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Mastering The Masters

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Tips for getting tickets and attending the Masters Golf Tournament.

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Article Body:

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Master's Passes

Each April, the world's best come together to tee off for their place in history, at the Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta, GA. After a chilly winter break, the Master's kicks off the beginning of a new season for professional golfers. With Dogwoods and Magnolias in full bloom, perfectly manicured greens lined with tall stately Georgia Pines provide the picturesque backdrop for the greatest and most prestigious event in golf.

Winning the Masters will change a golfer's life forever. Many of the greats have shined here including Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Tom Watson and Tiger Woods. And some have unexplainably gone and never experienced victory - most notably Greg Norman, who has played in five Master's tournaments and never won.

But as beautiful as the Augusta National Golf Club is, most of us just dream of the chance to play the course or even be a spectator. Tickets are sold out months in advance and "waiting lists" are rumored to be in excess of ten years. So how do you get your ticket to the greatest tradition in golf? Here are some tips on how to get there and some "dos" and "don'ts" from people who know.

That's the ticket

Everyone who has a passion for golf wants the opportunity to experience the Master's, this April 3rd to the 9th - but where do you get tickets?

If you are not fortunate enough to have season passes, the best and most secure way to guarantee quality tickets is through a reputable and experienced ticket

broker/agency. They offer one-day ticket passes, weekend ticket passes, practice round play, VIP parties and wonderful packages that include tickets to the events, first class transportation, four star dining and accommodations that range from a basic hotel room to a 15,000 square foot home.

"Look for a full service broker that has a history of success with Master's packages" says Robbi Raitt, President of Empire Tickets, in Atlanta. "Make sure that your package can be customized to fit your needs, so that it will be an experience unique to your personal taste and confirm that your agent will have someone on-site during the event to offer assistance if needed."

Raitt advises that a customer should never be shy about asking for references and that the best rule to live by when purchasing tickets/ packages for any event is tired and true - if it seems too good to be true, it is.

And whatever you do, don't throw those tickets away when the event is over. "Tickets are heirlooms." Eric O'Brien, long-time Masters fan says, "Going to the Masters is a family tradition. Old tickets are passed down along with the great stories that go with them."

Way to go!

Getting into the Master's is not cheap but worth every penny. Here is some advice on ways to optimize your experience from some "old pros".

Food. Come hungry because the concession stands get an A + from patrons for taste and quality. Even though the tickets are pricey, once inside a soft drink is still about .35 cents and those famous sandwiches, egg salad, ham & cheese, or the house specialty pimento cheese, are still only about \$1.00. Of course there are also many excellent restaurants in the area.

Shops. The Masters logo is recognized worldwide so don't forget visit the two "outdoor golf shops." The one at the main gate is the big one - every Masters souvenir you can think of can be found there. At the back gate - on the back of hole 5, gate 10 - is where a smaller shop is located. People line up to get in both shops to buy golf shirts, sweaters, hats, seats, glasses, briefcases, screensavers, and calendars -- anything with the logo. A good tip is to visit these at the end of the day, so you don't have to carry your purchase around with you.

Attire & Etiquette. Spectators of the Masters dress in golf shoes/attire as a sign of respect for the game. The Masters Tournament is an international competition and the contestants are invited guests. Everyone should be treated with courtesy and respect.

Everyone is requested to display the proper customs of etiquette, decorum and behavior, and to obey all Tournament policies, signs and verbal instructions of Tournament officials.

For the safety of everyone, and in keeping with policy established at major sporting events, running is considered to be unacceptable behavior.

In fairness to spectator access and viewing, only one stool/seat will be allowed per person entering the grounds. Seats in observation stands are not to be reserved and stools/seats are not to be unattended for any inordinate length of time.

Cell phones, beepers and other electronic devices are strictly prohibited on the grounds at all times. Cameras are strictly prohibited on Tournament days. Anyone violating this policy will be subject to removal from the grounds and the permanent loss of ticket(s).

Play. Learn the spectator holes. The Masters course is set up so you can see several holes from several locations. The Spectator Guide, which is given out at all entrances, will show you how to find the best holes for spectators. Get a paring sheet - that will show you how to spot groups on the golf course. If you want to see someone in particular, the paring sheet will help you plot out your strategy to get a good view.

"A must see event, in my mind, is spending time on the 16th green, a jewel of a Par 3 where so many tournaments have been won and lost," explains Glen Jackson, principle of Jackson Spalding Communications, in Atlanta and long-time Masters fan. "Spending time on the practice range is great fun and looking down Magnolia Lane, which harkens back to a time long ago and spending time on 12 and 13 are mandatory."

The Hangouts. The "Hangouts" include the practice tee. The first tee and under the first tee near the clubhouse. The putting green, where you can see the 18th & 9th green and 10th tee-box. The 16th green is a traditional gathering place. A par 3 (The Par 3 course is a gem. It is worth a peak. Sometimes you might find some former Masters champions playing away from the crowds). The "big pine at16" is known by a lot of people. A huge pine tree is behind the green and does stand out.

Another interesting place to visit is the Eisenhower cabin - behind the putting green. President and Mrs. Eisenhower stayed there when on the grounds. He was a member. There are a number of cabins on the grounds that are used during the tournament but the general public can't go in them, for the most part.

Great Expectations.

If you have never been to the Master's before here is a short list of things to

expect, according to Ed Presnell, Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce President and CEO.

- Get there early, stay late and really just enjoy the day. The traffic and the crowds take many people by surprise. Don't try to do it all at one time. Get to the front of the golf course and work your way back.
- Be prepared to walk and wear comfortable shoes.
- Watch the fan behavior. Watching people is part of the fun.
- Unless you have a particular golfer you want to follow, try to see the golf course first.
- There may be some protest this year surrounding the club's admission policy.

But most importantly, if you are a golf enthusiast, expect to have an unforgettable experience steeped in history. Since 1934 the Master's has showcased legends of the sport. In 1980 Seve Ballesteros won, becoming the youngest player to date (just 23 years old) to be crowned a winner. At age 46 in 1986, Jack Nicklaus donned his sixth "green jacket". And in 1997 Tiger Woods broke the tournament four day scoring record that had stood for 32 years. Not bad for a game with no mascots.

Written by Donna Garcia, VP of Sales and Marketing for Empire Tickets in Atlanta, GA

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