

Monterey

As one of the world's pre-eminent golf destinations, Pebble Beach maintains a special place in American golf lore

By Rich Skyzinski

The allure of Pebble Beach, like the waves that crash upon its shores, is steady, strong and relentless. For nine decades, golfers have been drawn to the breathtaking vistas of Carmel Bay, what famed author Robert Louis Stevenson once labeled “the most felicitous meeting of land and sea in creation.”

And while the acclaimed creation of Jack Neville and Douglas S. Grant at Pebble Beach remains America's crown jewel of golf, a higher-priced version of St. Andrews, if you will, there are more than enough additional choices in and around Carmel and Monterey, Calif., to make it a superb destination, even if the choice is made to never step foot on 17-Mile Drive.

The newest gems on the Monterey Peninsula are Bayonet and Black Horse, courses built in 1954 and 1964, respectively, on the grounds of the Fort Ord Military Base. In the late

1990s, as part of the Defense Realignment Closure in which many military facilities were downsized or turned over to private enterprise, the courses were purchased by the town of Seaside, and in 2005 the property was leased to the Seaside Resort Development Corporation.

The company poured some \$13 million into an extensive renovation that was completed late in 2008. Golf course architect Gene Bates kept much of the routing intact at both courses, but his work in removing trees and clearing out dense undergrowth resulted in the creation of spectacular new views of Monterey Bay. The old Bayonet Course had the reputation of being the toughest course on the Peninsula, thanks to low-hanging trees along both sides of holes that made pitching back into the fairway often the only play following wayward tee shots, and while Bayonet still offers plenty of narrow driving corridors, Bates removed the foreboding sense of claustrophobia and allowed new ground to be bathed in sunlight.

Following the No. 1 handicap hole, the par-5 eighth that customarily plays just short of 600 yards, Bates created what might become known as one of the state's toughest approach shots. From the middle tees, the dogleg-right ninth plays to about 445 yards with a second shot to a green sitting some 50 feet above fairway level. It unquestionably is the highlight of the round for any double-digit handicapper who reaches this green in two.

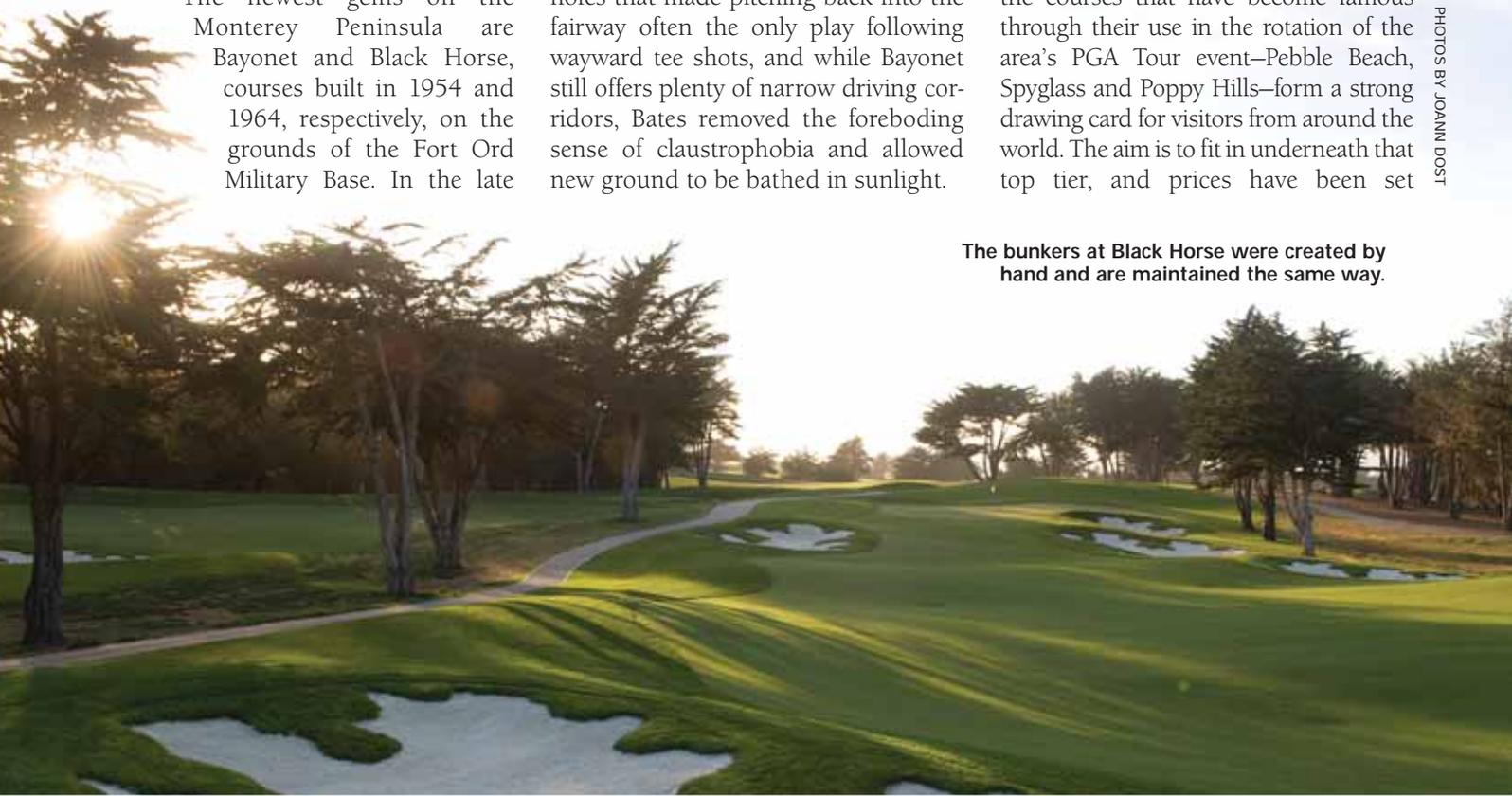
Black Horse allows for more room off the tee, but its green complexes might be more difficult. There are places where a player can use a putter from a collection area just off the green, or a wedge—or both when the first decision backfires and the ball comes rolling back to your feet.

