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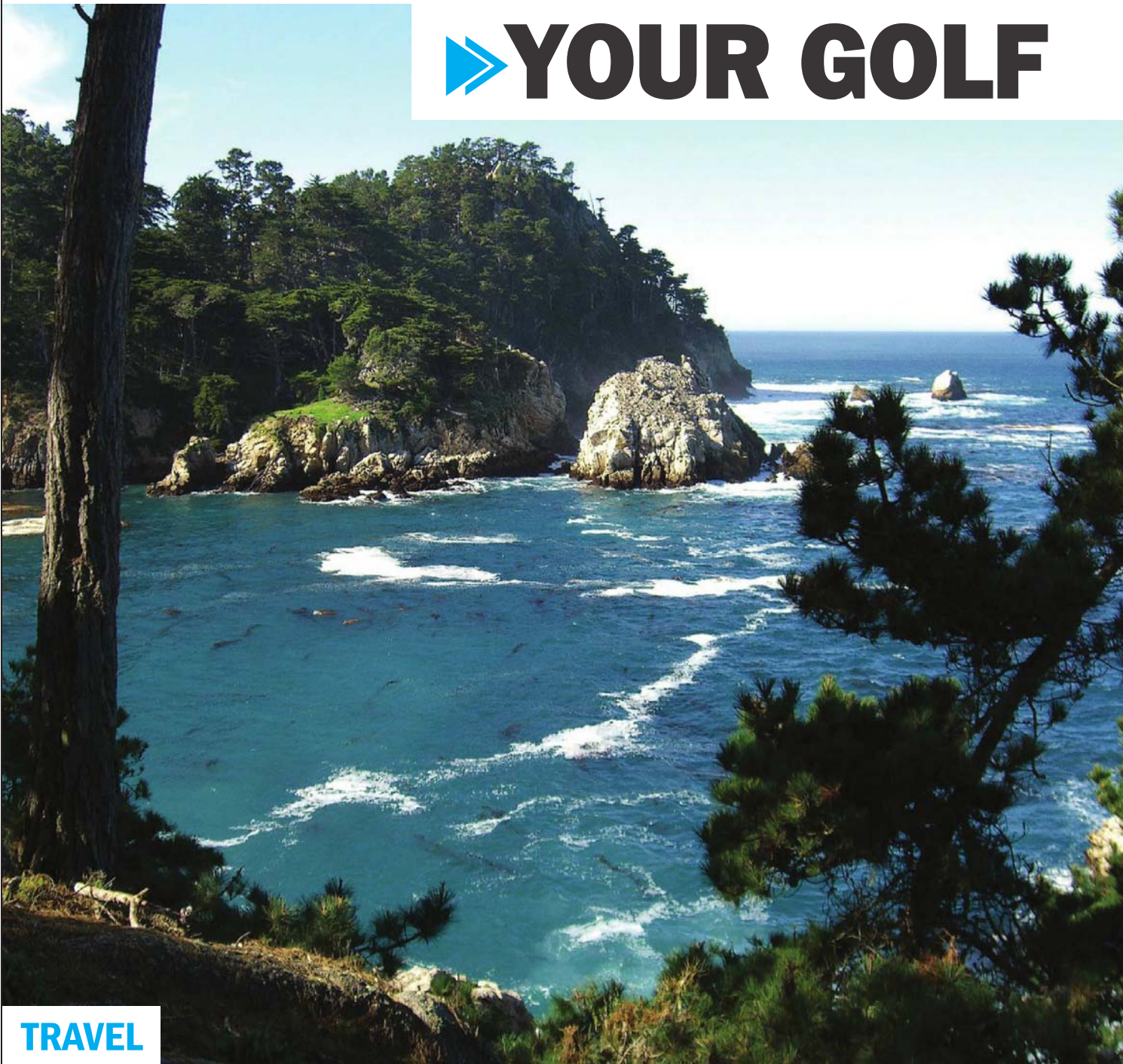
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▶ YOUR GOLF

TRAVEL

California Love

Carmel offers an inviting base camp to a historic Pebble Beach golfing expedition

BY ART STRICKLIN

For many golfers a trip to the scenic, historic and public Pebble Beach Resort is the trip of a lifetime, with the chance to walk in the footprints of legends like Hogan, Nelson, Nicklaus and Woods.

But if the trip to the United States public golf mecca caused you to overlook the home base of Carmel Calif. – which is only 7 miles from the doorsteps of Pebble Beach – and its wide variety of restaurants, lodging, ocean views and more great golf than you could ever find, that would be a crying shame as well.

In fact, if you happen to make the trip with one eye on checking off Pebble Beach on your golfing bucket list and also taking care of the significant other who perhaps doesn't golf, then you're certainly in luck in Carmel.

