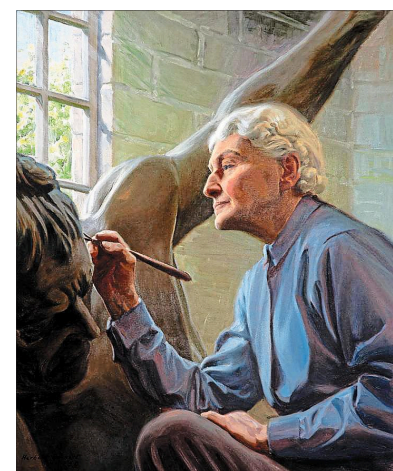
Brookgreen Gardens is a stunning 550-acre public garden with the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of American figurative sculpture. Top photo: Fountain of the Muses by Carl Miles.

green is just up the road — you'll know you're there when you see its signature image: a massive sculpture cast in aluminum, of two giant steeds rearing in combat, manes flying and muscles straining while a rider holds on

for dear life.

The Fighting Stallions is the work of Anna Hyatt Huntington, a woman ArtNews has called "the most famous New York sculptor you've never heard of." She and her husband, Archer

Milton Huntington, a philanthropist and son of a railroad magnate, were a rich and unconventional couple who came here in 1930 to purchase 9,000 acres of former rice plantations for \$225,000. Anna had contracted



COURTESY OF BROOKGREEN GARDENS

Portrait of New York sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington.

tuberculosis and needed a warm climate away from harsh New York City winters. And so they became the original snowbirds, packing their Scottish deerhounds, monkeys and birds into a custom-designed stretch aluminum trailer for the long drive every winter.

From the abandoned rice fields once worked by enslaved people, they transformed their land into a renowned statuary garden and animal habitat, as well as a site for their expansive 30-room Moorish-style winter retreat, known as Atalaya Castle, which

MYRTLE continues // G11

## Awesome Aussie adventures

STEVE MACNAULL

With the sun blazing and the temperature soaring to 37 C, it's time for a refreshing dip in the Pacific.

But, this is no ordinary ocean swim.

My plunge with my son, Alex, is framed by the Twelve Apostles, the magnificent limestone stacks towering 70 metres above the Pacific, 250 kilometres outside of Melbourne, Australia.

Despite the distance from the city, tourists and locals alike flock to the Apostles on day trips to be wowed by the natural won-

der that's one of the biggest attractions in the state of Victoria, of which Melbourne is the capital. The Apostles stand majestically, the tougher remnants of erosion of the nearby softer limestone-and-sandstone cliffs.

On a Bunyip Tours outing, the 500-kilometre round trip is no hardship for pleasure seekers. Guide Fiona drives the van along the Great Ocean Road, a two-lane ribbon of blacktop so spectacular it has "great" built right into its name. It's considered Australia's premier coastal drive for its constant killer views of the Pacific to one side and eucalyptus forests

on the other.

There are also ample stops at beaches that inspired international surf brands such as Ripcurl, Billabong and Roxy; the Kennett River to hand feed neon-hued king parrots; and Cape Otway to climb Australia's oldest lighthouse and have lunch at the adjacent café.

But, the Apostles are the star of the show and excitement reverberates in the van as we near them.

This is when Fiona informs us there are only eight Apostles, not the 12 promised in the name. As a

AUSSIE continues // G12



STEVE MACNAULL

The 243-kilometre Great Ocean Road hugs the Pacific from Torquay to Allensford.



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ANNE BOKMA

Alligator Bender by Nathaniel Choate.

## MYRTLE

continued from // G10

is open for guided tours. The property also includes Huntington State Park, a sweeping, wide-open beach area which offers some of the best bird watching on the east coast. And there's not a condo in sight.