What is immediately noticed on the Black Horse is the unique design of the bunkers. They have small peninsulas and inlets, created by hand and maintained the same way. In conjunction with a property that offers so many sweeping vistas, the bunkers are visually stunning as well.

The new management acknowledges the courses that have become famous through their use in the rotation of the area's PGA Tour event—Pebble Beach, Spyglass and Poppy Hills—form a strong drawing card for visitors from around the world. The aim is to fit in underneath that top tier, and prices have been set

The bunkers at Black Horse were created by hand and are maintained the same way.

PHOTOS BY JOANN DOST





Views of Monterey Bay are frequent from Bayonet and Black Horse.

accordingly. For what it costs to play Pebble Beach, a player can get three or four rounds on Bayonet or Black Horse.

“There are people who come to the area to play the Pebble Beach Resort courses and that is with good reason,” says Dick Fitzgerald, project director for Seaside Resort Development. “We want Bayonet and Black Horse to serve as that next level of more moderately priced places to play. The wholesale enhancements to Bayonet and Black Horse are staggering and golfers will discover two challenging, strategic and well-conditioned layouts that will rapidly emerge as must-play courses on the Monterey Peninsula.”

Over at Pebble Beach—inside the “forest,” as the locals say—are four well-known courses all open to the public: Pebble Beach, Spyglass Hill, the Links at Spanish Bay, and Poppy Hills, created by the Northern California Golf Association in 1986 as the country’s first course built by a state or regional golf association. [Note: Because of the popularity of these courses, starting times often are reserved weeks or months in advance. Therefore, visitors are advised

to handle starting times in conjunction with their travel arrangements, i.e., well in advance.]

There is no argument that each of these offers a memorable golf experience. The first five holes at Spyglass wind through seaside dunes and are nothing short of magnificent; Spanish Bay was created with firm turf and fescue grasses, designed to replicate a true Scottish links; Poppy Hills is a fine test of golf and the most affordable of the lot; and Pebble Beach speaks for itself. Not only are the views from Pebble Beach known to golfers around the world, but history has been made there as well.

Two of golf’s greatest shots were struck at its famed par-3 17th in U.S. Opens played there: a 1-iron by Jack Nicklaus that hit the flagstick in the final round of his win in 1972, and Tom Watson’s 71st-hole pitch-in from the deep rough in 1982.

Since much of Carmel and Monterey is high-end, without question the best value a golfer can find on the peninsula is at Pacific Grove Golf Links. For less than \$50, this unpretentious municipal course, located on perhaps the area’s premium piece of property, is not to be missed. First-time players often don’t believe this is a municipal course, and its heritage belies that, too; one nine was designed by H. Chandler Egan, a two-time U.S. Amateur champion and one of the game’s top amateurs at the turn of the 20th century, and the second nine was created by Neville, a co-designer of Pebble Beach. Bunkers are few and the greens are small, a joyful trip back to the time when golf was a simpler game.

Before Spanish Bay and the courses at Bandon Dunes in Oregon, Pacific Grove might have been the closest thing to an actual links in the U.S. Still, with its spectacular water views, this might be the course that makes you return to Monterey. 🌍



TRAVEL TIPS

From O’Hare, United has non-stop flights to Monterey, Palm Springs and Spokane; American offers non-stop service to Monterey and Palm Springs; Spirit flies non-stop to Myrtle Beach.

From Midway, Southwest flies non-stop to Spokane.

Virtually all airlines charge for checked baggage, but many airlines waive these fees for certain membership levels of their frequent flyer program. Check with your airline to see if you qualify.

Do not overpack. Even for airlines that waive baggage fees for their frequent flyers, most will charge for overweight baggage. The maximum weight for golf clubs at American Airlines is 70 pounds, but it is 50 pounds for many others. The fee for oversize baggage can be \$100 or more.

When traveling outside the 50 states, have a valid passport, even if it is not required.

Before you leave, check the long-range weather forecast at your destination so you are able to pack appropriately.

