



U.S. Golf Communities for the Love of the Game

From California to West Virginia, these properties have some of the best courses in the country

By Jennifer Tzeses

Photo: Courtesy of The Greenbrier

Making the move to a golf course community is often a decision based on multiple factors: location, amenities, value. But for an avid golfer, hands down, the most important one is the course itself. And the choice is often subjective depending on your type of play.

“The simplest categorization is between game-focused and experience-focused players,” said Denny Putsh, chief editor for [Hitting The Golf Ball](#), a website dedicated to teaching the game.

For the experience-focused player, qualities such as nature, scenery around the course and the level of engagement (few people, no stress) are important considerations. For game-focused players, things like the quality of the grounds, course architecture and level of difficulty are what matter most, Mr. Putsh said.

And when it comes to the course, hard-core golfers look for “well-manicured landscaping and the quality of the grass both on the fairways and greens,” said avid golfer Mauricio Umansky, founder and CEO, [The Agency](#), a global, luxury real estate brokerage and lifestyle company based in Beverly Hills, California. “I find that spectacular courses seamlessly incorporate the natural landscape of the destination.”

Mr. Umansky notes that recreational players also want something challenging, yet friendly. “Great courses have a variety of different tee boxes depending on your skill level, so you can choose the degree of difficulty,” he said.

Courses have features such as unique topography, prime locations, on-course comfort stations and a dedicated golf staff, said [Zack Bates](#), CEO of Private Club Marketing, a firm based in Newport Beach, California, that offers membership consulting, marketing and communication for private clubs and luxury brands. “These clubs bring in the best designers around the globe to do the initial design of the golf course. The portfolio behind names like Tom Fazio and Coore & Crenshaw drives the enthusiasts who have played on their other masterpieces,” Mr. Bates said.

“These golf communities have figured out that the experience starts before you even arrive,” Mr. Bates said. “Past guests, residents and members all share their love for their home course, bringing more interest and exposure to the properties and to the real estate itself—nothing beats authentic engagement.”

From California to West Virginia, here’s a look at four golf communities in the U.S. with some of the most spectacular courses.



Photo: Courtesy of The Madison Club/ Discovery Land Company

The Madison Club, La Quinta, California

Set in the Coachella Valley amid 500 acres of parkland ringed by the rugged Santa Rosa mountain range, [The Madison Club](#) features an 18-hole golf course designed by award-winning golf course architect Tom Fazio who's designed more than 120 golf courses across the United States.

The 7,400-square-foot championship-caliber golf course, which was crafted from nothing but flat desert land, utilizes design elements unique to the landscape and locale. These include challenging water elements such as running springs and custom-designed creeks, dense areas of mature trees, rolling fairways and a fair share of dips and valleys. It's a favorite for PGA Tour pros to sharpen their swing in the off months.

Naturally, teeing up works up an appetite, and on-course comfort stations mean that members can refuel on everything from tacos to homemade ice cream sandwiches. For example, ninth-hole favorite Dog House delivers favorite concession stand eats like hot dogs and sliders.

Thanks to the Discovery Performance Center, members are able to perfect their game by experiencing golf instruction through state-of-the-art-technology or one-on-one teaching. The center is part of the 52,000-square-foot clubhouse, which also features a 15-seat movie theater, a salon, a fitness center, a sushi bar, fine and casual dining as well as a sports complex with tennis courts, a spa and a swimming facility.

Membership requires homeownership as well as a \$250,000 initiation fee and annual dues of \$48,500. Home prices range from \$3.5 million to \$40 million and include Mediterranean Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival-style luxury villas averaging 5,000 square feet to completely custom-built homes.



Photo: Courtesy of The Madison Club/ Discovery Land Company



Yellowstone Club. Photo: Gibeon Photography

Yellowstone Club, Big Sky, Montana

With Lone Mountain and the Spanish Peaks towering in the background of bluegrass fairways and bent grass greens, the staggering beauty of the [Yellowstone Club's](#) private championship-caliber, 18-hole mountain golf course makes the experience altogether inspiring.

Designed by Tom Weiskopf, a pro golfer turned golf course architect, the course is set at an elevation of 8,000 feet amid thin air, which makes the ball seem to go farther than humanly possible. Ponds, waterfalls, creeks, elevation changes, slopes, over-water shots, tall pine trees and rolling greens create epic vistas at every hole. In between tee time, members can test their swing using the golf simulator at the practice area located between holes 10 and 18, which also offers teaching tees and multiple target greens.