In the small (3,787 full-time residents) incorporated city, there are 45 cozy hotels and inns accounting for 925 hotel rooms, plus 60 coffeehouses, pubs, bistros and fine restaurants. Playing world class golf

Spyglass Hill Golf Course

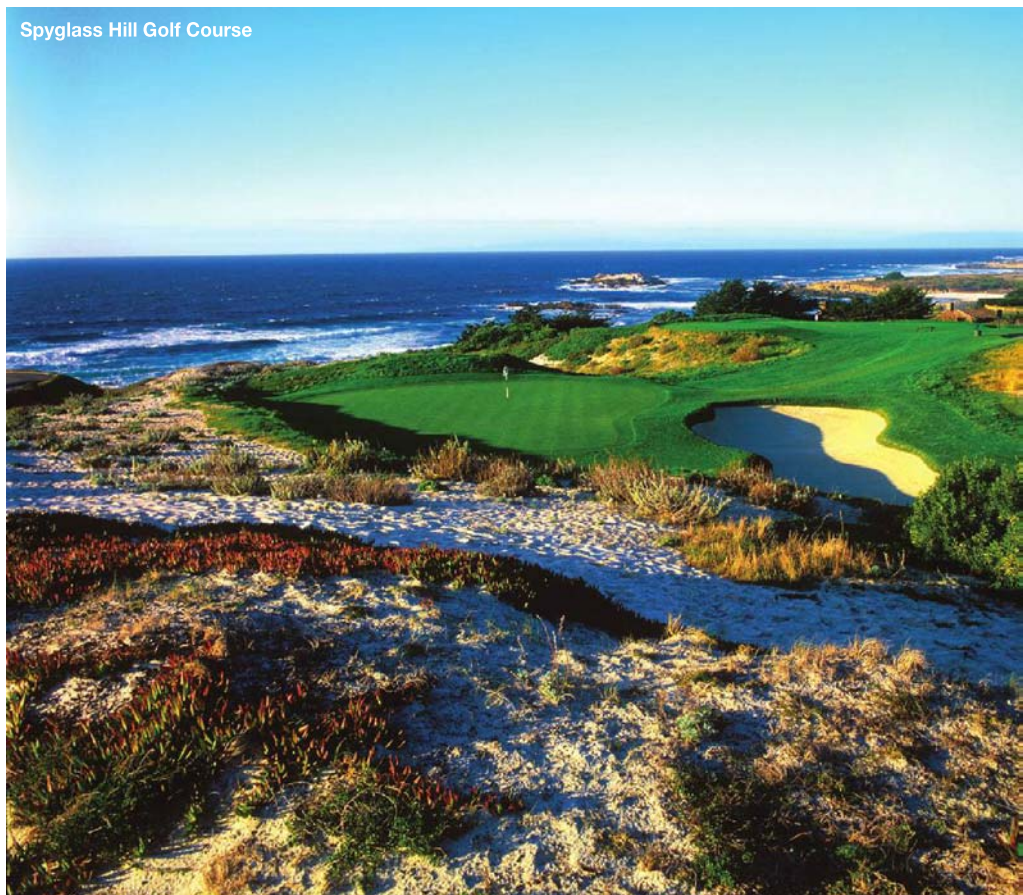


PHOTO BY EVAN SCHILLER

Spyglass Hill Golf Course



PHOTO BY EVAN SCHILLER

is certainly hard work and can build up a hunger, which can be filled in a variety of manners here.

From the tiny Portabella Italian restaurant to the famously romantic Casanova or the rowdy Brophy's Tavern, where Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell celebrated late into the night when he won the 2010 U.S. Open at Pebble, there is a wide array of dining choices.

But the primary reason for many out-of-state tourist visits is still golf and there is lots of it here. Pebble Beach, which opened in 1919 by architects Jack Neville and Douglas Grant, is still packing in the golfers that travel from around the world to play the top-rated public course in America.

While there have been some minor changes to the course over the decades, and much more major increases to the triple-digit green fees, the course, perched on the top of the Pacific cliffs, still holds the same charm and allure that has drawn the famous and the fanatical to this seaside golfing gem for nearly a century.

Just recently, CBS announcer Jim Nantz moved his home to just behind the 18th green to what he calls a spiritual place. Jack

Nicklaus has said if he only had one more round of golf to play in his life, it would be at Pebble Beach. Every day, golfers from across the country and around the world make the trip to the small pro shop looking for a tee time and hoping for a chance to tee it up where legends have and still walk.

Local resident Clint Eastwood, golf legend Arnold Palmer and former Los Angeles Olympic czar and Major League Baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth own Pebble Beach, and have pledged that this par-72 layout will remain public and open to all well into the next century.

While it's never hosted a U.S. Open, many locals and those who have played both feel that nearby Spyglass Hill is the better and tougher course in the Pebble Beach collection. Opened in 1966 by architect Robert Trent Jones, Sr., Spyglass Hill takes its name from Robert Louis Stevenson's (a former resident of this area) classic book "Treasure Island."

The first six holes cut a stirring figure across the Pacific Ocean, before turning inland into the lush and deer-laden Del



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Monte Forest. Spanish Bay is a Pebble Beach links-style layout opened by links disciples golfer Tom Watson and Sandy Tatum, with help from Robert Trent Jones, Sr.