Items to consider packing in your golf bag: extra socks; sunscreen; bug spray; a rain suit; an umbrella; Band-Aids.

— Amy Parker

Upper Rockies

With tranquil lakes and an abundance of wildlife, Idaho offers a true outdoors experience

By Rich Skyzinski and Wayne Mills

For the golfer whose outdoor interests include hunting and fishing, it takes a bit of planning and traveling in order to get sufficiently away from the hubbub of big-city life. It's not as easy as tossing the gear in the car and making a 30-minute drive.

Though there are good spots for the outdoorsman within Illinois and each of the neighboring states, prime territory is far from where we call home. In an expansive part of the Western United States, defined roughly as an area west of Minnesota and north of Iowa, the upper portion of the Continental Divide is remote but spectacular. The most difficult question to answer is: How do I get there?

When it comes time for golf, Circling Raven Golf Club, located on the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, about 25 miles south of the city of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, is not to be missed. This is a terrific golf experience with players being presented with an unending variety of shots uninterrupted by any signs of city life. Golf course designer Gene Bates was given a fabulous piece of property and crafted 18 holes acclaimed by virtually every major golf publication. Golfers on the incoming nine sense that they have the golf course to themselves because no hole can be seen from another.

In the picturesque city of Coeur d'Alene, the hub of activity takes place at the lakeside resort of the same name. Its golf offering is what a resort course

is supposed to be: well maintained and fun. Though on the shortish side—from the middle (tan) markers there are two par 3s less than 125 yards and three par 4s less than 300—there is no shortage of pretty views. The par-3 14th features a floating green, moved via a set of underwater cables so the hole can play to various distances.

Perhaps the best course in the area is Indian Canyon Golf Course, which sits almost adjacent to the Spokane Airport. It's a good idea to toss a camera in the bag because players are certain to pull it out a couple of times around this tour through hillsides covered in 80- to 100-foot-tall ponderosa pines. The course is run by Spokane's Park and Recreation Department and is one of the best values you'll find anywhere. Be forewarned: Players who like to walk and carry their clubs are in for a good workout.

Further to the southeast, Sun Valley Resort, in Idaho's Sawtooth Mountains, stakes its claim as the first American ski resort. Back in the 1930s, Averell Harriman, chairman of the Union Pacific Railroad, was looking to create a great American resort fashioned after some of the grand alpine resorts of Europe. He enlisted the services of Count



The green at Coeur d'Alene's 14th hole (right) is in a new location daily, but there's less water to deal with at Circling Raven's par-5 17th (below).



Felix Schaffgotsch to find the perfect location for his resort, to be reached by train, of course. The Count was about to end his search when he heard about the old mining town of Ketchum, Idaho. Upon reaching the Ketchum Valley, Count Felix was overwhelmed by the area and wired his employer, saying: "This combines more delightful features than any place I have ever seen in Switzerland, Austria or the U.S. for a winter resort."



COURTESY COEUR D'ALENE GOLF RESORT AND SPA

Trail Creek Course, a highly regarded 1970s Robert Trent Jones, Jr., design, plays mostly in the valley along and across the rushing waters of Trail Creek.

The real stunner is the newly opened first nine holes of the magnificent White Clouds Course. Designed by former Jones associate Don Knotts, White Clouds winds its way up some 400 feet onto the hillside and provides stunning views of the Bald Mountain ski slopes and the towns and valleys below. There are few vistas in golf that can match those from White Clouds. The back nine will play back down to the valley floor and along Trail Creek as well. When White Clouds is complete, it promises to be one of the best golf courses in the West.

When the golf clubs have been put away in exchange for rod and reel, it won't take long to

The Count's enthusiasm spread to Harriman, who rushed to join him, and within days purchased 4,300 acres of what was soon to become Sun Valley. After a frantic seven-month construction schedule, Sun Valley Resort opened for the winter in 1936.

The resort was an instant success. Local wildlife was seen sharing the mountain with European nobility and Hollywood royalty. Clark Gable, Errol Flynn, Claudette Colbert, Bing Crosby and Gary Cooper were all regulars in the lodge, while world champions, including Don and Gretchen Fraser, Gracie Carter Lindley and Andy Hennig used the mountain for Olympic training. Ernest Hemingway first visited in 1939 and returned many

times, writing "For Whom the Bell Tolls" in room 206 of The Lodge. Eventually Hemingway would move to Ketchum, where he died in 1961 and is buried there.

Sun Valley has been benevolently owned since 1977 by Earl Holdings, who also owns Sinclair Oil.

Although originally envisioned as a winter resort, Sun Valley has blossomed into a wonderful, warm-weather destination as well. Golf has become the centerpiece of the summer in Sun Valley and the centerpiece of the golf is a sumptuous new 58,000-square-foot clubhouse that was given an unlimited budget and then exceeded it.

The golf course offerings are very good and getting better. The 18-hole

realize this state is an outdoorsman's paradise.

Want proof? Idaho lakes and rivers have produced records for rainbow trout (37 pounds), northern pike (38 pounds, 9 ounces) and chinook salmon (42 pounds).

