

## Introduction

### 75 Best Golf Resorts In North America

*There's a new No. 1 atop our latest ranking*



**By Peter Finch**  
**Illustrations by Tim Bower**  
**October 2009**

Nobody could fault The Greenbrier's employees for expecting the worst. Summoned to the resort's 750-seat Colonial Hall on May 7 without explanation, many had to assume they were being fired. Everyone knew The Greenbrier was in deep financial trouble. Battered by the economy, owner CSX Corp. had recently furloughed several hundred workers and placed the resort in Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

But management had a different sort of surprise for employees that morning. "Ladies and gentlemen," said Greenbrier President Michael Gordon from the stage, "I'd like for you to meet the new owner of The Greenbrier, Jim Justice."

The announcement was so unexpected, it seemed like a miracle.

The room erupted. Employees jumped to their feet and cheered, hugging each other and high-fiving, many of them in tears.

"It was a great day to be Jim Justice," the new owner recalls with a smile.

James C. Justice II, a West Virginia native who made his fortune in coal mining and agribusiness, has big plans for the 6,500-acre resort. He has rehired all furloughed employees and, during the

next 18 months, intends to spend \$125 million on new amenities, including a casino, 1,500-seat theater, teen center and new dining options. Justice also has lined up a PGA Tour event.

It's hard to know whether all of this is what The Greenbrier really needs. Yet it's obvious that waiting out the recession isn't part of the Justice m.o. This is a trait he shares with many owners of [Golf Digest's 75 Best Golf Resorts in North America](#).

At Oregon's Bandon Dunes Golf Resort, owner Mike Keiser recently added an inn and a new restaurant at the Pacific Dunes course, and next year he'll unveil his fourth course, the much-anticipated Old Macdonald. Boca Raton Resort in Florida is fresh off a \$220 million investment that produced three new pools and a fitness center, among other improvements. Indiana's French Lick Resort spent more than \$500 million renovating two hotels and building a Pete Dye course, a casino and a spa.

Consultant Henry DeLozier of Toronto's Global Golf Advisors is not surprised. "Patrons of these kinds of resorts have high standards," he says, "and they're not willing to compromise those standards" just because the economy is in the dumps.

We created our list of top golf resorts with the help of Golf Digest's 900-plus course-rating panelists, who also produce our biennial ranking of America's 100 Greatest Courses. They rated hundreds of U.S., Canadian, Mexican and Caribbean golf resorts on a scale of 1 ("awful") to 10 ("perfect"). We averaged their ratings and multiplied the result by 10 to come up with a score for each.

Pebble Beach regains the No. 1 ranking, a position held by Sea Island in our previous resort survey (December 2006). Rounding out 2009's top five are Sea Island, Bandon Dunes, Four Seasons Resort Hualalai and Fairmont Banff Springs.

Like these five, all the resorts on our list deliver a fine combination of golf, lodging, food and service. Yet as a consumer, it's worth remembering that each offers a unique mix of those elements -- and thus, a resort's precise place on the ranking is less important than the fact it is *on the list*.

Consider our Nos. 8, 9 and 10: The Greenbrier, the Homestead and Pinehurst, all separated by no more than four-tenths of a point. The first two are more family-oriented destinations, with a rich supply of nongolf diversions including hunting, fishing, mountain biking, even falconry. Pinehurst has a spa, yes, but the real draw is its eight golf courses, one of which is a regular U.S. Open site. The "serious golfer" looking for 36 holes a day is likely to gravitate there.

Wherever you end up on a golf trip these days, expect to see fewer people than in years past. Through June, occupancy at U.S. golf resorts was down nearly 16 percent from 2008 levels, says Jan Freitag, vice president of hotel specialists Smith Travel Research in Hendersonville, Tenn. "We haven't seen anything like this since immediately after 9-11," he says.

