



Mauna Kea Golf Course

THE BEST By Scott Kauffman OF THE WEST

TWO SIGNATURE ELEMENTS OF THE WEST ARE ITS MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN RANGES AND STARK DESERT LANDSCAPES. TOSS IN THE PACIFIC COASTLINE AND WIDE-OPEN ACRES OF RANGLAND, AND YOU HAVE A MIX OF MOTHER NATURE'S FINEST FEATURES. ADD GOLF TO EACH OF THESE DISTINCTIVE REGIONS, THOUGH, AND THE WONDROUS WEST JUST GETS THAT MUCH BETTER. BELOW, WE'VE CHOSEN THE CRÈME DE LA CRÈME OF DESERT, RANCH, MOUNTAIN AND COASTAL COURSES—AS WELL AS A FEW ACROSS THE BORDER. SO WHETHER YOU WANT TO PUTT PAST THE ROCKIES OR SHOOT ACROSS THE SHORE, CONSIDER THESE VERDANT PLAYGROUNDS WHEN PLANNING YOUR NEXT GOLF GETAWAY.

COAST

For golf purists, coastal golf usually means one thing: links layouts. Throw in menacing seaside cliffs and the refreshing nature (and unpredictability) of the ocean breeze, and it's a combination that is hard to beat. Get your feet wet at these can't-miss coastal golf destinations.

Pebble Beach Golf Links, Pebble Beach, Calif.

Since 1919, the exquisite beauty and unique challenge of Pebble Beach has thrilled golfers and spectators alike. The site of golf's most prestigious tournaments, including the annual AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am, and the 1972, '82, '92 and 2000 U.S. Open Championships, this venerable venue is more than a golf course: It's a national treasure.

Bandon Dunes/Pacific Dunes, Bandon, Ore.

Ever since architect David Kidd blew the golf world away with Bandon Dunes in 1999, the remote town of Bandon has been associated with some of the world's best links golf. Now, with a stunning sequel designed by minimalist extraordinaire Tom Doak, this inseparable golf-only destination packs a one-two punch that rivals any destination on Planet Golf.

Mauna Kea Golf Course, Big Island, Hawaii

The television series "Average Joe" was filmed here, but this is no average Joe course. Built in 1965, the Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed layout was the first resort course on the Big Island and remains a classic with its incredible vistas of



snowcapped Mauna Kea, rugged lava beds and the sparkling blue Pacific. Be sure to play the new back tees at Mauna Kea's famed oceanfront third hole—now a 247-yard carry—that may be one of the game's most photographed and difficult holes.

Wailea Golf & Country Club (Blue Course), Maui, Hawaii

Slow play is never an acceptable aspect of the game, but golfers can't help but be sidetracked at this 54-hole resort during the winter months. (You can simply blame the showstopping whales splashing in the distance.) Wailea's first course features ocean views from every hole, a rare treat by any measure in the Hawaiian Islands. And with the club's central location along the Gold Coast of Wailea—minutes from the acclaimed Grand Wailea Resort & Spa and close to the Four Seasons and Fairmont Kea Lani resort hotels—it's no wonder the Blue Course is considered a Maui must.

DESERT

Though the desert is stark by nature, there is nothing bleak about desert golf. In fact, the desert has spawned a unique class of golf all its own and even popularized the term "target golf." Despite the challenging nature of these desert tracks (which require precise aerial games), the beauty of the setting sun against the mountainous terrain is a sight to behold. At these four scenic golf spots, target practice is second to none.

Shadow Creek Golf Club, North Las Vegas, Nev.

This \$37 million desert mirage opened by casino/resort magnate Steve Wynn in 1990 is the granddaddy of monumental, splashy golf course construction. Once the exclusive domain of the Strip's highest rollers, Shadow Creek is now open to all resort guests staying at MGM Mirage properties. Of course, admission comes with a handsome \$500 green fee, but it's worth every penny.

PGA West, Stadium Course, La Quinta, Calif.

La Quinta Resort & Club, the legendary Palm Springs-area hideaway, is home to five world-class golf courses, but it's the notorious PGA West Stadium Course that stands out in the crowd. Designed by Pete Dye in 1985 to be the most difficult course in the world, this longtime tournament venue has certainly lived up to the course designer's diabolical design reputation. Nine of the holes have water very much in play, there are 200-yard forced carries from the back tees, and almost every hole displays Dye's difficult bunkering. How tough is it? PGA TOUR players complained so much about it after the 1987 Bob Hope Chrysler Classic that its one-year run ended very abruptly.

Troon North (Mountain Course), Scottsdale, Ariz.