Idaho offers some 21.6 million square miles of wilderness, which contains some of the country's best hunting opportunities. Approximately two-thirds is public land and a new state Fish and Game program, Access Yes!, is providing additional land every year.

The season opens in October for North Idaho's deer, elk and moose. Bear season runs from late summer through October, then again in the spring.

The Caribbean

With the proper planning, golf in the islands is a hands-down winner

By Rich Skyzinski

Planning a golf getaway to the Caribbean isn't as easy as it might sound.

For starters, some islands offer only a few courses and the quality often is suspect. Doing your homework and doing it thoroughly is required in order to plan a reasonable itinerary.

Additionally, it hardly is convenient or inexpensive to hopscotch one's way around the Caribbean in order to play some of the best courses. It might sound like fun to play in the Bahamas one day and Puerto Rico the next, but a little research shows that to be impractical; it's the equivalent of flying from Chicago to Salt Lake City.

One more consideration to keep in mind: Although a getaway from Chicago might sound idyllic when the leaves start to fall and there's noticeably less daylight, hurricane season officially lasts through November. Gentle island breezes are one thing; gale-force winds and needing a weather radio are another.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

There's all the golf anyone would want on one island.

Cap Cana is an exquisite resort with six golf courses planned. Jack Nicklaus is scheduled to design three of them, and his first creation there, Punta Espada, is considered a must-play site. Eight holes were routed along the



Cap Cana in the Dominican Republic is home to a Champions Tour event.

COURTESY CAP CANA

shoreline and magnificent water views are provided from virtually every step on the property. Punta Espada was the first course in the Dominican Republic to be selected for a PGA Tour-sanctioned event; the Champions Tour is in the midst of a three-year agreement to play the Cap Cana Championship there.

Casa de Campo generally is regarded as the premier golf destination in the Caribbean. Pete Dye's acclaimed Teeth of the Dog can play as long as 7,471 yards, and with seven holes playing along a series of rocky coves, it is a brilliant and memorable golf experience. The par-4 15th is one of the world's best ocean holes. Two other courses here, Dye Fore and the Links, feature dramatic elevation changes and, in places, are more reminiscent of inland layouts more commonly found in the British Isles. Parts of Dye Fore sit some 300 feet above the Chavon River and offer postcard panoramas of both the turquoise Caribbean and the surrounding mountains.

Nick Faldo was provided a stunning piece of property at Roco Ki with which to work. At the Faldo Legacy Course, there are holes routed through a lush jungle, others that help to frame four lakes, and several that command unforgettable shots on cliffs pounded by the crashing waves. The 18th, with two shots over ocean inlets, might be one of the best finishing holes in the Caribbean.

JAMAICA

Half Moon Resort packs a good one-two punch: The golf course is included on the 2009 ranking of best courses in the Caribbean and Mexico by *Golfweek*, and *Caribbean World* magazine named the resort the best in the Caribbean. Robert Trent Jones, Sr., designed the course and it recently was renovated by Roger Rulewich. Golfers of any skill level will enjoy the course—tees start at 5,100 yards and go up to 7,110—that was the site of a PGA European Senior Tour event in 2003 and '04.

Located just minutes from the Ritz-Carlton Golf & Spa Resort, the White Witch is an attractive mix of holes routed over mountainous terrain, through thick and lush forests, and dramatic waterfront



COURTESY CAP CANA RESORT

From the Dominican Republic: Cap Cana (above) and Casa de Campo (right).



COURTESY CASA DE CAMPO

terrain. It helps to be a good putter here because the greens generally are fast and designer Robert von Hagge built some severe undulation into many of them.

The course associated with the Breezes at Runaway Bay offers a more moderately priced 18 holes. Expect to find good conditions regardless of the season. Caddies are a big help, particularly with the greens, and unlike many new courses created along jagged cliffs and unforgiving parts of the waterfront, golfers seldom lose a ball here. The course, which offers some very long par 4s and challenging par 3s, is only minutes from the resort, and another plus is that green fees are included in the cost of the resort.

PUERTO RICO

The Dorado Beach Resort has four courses from which to choose, but the standouts are the East and West, and either represents a can't-lose proposition. There are additional similarities: Both

were opened in the 1960s, both were designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr., and within the last decade both underwent changes that resulted in noticeable upgrades. The par-5 fourth on the East is one of the world's best holes. It is a double dogleg and there are two water hazards that golfers must negotiate. But depending on conditions, an accomplished player can try to carry one or both, thereby cutting up to 100 yards off the length of the hole. There are dozens of ways to play the hole, providing golfers with an unlimited number of strategic options. 🌴

DESTINATION

Golf Getaways | Perfect spot for a road trip

Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Stretching up and down the South Carolina coastline, the golf options along the Grand Strand are endless.