Room rates at golf properties have tumbled too, dropping by an average of 10 percent in the first half of 2009, Freitag says. That's obviously good news for consumers, though you shouldn't expect to see across-the-board price cuts at top resorts. "Value" is what many of them are pitching. They're packaging more goods and services together for one price, including meals, spa vouchers, golf-shop credits and the always popular "unlimited golf."

Don't assume you need to accept the package deals you are offered. "People can call up a resort reservationist and get a package that's just right for them," says consultant DeLozier. "They'll say, 'We don't really want a spa visit, but we want you to throw in breakfast every day instead.'"

At the same time, resorts are having to cut some corners -- even at the highest levels. So don't be shocked if, for example, one of a resort's courses is temporarily closed when you arrive in an off-peak month. Sea Island did this last year with its Retreat Course. Others are closing some of their restaurants at times. And some are curtailing course maintenance where appropriate. Michigan's Grand Traverse Resort, for example, has designated some out-of-play areas as money-saving "no-mow" zones.

The good news for resorts is "everything is cyclical, and this too shall pass," says Freitag. Gross domestic product growth "is going to be positive in the first quarter of 2010, and room demand ought to be about a quarter behind," he predicts.

Still, it's going to take more than a few positive quarters to get big, high-maintenance resorts back on solid financial footing. Take The Greenbrier, which cost Jim Justice \$30.6 million. It showed losses of \$38 million in 2008.

"If you just sat on your hands and were an absentee owner, it would bleed you to death," concedes Justice, 58, who has no previous experience in the resort business. But he is counting on his energy and passion for the resort, where he competed in amateur golf tournaments as a boy, to carry the day. "My plan is, 'Don't disturb the eloquence, but inject the energy back into the grand old lady.' ... It's going to take a lot of my time. But I really and truly know what we need to do."

2009 ranking

## 75 Best Golf Resorts In North America



Typography by Jessia Hische

By Peter Finch

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\*2006 Rank | \*\*Base Room Rate In High Season

### 1. PEBBLE BEACH RESORT/INN AT SPANISH BAY (3)\*

**Score:** 89.17 **Contact & Directions:** [pebblebeach.com](http://pebblebeach.com), 800-654-9300 **Room Rate:** \*\* \$595 **New & Notable:** Site of the 2010 U.S. Open, Pebble has been strengthened and lengthened to more than 7,000 yards. At \$495, the green fee is stratospheric -- but check its website for money-saving packages.

### 2. SEA ISLAND (GA.) RESORTS, THE CLOISTER & THE LODGE (1)

**Score:** 88.68 **Contact & Directions:** [seaisland.com](http://seaisland.com), 800-732-4752 **Room Rate:** \$525 **New & Notable:** The rebuilt Cloister lodging continues to earn raves. The less-

used Retreat Course is now mainly for members, but the Seaside (Tom Fazio) and the Plantation (Rees Jones) remain open to guests.

### 3. BANDON (ORE.) DUNES GOLF RESORT (2)

**Score:** 87.81 **Contact & Directions:** [bandondunesgolf.com](http://bandondunesgolf.com), 888-345-6008 **Room Rate:** \$200 **New & Notable:** A 39-room inn overlooks No. 18 of the

Bandon Dunes course. The latest dining addition is a grill overlooking Pacific Dunes. Next up: course No. 4, a Tom Doak/Jim Urbina design called Old Macdonald.

### 4. FOUR SEASONS RESORT HUALALAI (4)

The Big Island, Hawaii **Score:** 85.70 **Contact & Directions:** [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com), 800-819-5053 **Room Rate:** \$595 **New & Notable:** The resort just completed a \$40 million "enhancement" project, adding 20 two-bedroom suites and more than doubling the size of its spa to 28,000 square feet. Part of the Nicklaus Course hugs the sea.