Brookgreen is the impressive legacy of this couple who married late in life (she was 47, he was 53) and who never had children, although they cared for a vast menagerie of animals, including horses, snakes, bears, an alligator, and a monkey named Henrike who sat on Anna's shoulder. The daughter of a Harvard professor of paleontology, Anna showed an early interest in animals and their anatomy and first became prominent as an animal sculptor. She was listed in the 1910 census as one of only 12 women in the U.S. who earned more than \$50,000 a year. Anna would go on to create great figurative works, including a 1915 monument of Joan of Arc outside New York City's Central Park, the first public monument made by a woman and the first dedicated to a female historical figure.

Almost 2,000 sculptures by more than 400 artists are on display at Brookgreen, including many of Anna's creations. One of her most beautiful pieces is Diana of the Chase, a life-size bronze of the Roman goddess caught in the act of shooting her bow with a leaping whippet at her feet. It's situated in a tranquil reflecting pool and shaded by the thick outstretched limbs of a mighty oak. Another showstopper is Carl Milles' Fountain of the Muses, commissioned in 1929 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a delightful fountain sculpture with several figures, including a poet, architect, musician, painter and sculptor, representing the arts.

A \$16 ticket to Brookgreen lasts seven days and that's a good thing since there's so much to see and do here, including the Atalaya Castle, the butterfly house, a native wildlife zoo, children's garden, indoor art galleries, a labyrinth, walkways, garden paths and a poetry garden with verse inscribed on cement plaques ("I used to love my garden, but now my love is dead: I



COURTESY OF BROOKGREEN GARDENS

Wind on Water, by Richard McDermott Miller. Almost 2,000 sculptures by more than 400 artists are on display at Brookgreen.

found a Bachelor's Button in Black-eyed Susan's bed.") Its biggest draw of the year is Night of A Thousand Candles (weekends in December) when the gardens come to life amid the glow of thousands of hand-lit candles and sparkling lights.

This sculpture mecca and botanical marvel serves as spiritual retreat, an oasis of art and landscape architecture a world away from the carny vibe of the Boardwalk.

As my four-hour visit comes to an end, I bend my head to check a text on my phone. I should have known better — I slam right into the heavy branch of an oak tree. Nature has a lot to teach us, and sometimes it does it the old-school way, by hitting you smack-dab in the face.

Anne Bokma is an award-winning journalist and travel writer in Hamilton.

## Yoga takes off at the airport

CAMILLE HOHEB

Delayed flights and long layovers can lead to frustration over wasted hours sitting and waiting. Flying can also pose a health challenge.

That's where yoga comes in, helping to relieve mental and physical stress. Stress reduction is the top reason for taking a vacation, so flying should be as easy and pleasant as possible.

Along with healthier eating options, spas and private napping quarters, yoga rooms offer travelers another healthy amenity at the airport. According to the American Osteopathic Association, there are many physical benefits of yoga including enhanced flexibility, muscle strength, improved respiration and circulatory health as well as improved energy and vitality.

Yoga is on the rise with 36.7 million practitioners in the United States. What's especially interesting is that those who practise yoga are also involved in other forms of fitness such as running, cycling and weightlifting. There's a young, new generation of yoginis too: 37 per cent of yoga practitioners have children under 18 years old who also practise.

While flying has become more affordable and accessible, heightened security, crowding, delays and the feeling of a lack of control over your own schedule and

personal space all contribute to feeling anxious.

Yoga is a physical, mental and spiritual practice that includes meditation, breath control and body postures that stretches and strengthens muscles. Prolonged sitting, especially in tight airplane seats and seating areas decrease circulation and tightens leg, hip and back muscles.

Knowing there is a designated place to stretch, move, meditate or be silent can help passengers be more comfortable and help them feel better while waiting for a flight. Travelers can proactively make their airport experience better by mitigating these accumulated stressors.

With yoga thriving, it's refreshing to see that airports are addressing passengers' emotional and physical needs. Now found in regional and international airports worldwide, you can meditate, downward dog or just find a quiet place to clear your head before you fly.

Other airports are experimenting with temporary yoga space and teacher-led classes. For example, JetBlue at JFK launched free yoga for a week in 2016.

It's worth reviewing the airport website for available yoga rooms or other wellness-related amenities such as prayer and meditation rooms, healthy food options, spas, walking paths and gardens.

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