



The Gasparilla Inn & Club's scenic course plays along the water. The inn looks as it did decades ago (left), thanks to a restoration. Bottom: The Belleview Biltmore, circa 1900.



GASPARILLA INN & CLUB, BOCA GRANDE

BACKSTORY: Developed by the Boca Grande Land Co. for wealthy northern guests, the Gasparilla Inn opened in 1913 on sleepy Gasparilla Island, midway between Sarasota and Ft. Myers. (Former president George H.W. Bush brings his family to the island almost every Christmas.) Tycoons, including J.P. Morgan, and Boston society flocked to the isolated hotel, arriving by boat or bridge from the mainland. Long popular for its deep-sea fishing, the 62-room hotel and 80 cottages are only 300 yards from the Gulf of Mexico, and the marine influence is evident throughout: A six-foot-long tarpon is mounted behind the front desk. **WHAT'S NEW:** The resort has upgraded its Beach Club, dining areas and guest rooms (all with high-speed Internet). There's a new spa with 10 treatment rooms and two pools, and the cottages have also

been updated. **GOLF:** As low-key as the inn, the 1928 golf course—its designer is unknown—was reworked by Pete Dye in 2004. Sixteen holes sit on a separate island; there are no tee times, and you can begin your round on any hole. Nos. 12 to 17 play along the water, offering breathtaking views of Charlotte Harbor. The course plays fairly from the forward tees, thanks to Alice Dye's input. **INDULGENCES:** Yoga in the Fitness Center while gazing at the Gulf of Mexico; dining alfresco at The Pink Elephant; renting a boat for a sunset sail. **RATES:** Open October to June; rooms, \$173-\$409; cottages, \$346-\$748; gasparillainn.com. —C.S.