### 5. FAIRMONT BANFF (ALBERTA) SPRINGS (12)

**Score:** 85.00 **Contact & Directions:** [fairmont.com](http://fairmont.com), 800-257-7544 **Room Rate:** \$459 **New & Notable:** A fifth-floor renovation has produced a "Fairmont Gold" area with 72 guest rooms, a lounge and a private concierge. Twenty-seven holes beckon, with stunning views of the Canadian Rockies.

### 6. THE AMERICAN CLUB (5)

Kohler, Wis. **Score:** 83.39 **Contact & Directions:** [destinationkohler.com](http://destinationkohler.com), 800-344-2838 **Room Rate:** \$281 **New & Notable:** The PGA Championship returns to the Straits Course in 2010; the Blackwolf Run courses are prepping for the 2012 U.S. Women's Open with new sand and reseeded tees, fairways and putting surfaces.

### 7. KIAWAH ISLAND (S.C.) GOLF RESORT (14)

**Score:** 83.04 **Contact & Directions:** [kiawahresort.com](http://kiawahresort.com), 800-654-2924 **Room Rate:** \$395 **New &**

**Notable:** The resort has shaken up its restaurants, starting with the Sanctuary Hotel's Ocean Room, now a steakhouse. The Ocean Course, with its stunning \$22 million club-house in the dunes, gets the 2012 PGA.

#### **8. THE GREENBRIER (10)**

White Sulphur Springs, W.Va. **Score:** 82.39 **Contact & Directions:** [greenbrier.com](http://greenbrier.com), 800-624-6070 **Room Rate:** \$379 **New & Notable:** The storied retreat ran into financial problems and union strife that were nearly its undoing. The new owner, coal magnate Jim Justice, vows a turnaround. Among his plans: high-end gambling.

#### **9. THE HOMESTEAD (18)**

Hot Springs, Va. **Score:** 82.23 **Contact & Directions:** [thehomestead.com](http://thehomestead.com), 800-838-1766 **Room Rate:** \$175 **New & Notable:** The food and beverage operations have gotten much attention lately. The historic main dining room has been totally renovated, with updated menus as well. Take your pick from among three fine golf courses.

#### **10. PINEHURST (N.C.) RESORT (8)**

**Score:** 82.02 **Contact & Directions:** [pinehurst.com](http://pinehurst.com), 800-487-4653 **Room Rate:** \$340 **New & Notable:** All 260 rooms at the flagship Carolina Hotel got makeovers as part of a \$15 million lodging upgrade. The No. 2 Course will be the site of the 2014 U.S. Open and U.S. Women's Open in consecutive weeks.

#### **11. ONE & ONLY PALMILLA (NR)**

Los Cabos, Mexico **Score:** 81.25 **Contact & Directions:** [oneandonlyresorts.com](http://oneandonlyresorts.com), 866-829-2977 **Room Rate:** \$675 **New & Notable:** The oceanside resort recently finished a \$30 million renovation that includes a new restaurant -- Market by Jean-Georges -- and 16 casitas. The golf course was Jack Nicklaus' first in Latin America.

#### **12. THE BROADMOOR (9)**

Colorado Springs **Score:** 81.21 **Contact & Directions:** [broadmoor.com](http://broadmoor.com), 800-634-7711 **Room Rate:** \$325 **New & Notable:** Six deluxe cottages now line the 18th fairway of this resort's East Course. Their 44 new bedrooms offer great views of Cheyenne Mountain and, in 2011, the U.S. Women's Open.

#### **T-13. FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANAI (HAWAII) AT MANELE BAY (6)**

**Score:** 80.00 **Contact & Directions:** [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com), 800-321-4666 **Room Rate:** \$445 **New & Notable:** Mid-decade, the resort spent \$55 million upgrading rooms, restaurants, the pool and more. The Challenge, its lava-lined, Jack Nicklaus-designed 18, got new grass and bunkers.