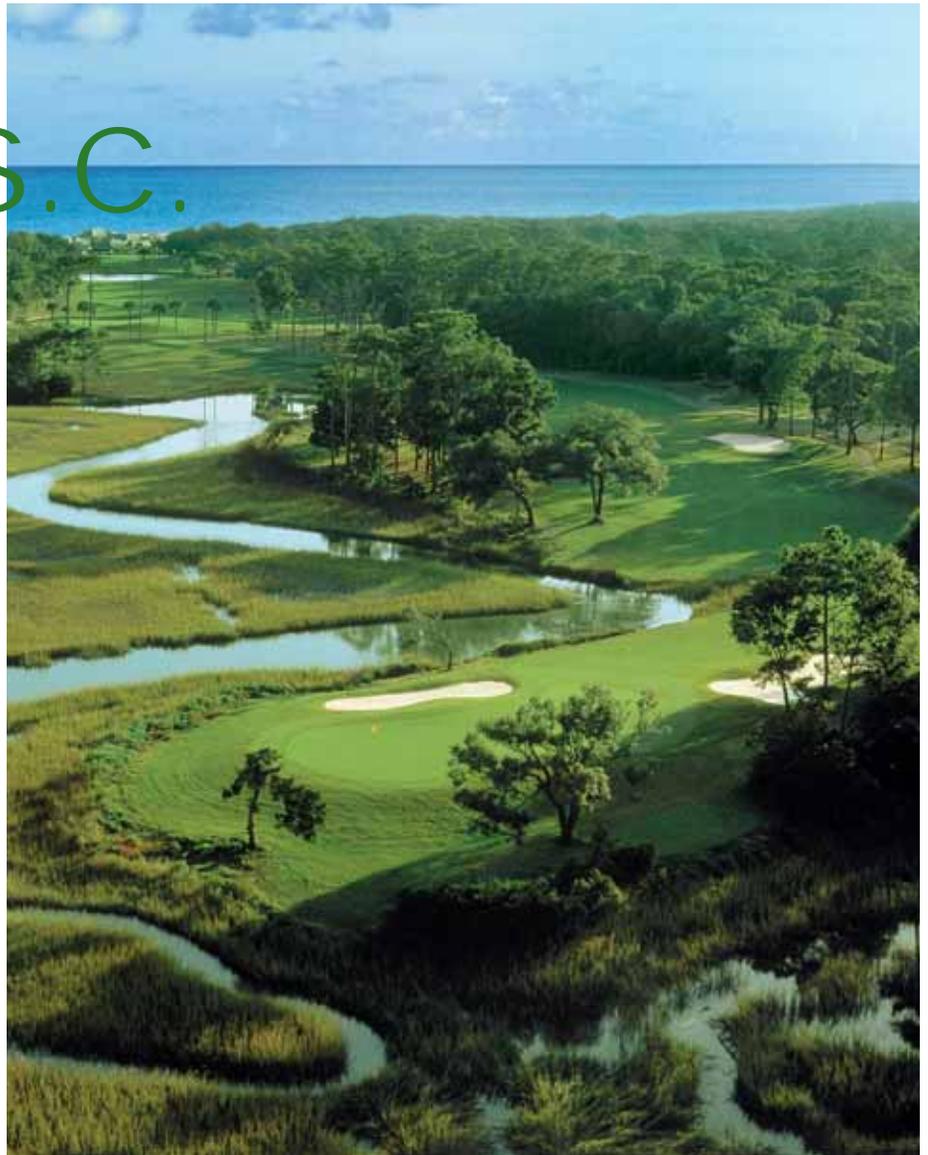
By Alan Bondin

Selection is not a problem in the Myrtle Beach golf market. Rather, too many options and too little time is the dilemma most golfers face.

The Grand Strand, an 80-mile stretch of coastline from Georgetown, S.C., to Southport, N.C., hit a peak with 120 courses in 2001. That total has come down to just over 100, with all but six open to the public, after a rash of closures from 2005-07 in favor of redevelopment.

Courses vary from inexpensive layouts frequented mostly by locals to layouts ranked among the best in the nation with green fees that reach \$200, and there is variety and quality in the north, south and central Strand.

The Dunes Club is the second-oldest course on the Strand and the one course that actually abuts the Atlantic Ocean. The clubhouse sits along the dunes backing the beach, and the ocean is behind the green on the par-3 ninth hole. The Robert Trent Jones layout opened in 1948 and features slightly elevated greens that put an emphasis on approach shots. The first four holes on the back nine make outstanding use of the terrain, and there are few holes in golf as entertaining as the 13th: a U-shaped par-5 with a daunting second shot over water. The



Top: The Dunes Club winds its way around, alongside the Atlantic Ocean; Right: The Founders Club highlights natural areas.

PHOTOS COURTESY THE BRANDON AGENCY

A COASTAL GOLF MECCA AWAITS

Dunes Club is perhaps the course most suited for tournament play in the area, having been the site of an LPGA major, the PGA Tour Q-School final and the season-ending Champions Tour Championship from 1994-1999. It is semi-private but can be accessed by visitors through more than 50 affiliated hotels and golf package providers.

Tidewater Plantation and Golf is one of the most stunning courses on the East Coast. Several holes run along the Intracoastal Waterway or surrounding tidal salt marshes in the Cherry Grove inlet. The Ken Tomlinson design, with a layout assist from Rees Jones, has a pair of dramatic par 3s that back up to each other along a marsh, and par 5s that are reachable but not without risk, including two that curl around the marsh.