The 28,000-square-foot golf clubhouse is located above the first hole, and it's equally as impressive as the course itself. Inside are multiple dining options, bars and a pro shop. Wellness pursuits abound here with a 75-foot heated pool, several spas, tennis and platform tennis courts, basketball courts, yoga instruction, personal training and massage.

In addition to the golf course, the club is known for its 2,900 acres of world-class alpine skiing. Other offerings include a full outdoor pursuits program with horseback riding, hiking and mountain biking trails, fly fishing, archery, trap and skeet shooting, rock climbing, white water rafting, kids programming and tours to nearby Yellowstone National Park.

Membership requires home ownership and includes a one-time \$400,000 fee and annual dues of \$47,000. Home prices range from \$3.15 million condos to \$25 million ranch homes on 360 acres of land. Alpine and ranch-style architecture reigns supreme, and most homes include ski rooms with individual lockers, heated driveways, bunk rooms and boot dryers.



Yellowstone Club. Photo: Tony Demin



Photo: Courtesy of The Greenbrier

The Greenbrier Sporting Club, White Sulphur, West Virginia

Tucked in the hills of West Virginia, [The Greenbrier's](#) long golf history dates back to the early 1900s. Nearly all of the biggest stars of the sport (Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson and Tom Watson) have played here. And, the property has hosted tournaments from the Ryder Cup to the PGA Tour.

Homeowners can play 45 holes amid The Greenbrier's varied course options. "Each one offers something a little different as far as scenery and challenges," said Cam Huffman, director of public relations and content at The Greenbrier. "The Old White TPC offers players the challenge of a PGA Tour course; The Meadows offers unique stacked sod bunkers and The Greenbrier provides the opportunity to play at the home of the 1979 Ryder Cup, while The Ashford offers the perfect spot to teach young players or for veterans to work on their short game," Mr. Huffman said.

Opened in 1914, Old White TPC was the first 18-hole course at The Greenbrier. Set at the base of the mountains, the views are as inspiring as they are challenging, which is why it's used as a PGA Tour course. The terrain is largely flat with a rock-lined creek running through it. Other highlights include The Greenbrier Course, the only resort course in the world to have hosted both The Ryder Cup and The Solheim Cup. The nine-hole course features well-bunkered, terraced greens shrouded in woods.

While golf is the main draw here, there are a host of other activities from tennis and pickleball to candy making, glassblowing and falconry lessons, as well as 20 restaurants, lounges and bars and a spa and casino to boot.

Membership requires an initiation fee upward of \$120,000 with an annual fee of \$2,900. From homes on the courses to those by the mountains or creekside, real estate prices range from \$900,000 to more than \$5 million.



Photo: Courtesy of The Greenbrier



Desert Mountain

Desert Mountain, Scottsdale, Arizona

With its 8,000-acre high Sonoran Desert location, [Desert Mountain](#) boasts six championship Jack Nicklaus-designed golf courses and a new par-54 championship course. “Golfers of every skill level will find impeccable course conditions, whether enjoying rolling fairways and dramatic elevation changes and sweeping desert vistas,” said Troy Gillenwater of Russ Lyon Sotheby’s International Realty, based in Scottsdale, Arizona. “Exclusive ‘cool season’ turf keeps the grasses green all year long.”

Highlights include the 7,042-yard Cochise course, which has played host to several tournaments, including the TOUR Championship from 2012 to 2016 and the Charles Schwab Cup Championship. With rolling fairways surrounded by water, dramatic rock outcroppings and contoured greens, hallmarks are the par-3 seventh hole and par-5 15th hole, where the double green sits on a scenic island approached from two different directions.

No. 7 at Desert Mountain, the newest course here, features a desert parkland setting with a stream running through it, water features and challenging hits from the back trees. There’s also a special handicap system for match-play experiences and an alternative teeing bunker on each hole.

Desert Mountain members also have extensive golf practice facilities, including multiple pitching, chipping, putting and bunker areas, and four separate practice ranges with target greens. The Jim Flick Golf Performance Center enables players to utilize 3-D Doppler radar-based launch monitors to track and measure ball flight and gesture recognition.

With its own 3,000-acre desert preserve, there are private trails for hiking and horseback riding, as well as a spa, a 42,000-square-foot exercise center and tennis courts.

Membership costs \$75,000 with \$1,325 monthly dues. A diverse array of housing options in more than 40 distinct residential villages offer Taliesin-inspired contemporary design to Colonial Spanish hacienda style. Housing prices range from \$800,000 to \$15 million



Cintarosa Village, Desert Mountain. Russ Lyon Sotheby's International Realty