#### **T-13. THE RITZ-CARLTON LODGE, REYNOLDS PLANTATION (20)**

Greensboro, Ga. **Score:** 80.00 **Contact & Directions:** [ritzcarltonlodge.com](http://ritzcarltonlodge.com), 800-241-3333 **Room Rate:** \$279 **New & Notable:** The Jack Nicklaus-designed Great Waters is closed for renovation, but happily there are four other quality courses to play. A bonus: TaylorMade's The Kingdom is a clubfitting paradise.

#### **15. THE RITZ-CARLTON, KAPALUA (13)**

Maui, Hawaii **Score:** 79.89 **Contact & Directions:** [ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com), 800-262-8440 **Room Rate:** \$299 **New & Notable:** A \$180 million renovation, the largest in Ritz-Carlton history, brought a new spa and makeovers to all six restaurants and 463 guest rooms. Golf options: the Plantation and Bay courses.

#### **16. GRAND HYATT KAUAI RESORT & SPA (32)**

Poipu, Hawaii **Score:** 79.17 **Contact & Directions:** [grandhyattkauai.com](http://grandhyattkauai.com), 800-554-9288 **Room**

**Rate:** \$440 **New & Notable:** The 45,000-square-foot Anara Spa reopened last year. The greens on Robert Trent Jones Jr.'s Poipu Bay will be replaced with seashore paspalum.

**17. GRAND WAILEA (17)**

Maui, Hawaii **Score:** 79.10 **Contact & Directions:** [grandwailea.com](http://grandwailea.com), 800-888-6100 **Room Rate:** \$725 **New & Notable:** Last year the resort completed a \$50 million renovation covering all 780 rooms. It has been part of the Waldorf Astoria Collection since 2007. Pick from among five golf courses.

**18. THE RITZ-CARLTON, HALF MOON BAY (CALIF.) (28)**

**Score:** 78.77 **Contact & Directions:** [ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com), 650-712-7000 **Room Rate:** \$419 **New & Notable:** Arthur Hills' super-scenic Ocean Course is being groomed to accept links-style run-up shots. This project concludes before the end of the year. The second course is an Arnold Palmer design.

**19. FOUR SEASONS RESORT MAUI (HAWAII) AT WAILEA (7)**

**Score:** 78.75 **Contact & Directions:** [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com), 808-874-8000 **Room Rate:** \$445 **New & Notable:** All 380 guest rooms and public areas benefited from a \$50 million renovation, completed in 2007. The latest addition is a \$9 million, adults-only infinity pool with six luxury cabanas.

**20. THE FAIRMONT ORCHID (NR)**

The Big Island, Hawaii **Score:** 78.33 **Contact & Directions:** [fairmont.com](http://fairmont.com), 866-540-4474 **Room Rate:** \$449 **New & Notable:** Until Dec. 20, book two rooms for the price of one at this oceanfront spot. Thirty-six holes at adjoining Mauni Lani await with dramatic water views.

**21. CORDEVALLE, A ROSEWOOD RESORT (11)**

San Martin, Calif. **Score:** 77.86 **Contact & Directions:** [cordevalle.com](http://cordevalle.com), 888-767-3966 **Room Rate:** \$495 **New & Notable:** The new owner is beautifying this Silicon Valley favorite with artwork and thousands of roses. The course stretches to more than 7,600 yards from "unofficial" back tees.

**22. WILLIAMSBURG (VA.) INN (35)**

**Score:** 77.27 **Contact & Directions:** [colonialwilliamsburgresort.com](http://colonialwilliamsburgresort.com), 800-447-8679 **Room Rate:** \$399 **New & Notable:** A \$220 million investment in the resort was completed two years ago. The greens on the Gold and Green courses have been seeded with improved types of bent grass.

**23. FAIRMONT CHATEAU**

Whistler (B.C.) (25) **Score:** 77.17 **Contact & Directions:** [fairmont.com](http://fairmont.com), 800-606-8244 **Room Rate:** \$186 **New & Notable:** The green fee of roughly \$150 allows guests to play all day on a well-regarded Robert Trent Jones Jr. design -- and kids play free when you're with them.