True Blue Plantation is one of the more treacherous and dramatic courses on the Strand. It was one of two courses in Pawleys Island designed by innovative architect Mike Strantz before he died of cancer, along with a highly acclaimed sister course, Caledonia Golf & Fish Club. The course has dramatic bunkering and requires precise shotmaking, and has an unusual five par 3s and five par 5s, including three that are at least 599 yards.

Leopard's Chase Golf Club in Sunset Beach, N.C., is one of the latest creations of local architect Tim Cate, who has designed a number of courses on the south coast of North Carolina. It's an attractive layout made difficult by a multitude of bunkers and fast, undulating bentgrass greens. It features ornamental grasses throughout, with boulders embedded with seashells lining the walls of many water hazards, and a waterfall near the 18th green.

The Founders Club of Pawleys Island was designed by Thomas Walker on the site of the Sea Gull Golf Club. Players who are not hitting out of sand are driving on it as every hole is

DON'T BE FOOLED. Golf courses in the Myrtle Beach area compete with each other for rounds from vacationing golfers.

But the willingness to cooperate in the midst of the competition is what has allowed the Grand Strand to become a golf mecca.

The marketing cooperative, Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday, is what binds the layouts.

It includes 78 of the area's nearly 100 public courses, as well as about 90 accommodations providers and golf package providers that combine rounds and beds for visiting players.

Golf Holiday's budget to promote and market the area reached approximately \$8 million in 2008, primarily through member contributions and some matching state funds.

Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday got its start in 1963 when a handful of course and hotel operators formed Golf Holiday. It merged with another marketing company and became Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday in 1967.

One of its founders, Cecil Brandon,

served as the volunteer executive director of the cooperative for three decades.

In addition to marketing and promoting the area, Golf Holiday stages several events including the 26-year PGA Tour Superstore World Amateur Handicap Championship, which was sponsored by DuPont for 19 years and has attracted at least 3,000 golfers every year since 1991.

Golf Holiday sponsored and convinced Golf Channel programming executives to film and air 12 episodes of the 2008 show "Road Trip: Myrtle Beach," a reality-type program that followed the adventures of a golfing foursome composed of former PGA Tour member Charlie Rymer, musicians Josh Kelley and Mark Bryan, and female touring professional Perry Swenson.

Competition and cooperation between courses in Myrtle Beach continue to keep it among the world's most competitive golf markets.

— Alan Bondin



No. 8 on the South course at Thistle Golf Club

surrounded by vast waste bunkers. Cart paths are needed only around tees and greens, and each hole has five tee boxes that often are islands amid natural areas. Many fairways were shaped to include changes in elevation, while mounding and pot bunkers add to difficulty.

The Barefoot Resort Dye Club is the toughest of the four high-end courses that opened simultaneously in 1999, and might be the most difficult course on the Strand. It is plenty long, and, in typical Pete Dye fashion, is visually imposing off the tee with waste bunkers on nearly every hole, countless pot bunkers, water hazards, wetlands and mounding throughout the layout. High native grasses lurk on the periphery of holes and many fairways are elevated with trouble below on both sides. 🌿

Alan Bondin covers golf for the Myrtle Beach Sun.

Palm Springs

A winter oasis, Palm Springs offers favorable conditions across desert terrain

By Matt McKay

Dino. Ike. Arnie. Bob. Francis Albert. All used to flock to the Southern California desert from across the country in search of perfect conditions, whether they be for golf or martinis on the veranda.

It's true, some of the quaintness is gone from Palm Springs. The tradeoff is, golf abounds in this oasis, especially during the peak tourist season from January through April. The courses, style, and class the 1950s elite enjoyed are still available to the modern

traveler. Visitors simply have to know what they're looking for and where to find it in the modern, grown-up and grown-in Coachella Valley.

La Quinta Resort has five golf courses available to guests, including the iconic PGA West Stadium Course and the Nicklaus Tournament Course, both of which serve as venues for the final stage of PGA Tour qualifying. The Stadium Course, generally considered to be Pete Dye's pièce de résistance, has been softened over the years. But the insidious landforms, uneven fairways and some of the world's deepest bunkers still ensure the sternest test of golf. The Nicklaus is a fine example of the Golden Bear's design principles employed in a desert landscape. Instead of carrying a barranca or pond, the fairways and



PHOTO COURTESY LA QUINTA RESORT

greens are sandwiched between traditional sand bunkers and the traditional look of the ancient desert.

The La Quinta Mountain Course, running along and through the Santa Rosa Mountains, is just right for players who like a rugged, natural terrain. The Dunes Course offers two of the desert's most memorable holes: the 191-yard, par-3 sixth—jokingly called the easiest par 5 in the valley—and the 433-yard, par-4 17th, a dogleg left around a large pond. Resort guests also have access to the PGA West Greg Norman Course. It's likely the most playable course in the rota, with fewer forced carries and hardpan desert beyond the turf.