When it opened in 1990, this Troon Golf property defined the upscale daily-fee industry and coined the phrase "member for a day" because its immaculate conditions and service-oriented environment made customers feel like private club members. Perennially rated among America's best courses, the Tom Weiskopf and Jay Morrish design collaboration offers a true desert golf experience: Picturesque Pinnacle Peak dominates the horizon, and gigantic granite boulders and an arroyo play a strategic role on many of the holes.

Tournament Players Club of Scottsdale (Stadium Course), Scottsdale, Ariz.

Home to the raucous PGA TOUR FBR Open (formerly the Phoenix Open), the Stadium Course at the TPC is one of the great layouts where golfers can watch the pros finish up on Sunday and play the course's same tournament conditions the following morning. In fact, many who have played this Sonoran Desert delight will say it plays in "tournament condition" much of the year. The course has a number of signature holes, but surely the par-3, 162-yard No. 16 is the most popular (remember Tiger Woods' amazing ace in 1997?).

MOUNTAIN

The Rockies and other ranges elicit a variety of emotions, not the least of which is awe-inspiring wonder. Here's a foursome of golf layouts that certainly take golf to a higher plane.

Paa-Ko Ridge Golf Club, Sandia, N.M.

Tucked in the Eastern Foothills of the Sandia Mountains high atop Albuquerque at some 6,500 feet, this daily-fee facility is one of the best new courses to open in recent years. Director of Golf Warren Lehr describes the Ken Dye-designed gem as having an opening hole followed by 17 signature holes. With ancient Anasazi ruins below azure skies and rocky-ridge mesas lined with scrub oak, piñon pines, and the occasional towering ponderosa pine, Paa-Ko Ridge is one of the few courses where the senses truly come alive.

Wolf Creek Golf Club, Mesquite, Nev.

Imagine standing on a patch of grass 11 stories high above the desert floor about 100 miles from the Vegas Strip. You look around and see nothing but red rock canyon walls, glistening waterfalls and lush green fairways. That's what it feels like to play golf at Wolf Creek, which is routed through some of the most dramatic desert canyons in the world. But don't let the amazing beauty distract you, because this course sports a ghastly 154 USGA rating, making it the third toughest course in the country.

Coeur d'Alene Resort, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains on the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene in northern Idaho, this world-class golf resort offers a multitude of memories from its golf carts with wood-grain dash and chrome-spoke wheels to its scenic over-water practice facility and complimentary

sports massage. But the resort's most indelible image is the renowned 14th hole, which features a par-3 floating movable island green (average distance: 154 yards). After landing on the 15,000-sq.-ft. surface, golfers are ferried to the green by the Putter Boat shuttle to finish the unforgettable hole and return with a certificate of accomplishment.

Old Works Golf Course, Anaconda, Mont.

World-class golf and Federal EPA Superfund sites often don't go hand-in-hand, but Jack Nicklaus did a masterful job of marrying the two disparate parts on this historic site laced with industrial and mining waste prior to Nicklaus' arrival. Simply put, Old Works winds through some of the most unique sites for golf, and Nicklaus kept the mining theme front and center with numerous black slag bunkers (Christina Lake in British Columbia is the only other course that features slag bunkers). Adding to the allure is a top-notch practice facility that includes a three-hole practice layout fittingly called the Little Bear Course.

RANCH

Life on the ranch is all about wide-open spaces; gorgeous meadows, valleys and foothills; and freedom from society's stresses. Occasionally, golf sneaks into the picture, which is just fine if you've ever teed it up in the following ranchlike settings.

Running Y Ranch Resort, Klamath Falls, Ore.

Overlooking Upper Klamath Lake on the verdant edges of southern Oregon's Cascade Range, the Running Y Ranch is a mountain retreat replete with Oregon's riches. Spread across 3,600 acres of wooded hills and lush meadows, the resort community features a multitude of amenities, including the state's only Arnold Palmer-designed course.





TO LEARN MORE

Bandon Dunes/Pacific Dunes, 888.345.6008,
www.bandondunesgolf.com.

Banff Springs Golf Course, 403.762.2211
www.banffsprings.com.

Cabo del Sol, 877.703.4394, www.cabodelsol.com.

Carmel Valley Ranch,
831.626.2510, www.cvrgolf.com.

Coeur d'Alene Resort,
800.688.5253, www.cdareort.com.

Four Seasons Golf Club,
888.647.0979, www.puntamitagolf.com.

Mauna Kea Golf Course, 808.882.7222,
www.maunakeabeachhotel.com.

Old Works Golf Course,
406.563.5989, www.oldworks.org.