**24. COEUR D'ALENE (IDAHO) GOLF & SPA RESORT (31)**

**Score:** 76.93 **Contact & Directions:** [cdaresort.com](http://cdaresort.com), 800-688-5253 **Room Rate:** \$179 **New & Notable:** To be more environmentally sound, superintendents use organic fertilizers and have updated the irrigation system. The famous floating 14th green is the course's main attraction.

**25. FOUR SEASONS RESORT**

Scottsdale at Troon North (T-23) **Score:** 76.86 **Contact & Directions:** [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com), 888-207-9696 **Room Rate:** \$395 **New & Notable:** Last year the resort completed a \$19 million makeover of the 210 guest rooms, lobby and restaurants. Two highly rated courses, Monument and Pinnacle, are a three-minute shuttle ride away.

**26. THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL (NR)**

Newport Beach, Calif. **Score:** 76.67 **Contact & Directions:** [pelicanhill.com](http://pelicanhill.com), 800-820-6800 **Room Rate:** \$695 **New & Notable:** Opened last year, this resort features 204 bungalows and 128 villas on 504 acres. Two adjoining Tom Fazio courses, around since the '90s, were recently brought up to date.

**27. ONE & ONLY OCEAN CLUB/ATLANTIS (NR)**

Paradise Island, The Bahamas **Score:** 76.43 **Contact & Directions:** [oneandonlyresorts.com](http://oneandonlyresorts.com), 888-877-7525 **Room Rate:** \$515 **New & Notable:** The recently unveiled Technogym fitness program combines training, high-tech equipment and nutritional advice. Test your newly fit body on the Tom Weiskopf-designed course.

**28. MAUNA KEA BEACH HOTEL (21)**

The Big Island, Hawaii **Score:** 76.36 **Contact & Directions:** [princereresortshawaii.com](http://princereresortshawaii.com), 808-882-7222 **Room Rate:** \$700 **New & Notable:** Back in business after an earthquake closed the place for two years. All 36 holes are stunning, but Robert Trent Jones Sr. called the par-3 third "the most beautiful in the world."

**29. FRENCH LICK (IND.) RESORT (NR)**

**Score:** 75.71 **Contact & Directions:** [frenchlick.com](http://frenchlick.com), 888-936-9360 **Room Rate:** \$299 **New & Notable:** A massive capital investment has brought two hotels back to life, restored the Donald Ross course and introduced casino gambling. The newest addition: a Pete Dye course with 30-mile views in all directions.

**30. FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANAI (HAWAII), THE LODGE AT KOELE (NR)**

**Score:** 75.56 **Contact & Directions:** [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com), 800-321-4666 **Room Rate:** \$345 **New & Notable:** The Experience at Koele, a Greg Norman-Ted Robinson design, is dramatic. The luxurious Lodge got a \$55 million makeover as part of its Four Seasons branding.

**31. WYNN LAS VEGAS (27)**

**Score:** 75.15 **Contact & Directions:** [wynnlasvegas.com](http://wynnlasvegas.com), 888-320-7123 **Room Rate:** \$159 **New & Notable:** Although this 4½-year-old Tom Fazio course is right on the Strip, its 8,000 trees continue to grow in and make it feel more like North Carolina than Las Vegas.

**T-32. CASA DE CAMPO RESORT (36)**

La Romana, Dominican Republic **Score:** 75.00 **Contact & Directions:** [casadecampo.com.do](http://casadecampo.com.do), 800-877-3643 **Room Rate:** \$295 **New & Notable:** A spa accompanies Pete Dye's three courses (Teeth of the Dog, The Links and Dye Fore). Altos de Chavron, the resort's shopping hub, has added a museum and an art studio.