Built for and recently added to the Bob Hope Classic rotation on the PGA Tour, SilverRock in La Quinta is worth pointing out because of its beauty, challenge, significance to the tour, and its proximity to other golf resorts hidden within La Quinta, Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage. The golf course is set at the base of the Santa Rosa and Coral Mountains, and wanders through several outcroppings and exposures. There are plans for a future second course, hotel, and clubhouse.

The JW Marriott Desert Springs in Palm Desert speaks to the days in the 1980s when Palm Springs became the Coachella Valley as other municipalities became involved in larger destination developments. There are two 18-hole Ted Robinson-designed golf courses. The Palm course, which sits more on the front of the property, is the more popular course, featuring picturesque holes and dramatic waterscapes. The Valley Course's dominant feature is landforms that, for the most part, have been positioned to help the resort player have a great time in a timely manner.

Built in 2007, the casino tower in Indio, owned and operated by the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, is accompanied by the Clive Clark-designed Eagle Falls Golf Course in Fantasy Springs, Calif. A traditional, wall-to-wall turf course set in the desert,



PHOTO COURTESY SILVERROCK RESORT

Left: The PGA West Greg Norman course; Above: The 10th hole at SilverRock Resort.

Clark's wide fairways are offset by well-positioned, punitive bunkers and native grasses lining the playing areas. Recovery shots and big benders must avoid this grass or be prepared to suffer the consequences. The par-5 18th features a grand waterfall feeding a pond that protects the left side of the fairway and green.

Owned and operated by the Agua Caliente band of Cahuilla Indians, the South Course at Indian Canyons Resort was renovated in 2004 by Casey O'Callaghan and features awe-inspiring views of the San Jacinto Mountains. The North Course, formerly Canyon Country Club, now is part of the resort. A

traditional 1950s course, the William Bell layout wanders through the mid-century modern houses of South Palm Springs.

Indian Wells Resort, the former home of the Skins Game, offers two courses, the Celebrity and Players courses, with four hotel properties on the resort grounds (Hyatt Grand Champions, Renaissance Esmeralda, Miramonte, and Indian Wells). The Celebrity Course was redesigned in 2006 by Clark and is famous for its garden-like setting. The Players Course, updated by John Fought just three years ago, utilizes wide fairways to take players out into the desert before returning to the shadows of the resort buildings. 🌿

Matt McKay is a freelance writer based in Palm Springs, Calif.



WEATHERING the

Storm

The trend of fractional living is gaining popularity as Chicagoans look for extended winter golf getaways

By Chelan David

Paul Hindsley knew he wanted a place in Palm Springs, Calif., where he and his family could, for several weeks during the winter, escape the bone-chilling Chicago air.

Drawn by warm weather, stunning scenery and first-class golf amenities, Hindsley looked at several properties in the area. Owning a home outright, however, felt like too large a commitment. And time shares had a negative stigma to the 49-year-old investment banker.

Then a friend suggested fractional

living, which allows co-owners to own luxury homes at a fraction of a sole ownership cost. Unlike time shares, fractional interests are secured by a deed to a specific home; the interest can be mortgaged, sold or willed just like any other real estate purchase. It is a growing industry in popular destinations such as mountain or beach resorts, and Southern California has proved to be a popular choice to Chicagoans.

After familiarizing himself with the fractional concept, including the ongoing investment plans, the reservation system, access to golf and sale scenarios, Hindsley purchased a one-ninth interest in a freestanding villa at the Residence Club at PGA West in La Quinta.

“Traveling great distances to warm weather locations from Chicago makes it hard to own a property and dedicate the

time and resources to make it a true home,” says Hindsley. “The fractional option is a great step, particularly if you believe you will be able to get away in the winter/spring three-five weeks a year.”

Dean Poulos, owner of Homer’s Ice Cream in Wilmette, also opted for fractional living at PGA West as a respite from the Windy City’s brutal winters. He compared the residence club’s amenities to a four-star hotel and relishes the flexibility of use and lack of cleaning and maintenance responsibilities. Also, the weather and access to golf are huge pluses for Poulos and his wife, Sandy.

“The Palm Springs area,” he says, “has incredible weather with no humidity, beautiful scenery and amazing golf

 **Chicago**
Average daily low
in January: **18°F**

PHOTO BY DAVIDMARTYN/DREAMSTIME.COM

courses.” And, naturally, there’s the luxury of being able to play those courses in January or February—in shorts.

According to Ted Lennon, president of Lowe Destination Development Desert Operations, fractional living has gained momentum in golf communities during the last couple of years. With residential real estate off in most places around the country, it has proved to be attractive since it requires less capital.

Says Lennon, “It is affordable luxury and offers the flexibility that second homeowners seek.”

At Stone Eagle, a 700-acre private golf community in Palm Desert, another Palm Springs suburb, the fractional ownership program consists of three fully furnished homes. Prices start in the high \$200,000s for two-bedroom residences and go up to the high \$400,000s for four-bedroom residences. Concierge services at the resort include pre-arrival groceries and reserved starting times at the Tom Doak-designed golf course. Owners can select three scheduled weeks in-season and any other time of the year subject to availability.