Del Monte Golf Club is one of the oldest public courses in continuous operation west of the Mississippi River. Poppy Hills Golf Course, finally reopened after a long and highly successful renovation, is the home course of the Northern California Golf Association and still open to outside play.

Just down the road is Pacific Grove Golf Course, often known as a poor man's Pebble for its equally scenic views and much lower prices. And there are two spectacular public golf options at nearby Fort Ord: Blackhorse and Bayonet.

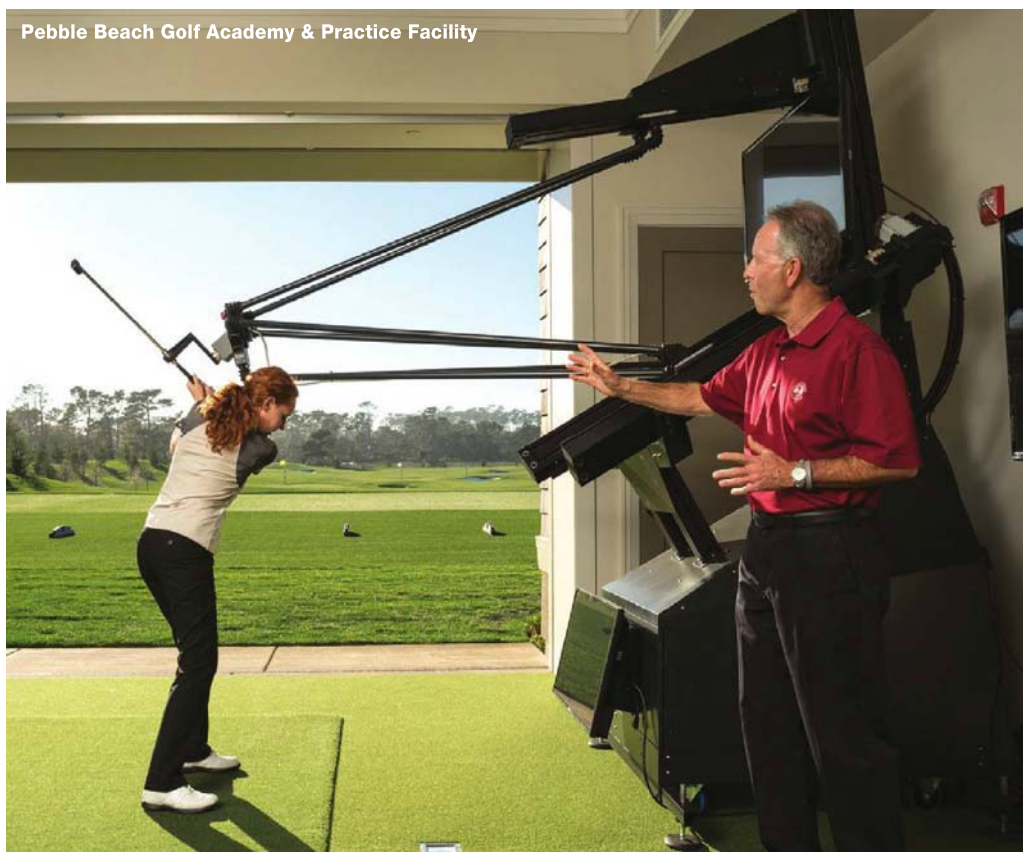
Of course, playing all those fine seaside public courses can put you in the mood to practice and improve, and Pebble Beach recently opened a huge, modern practice center this January, with indoor and outdoor practice facilities, and all sorts of high-tech practice gear.

There is a double-sided range that is 350 yards wide and can accommodate 85 hitting bays at a time. Anybody staying at the resort, playing the course or just driving down for the day can practice at the 3,000 square-foot, million-dollar facility, which is also the home of the Pebble Beach Golf Academy and run by the best instructors.

There are three modern indoor studios for night events or groups on indoor computer generated golf scenes, where participants can see the famous Pebble Beach holes before they actually play them.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Texas is the second largest United States golf market for the resort next to California, and this multimillion dollar facility is yet another reason to make the journey.

Pebble Beach Golf Academy & Practice Facility



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Spyglass Hill Golf Course

PHOTO BY CHRISTINE BUSH

In short, scenic Carmel is a public golf haven, and an exclusive enclave for prestigious private clubs. Good luck trying to talk your way onto the highly private and exclusive Cypress Point or Eastwood's Tehama golf course or the nearby Preserve. If you can get on, please tell us your secret.

But walk the street of Carmel and you have a good chance to spot Eastwood or actress Joan Fontaine, or browse dozens of galleries, day spas and upscale shops on Ocean Avenue. You can walk the well-maintained beach while watching the seagulls glide overhead and listening to the sea lions barking in the distance.

If Pebble Beach is truly the American public golf mecca, then Carmel or Carmel-by-the-Sea as its official name implies, is one of the finest waiting rooms or landing spots you will ever find.

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www.carmelcalifornia.com

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