**T-32. THE RITZ-CARLTON GOLF RESORT, NAPLES (FLA.) (15)**

**Score:** 75.00 **Contact & Directions:** [ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com), 800-241-3333 **Room Rate:** \$399 **New & Notable:** The Mediterranean-style resort has nearly 300 rooms and five restaurants. Two Greg Norman courses include Tiburón (site of the Merrill Lynch Shootout). Beach resort is a shuttle away.

**34. LOEWS VENTANA CANYON RESORT (50)**

Tucson **Score:** 74.29 **Contact & Directions:** [loewshotels.com](http://loewshotels.com), 520-299-2020 **Room Rate:** \$279 **New & Notable:** Renovated in 2006, this resort has 398 rooms, a spa, four tennis courts and two pools. It shares two Tom Fazio-designed courses with the No. 72-ranked Lodge, a separate resort next door.

**35. THE BREAKERS PALM BEACH (40)**

**Score:** 74.26 **Contact & Directions:** [thebreakers.com](http://thebreakers.com), 888-273-2537 **Room Rate:** \$450 **New &**

**Notable:** A John Webster Golf Academy, which offers instruction, clubfitting and fitness routines, complements this resort's two recently renovated 18s. A four-year room-renovation project ends in 2010.

### **36. THE SEA PINES RESORT (39)**

Hilton Head Island **Score:** 73.50 **Contact & Directions:** [seapines.com](http://seapines.com), 800-732-7463 **Room Rate:** \$279 **New & Notable:** Heron Point by Pete Dye, one of three 18s here, replaced the old Sea Marsh course two years ago. Harbour Town Golf Links has been the site of a PGA Tour event for 41 years.

### **37. NEMACOLIN WOODLANDS RESORT (26)**

Farmington, Pa. **Score:** 73.46 **Contact & Directions:** [nemacolin.com](http://nemacolin.com), 800-422-2736 **Room Rate:** \$359 **New & Notable:** There's Pete Dye's Mystic Rock, and The Links Course sprawls alongside Nemacolin Golf Academy. Also a 45,000-square-foot arcade, and Wooflands, a pet resort.

### **T-38. FOUR SEASONS RESORT AVIARA (44)**

Carlsbad, Calif. **Score:** 72.67 **Contact & Directions:** [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com), 760-603-6800 **Room Rate:** \$395 **New & Notable:** Greenside bunkers are filled with high-quality silica sand, and the redesigned Aviara clubhouse opened in December, completing the resort's modernization project.

### **T-38. THE PHOENICIAN (37)**

Scottsdale **Score:** 72.67 **Contact & Directions:** [thephoenician.com](http://thephoenician.com), 800-888-8234 **Room Rate:** \$449 **New & Notable:** The lakes, bunkers and tee boxes on the Oasis, one of three nine-hole courses, were redesigned, and the resort underwent a \$70 million renovation.

### **40. THE BOULDERS RESORT & GOLDEN DOOR SPA (16)**

Carefree, Ariz. **Score:** 72.64 **Contact & Directions:** [theboulders.com](http://theboulders.com), 888-579-2631 **Room Rate:** \$199 **New & Notable:** The Golden Door Spa has expanded offerings to include stretching, conditioning and yoga for golfers. Ladies First is a three-day instruction and social program.

### **41. THE INN AT BAY HARBOR (MICH.) (NR)**

**Score:** 72.50 **Contact & Directions:** [innatbayharbor.com](http://innatbayharbor.com), 800-462-6963 **Room Rate:** \$254 **New & Notable:** The Links and Quarry nines -- two of three overlooking Little Traverse Bay -- have a handful of new tee boxes and renovated bunkers. The Inn's spa area has benefited from some minor cosmetic surgery.

### **42. SAWGRASS MARRIOTT (34)**

Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. **Score:** 72.33 **Contact & Directions:** [sawgrassmarriott.com](http://sawgrassmarriott.com), 800-457-4653 **Room Rate:** \$219 **New & Notable:** A 77,000-square-foot Mediterranean-style clubhouse opened two years ago during a \$56 million renovation. Plus: Pete Dye revamped the Players Stadium and Dye's Valley courses.