Paa-Ko Ridge Golf Club,
866.898.5987, www.paakoridge.com.

Pebble Beach Golf Links,
800.654.9300, www.pebblebeach.com.

PGA West, Stadium Course,
760.564.7170, www.pgawest.com.

Predator Ridge Golf Resort,
888.578.6688, www.predatorridge.com.

Pronghorn, 800.541.9424, www.pronghornclub.com.

Red Sky Golf Club, 877.973.3759,
www.redskyranh.com.

Running Y Ranch Resort,
888.850.0261, www.runningy.com.

Shadow Creek Golf Club
866.260.0069, www.shadowcreek.com.

Tournament Players Club of Scottsdale,
480.585.4334, www.tpc.com.

Troon North, 480.585.5300, www.troonnorthgolf.com.

Wailea Golf & Country Club,
888.328.6284, www.waileagolf.com.

Wolf Creek Golf Club,
866.252.4653, www.golfwolfcreek.com.

Laid out along the shores of Klamath Lake (the largest natural lake in the Pacific Northwest) and routed through rolling terrain with mature pine forests and scenic wetlands, Palmer's course is as spectacular as the surrounding scenery.

Red Sky Golf Club, Wolcott, Colo.

For decades, the rugged Red Sky Ranch land west of Vail was used by the Joufflas family as sheep grazing country. Today, golfers are enjoying the picturesque views along Bellyache Ridge and vistas off to Castle Peak and the Back Bowls of Vail thanks to a 36-hole dream club created by Vail Resorts Development Company. Though the Tom Fazio-and Greg Norman-designed courses are part of a private community, members only have exclusivity on one of the courses at a time, freeing up the other course for Vail Resorts guests.

Carmel Valley Ranch, Carmel, Calif.

Just down the road from Pebble Beach, this intimate resort encircled by the Santa Lucia Mountains features a world-class Wyndham hotel and 18 holes of delightful Pete Dye golf. The course is only 6,234 yards long, but it features many elevation changes and spectacular mountain vistas. If golf is a good walk spoiled, a stroll through this 400-acre countryside estate more than makes up for it.

Pronghorn (Nicklaus Course), Bend, Ore.

Oregon often isn't associated with the desert, but this high-desert region proffers some of the sunniest and driest weather in the state. That makes for great golf conditions at this private resort community offering a fantastic Jack Nicklaus Signature course for resort guests and members. Also with an adjacent Tom Fazio-designed course surrounded by 20,000 acres of protected federal land, Pronghorn is unparalleled when it comes to golf.



Photography by Don Weixl



INTERNATIONAL

Cabo del Sol (Ocean Course), Los Cabos, Mexico

Situated on the tip of Mexico's Baja Peninsula, this Jack Nicklaus-designed course (part of a 36-hole master-planned resort community) turned Cabo into one of the world's most sought-after golf destinations when it opened in 1994. Stretching more than a mile along a coastline of craggy outcroppings and sun-washed shores, the Ocean Course is perhaps best known for its three finishing holes which bring into view the stunning Sea of Cortés.

Banff Springs Golf Course, Banff, Alberta, Canada

Located an hour and a half west of Calgary amid the splendor of Banff National Park, this Stanley Thompson-designed classic course was the first in history to cost more than \$1 million to build. Opening in 1934 after six years of backbreaking work, Thompson's vision evolved into a magnificent product that has brought glory to thousands of golfers who have made the awesome trek to this part of the Canadian Rockies.

Four Seasons Golf Club, Punta Mita, Mexico

The famous coastal town of Puerto Vallarta has several top courses, but the most spectacular course in the area is the 19-hole Jack Nicklaus layout about 30 miles north. Punta Mita is uncrowded and has one of the most memorable holes: The optional 19th hole (or "Tail of the Whale") plays 199 yards to a lava rock island in the Bay of Banderas—what may be the only natural island green in the world. Entry to the green comes at low tide and happens via tiptoeing across a sandbar (unless you have a boat). Eight other holes border the ocean with a photo opp at every turn.

Predator Ridge Golf Resort, Vernon, British Columbia, Canada

After hosting a hugely successful nationally televised Skins Game that featured Mike Weir, Phil Mickelson, Fred Couples and Sergio Garcia, this 27-hole resort community just about single-handedly put an obscure pocket of Western Canada—the Okanagan Valley—on the global golf map. Why? This region boasts more than 50 courses and a high-desert climate that gives Okanagan the country's longest, driest and sunniest golfing season. Reminiscent of Napa thanks to its 50-plus wineries, it is a region quickly gaining worldwide appeal, and Predator Ridge's luxurious accommodations and amenities rival that of any in the States. ✨