



LUXURY LINKS

A look at what's happening in the world of high-end golf.

The Best Play (and Live) Here

Palm Beach County is home to golf's elite players and luxurious golf communities.

BY SCOTT KAUFFMAN

With more than 160 golf course developments in 2,386 square miles, Florida's Palm Beach County rightfully proclaims itself "Florida's Golf Capital." Exclusive golf clubs are the haven to many well-known golfers, including the likes of Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman, Ray Floyd and Nick Price. Even Tiger Woods is moving to the Gold Coast, having purchased a 10-acre oceanfront parcel on ultra-exclusive Jupiter Island for a reported \$40 million. Woods, who still has a home at Isleworth Country Club in Orlando, was extended an invitation to join Nicklaus' nearby Bear's Best. No word whether Woods has accepted the Golden Bear's generous overture.

Though Woods' Palm Beach club of choice is yet to be determined, there's no question Bear's Best is worthy of his presence. An exclusive enclave of just 99 residential units on 401 acres of prime Jupiter property, the Bear's Best is one of the most exquisite and private places to golf and live in America. The sold-out 1-acre estate lots (55 total) are selling for an average \$3 million. Recently, Bear's Best released 13 Vintage Estates located on the club's par-3 course. The price for the Tuscan-themed homes: \$5.5 to \$5.7 million.

"There's no other club like Bear's Best," says sales director David Craven, "because of the inspiration of Mr. Nicklaus and his lovely wife (Barbara). It starts with the 40,000-square-foot clubhouse and that magnificent golf course. The quality and magnitude of the homes have just flowed from there."

One of the newer developments appealing to similar clientele is Old Palm Golf Club, an upscale private community in Palm Beach Gardens developed by WCI Communities Inc. The year-old club and course is the vision of Floyd, who was intimately involved in ensuring all elements of Old Palm are synonymous with the finest golf clubs of the world. Among the early members to buy into the \$250,000 equity club are former baseball great Jim Palmer, former drag racer Joe Amato and golfers Hank Kuehne and Robert Floyd.



The 8th Hole at the Old Palm Golf Club



Available from WCI Communities at the Old Palm Golf Club, the Montsorrel estate home is offered from \$3.095 million. Interior details include coffered ceilings, ornate iron stair rails, butler's pantries and balconies.

Some of the compelling features of the 658-acre community are: a 33-acre practice facility with state-of-the-art video technology and three regulation holes, no tee-time policy, a complete caddie program and four 700-square-foot casitas available to members' guests. Among the development's 294 homes are eight 5,200-square-foot golf cottages that sold for \$1.9 million each (Ray Floyd and former Miami Dolphins coach Don Shula are two owners), Golf Estates (3,200-4,000-square-foot homes on lots of one-third or one-quarter of an acre) that start at \$1.7 million, larger Grand Estates that range from \$2.7 to \$5.5 million and 1-acre custom estate lots that cost \$1.3 to \$1.7 million. According to WCI, close to 100 homes were sold at the end of 2005.

Another notable private golf club community in Palm Beach Gardens doing extremely well with sales is Frenchman's Reserve. According to senior project manager Alex De Chabert, of the 448 estate homes being built by Toll Brothers, 319 were sold as of mid-January with 187 of them closed.

"When sales commenced about four years ago, these luxury residences were priced from the mid \$600s," De Chabert says. "Today, new 3,400- to 5,400-square-foot homes within this intimate country club community are offered from approximately \$1 million to \$2 million."

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