Reservation policies for fractional owners vary from property to property, but many, such as the Residence Club, have a rotating selection priority. “We believe the fairest way to allocate time is the use of a rotating priority system, which moves owners to the front of the line,” explained Marc Bailes, owner of the Residence Club’s corporate legal entity. “Once there, that owner will then drop to the end and work back to the beginning.”

During mid-summer, Hindsley sends in his request for the specific time periods he would like to stay at the villa and, by August, knows which weeks will be designated as his. Last year, his first full year at the Residence Club, he had no problem making reservations for the weeks he wanted.

“We don’t expect that to happen every year, but we believe the combination of the reservation system and nine members per villa will enable us to receive at least two of our priority weeks each year,” he said.

The three-bedroom villas at the Residence Club consist of 3,300 square

feet and are fully furnished. While it’s a comfortable fit for Hindsley, his wife and their four children, he also enjoys the preferential pricing and starting times at five available golf courses. Some of the courses are challenging; others are suitable for his 11-year-old son and his wife, who only play occasionally.

So far he is happy with his purchase. “Our plan is to maintain this fractional ownership until we expect to be able to spend materially more time, or materially less time, in a winter home.”

For most buyers, fractional ownership represents a lifestyle choice rather than an investment opportunity. However, in the midst of a flagging economy, with the traditional real estate market struggling mightily, parking money in a fractional interest can potentially lead to dividends down the road.

Bailes says that fractional ownership works best in areas in which sole ownership of homes is expensive, such as La Quinta, Calif., Aspen and Vail, Colo., Park City, Utah, and New York



Palm Springs, Calif.

Average daily high

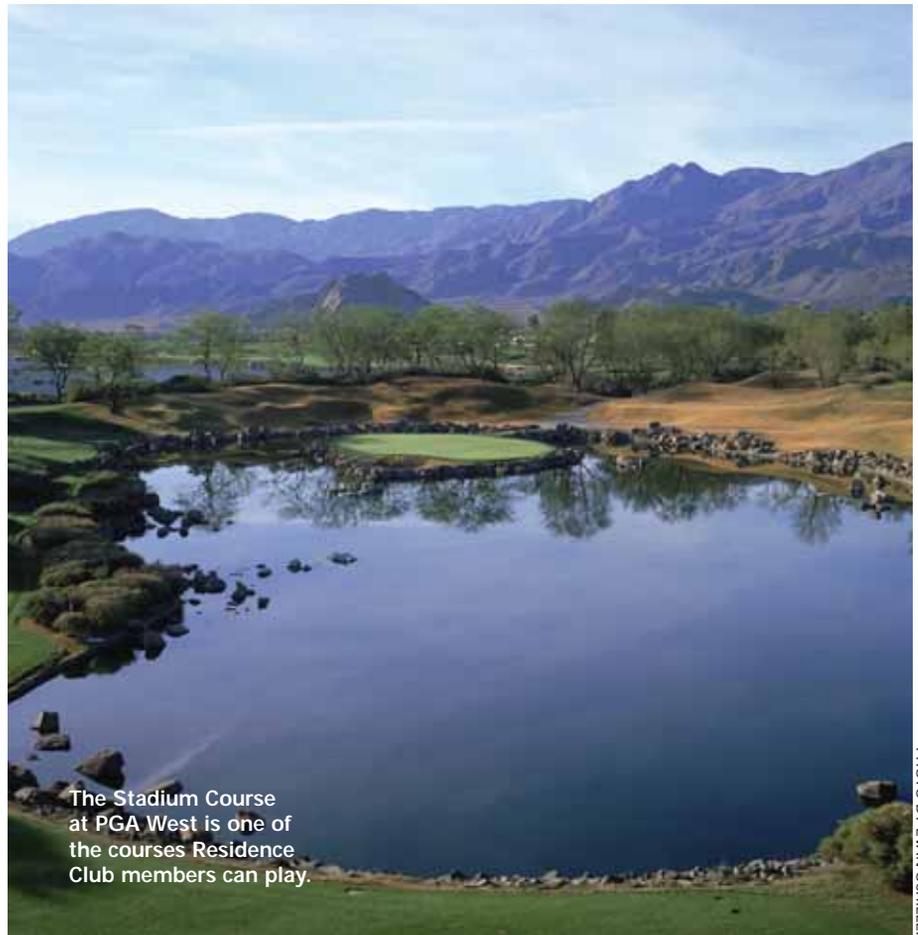
in January: **70°F**

City. In many of these areas, the price of fractional interests has increased.

Joining the Residence Club was a lifestyle choice for Hindsley and his wife.

“In the financial sense, we view the Residence as a neutral investment, meaning we did not join the club with the expectation that the value could increase or decrease materially,” he said. “Importantly, the high quality of the villas and the attraction of the La Quinta area made us comfortable that these assets would continue to be in demand over time, and thus the investment would not materially decline in value over time.”

Chelan David is a freelance writer based in Seattle.



The Stadium Course at PGA West is one of the courses Residence Club members can play.

PHOTO BY EVAN SCHILLER