### **43. SUNRIVER (ORE.) RESORT (41)**

**Score:** 72.27 **Contact & Directions:** [sunriver-resort.com](http://sunriver-resort.com), 800-801-8765 **Room Rate:** \$249 **New & Notable:** A new nine-hole design, Caldera Links, joins the 18-hole Crosswater, which hosts the Jeld-Wen Tradition, a major on the Champions Tour. There are two additional 18-hole courses, Meadows and Woodlands.

### **44. THE LODGE AT TORREY PINES (52)**

La Jolla, Calif. **Score:** 71.82 **Contact & Directions:** [lodgetorreypines.com](http://lodgetorreypines.com), 858-453-4420 **Room Rate:** \$495 **New & Notable:** Relive Tiger's thrilling 2008 U.S. Open by staying in one of 170 rooms near the South Course's 18th hole. If your knee is hurting, visit the 9,500-square-foot spa.

**45. THE EQUINOX (59)**

Manchester Village, Vt. **Score:** 71.71 **Contact & Directions:** [equinoxresort.com](http://equinoxresort.com), 800-362-4747  
**Room Rate:** \$559 **New & Notable:** The resort got a \$20 million makeover last year. Earlier, its 1927 golf course was redesigned by Rees Jones. A worthy side trip: Robert Todd Lincoln's home, Hildene, and the neighboring cemetery.

**46. GIANTS RIDGE (NR)**

Biwabik, Minn. **Score:** 71.39 **Contact & Directions:** [giantsridge.com](http://giantsridge.com), 800-688-7669 **Room Rate:** \$179 **New & Notable:** The Quarry and Legend designs are the highlights at this northern resort: Both appear on Golf Digest's 100 Greatest Public Courses list. The Lodge, one of two room choices, is newly renovated.

**47. FAIRMONT SCOTTSDALE (49)**

**Score:** 71.25 **Contact & Directions:** [fairmont.com](http://fairmont.com), 800-344-4758 **Room Rate:** \$299 **New & Notable:** The new Champions Course opened two years ago, joining the Stadium Course, which hosts a PGA Tour event. A \$45 million renovation of the resort remade rooms and added a Bourbon Steak restaurant and lounge.

**48. GRAND TRAVERSE RESORT & SPA (NR)**

Acme, Mich. **Score:** 71.14 **Contact & Directions:** [grandtraverseresort.com](http://grandtraverseresort.com), 800-236-1577  
**Room Rate:** \$279 **New & Notable:** Three courses require a lot of upkeep, which isn't always good for the environment (or the budget). So new "no-mow" spots, where grasses are allowed to grow, are in out-of-play areas.

**49. BARTON CREEK (47)**

Austin **Score:** 70.91 **Contact & Directions:** [bartoncreek.com](http://bartoncreek.com), 800-336-6158 **Room Rate:** \$210  
**New & Notable:** Fazio Canyons, one of two Tom Fazio courses at the resort, was the site of U.S. Open local qualifying. Arnold Palmer and Ben Crenshaw/Bill Coore designed the other two courses.

**50. MAUNA LANI BAY HOTEL (29)**

The Big Island, Hawaii **Score:** 70.50 **Contact & Directions:** [maunalani.com](http://maunalani.com), 800-367-2323  
**Room Rate:** \$455 **New & Notable:** The resort's 343 rooms are spread over 30 acres, leaving lots of room for natural space. Two extra holes allow for updates to the main 36 at the North and South courses.

**51. PGA VILLAGE (57)**

Port St. Lucie, Fla. **Score:** 70.25 **Contact & Directions:** [pgavillage.com](http://pgavillage.com), 800-800-4653 **Room Rate:** \$139 **New & Notable:** The Dye Course was upgraded in October 2007. Changes include 450 new trees and Champion Ultra Dwarf Bermuda greens. Two Tom Fazio courses got their makeovers the year before.

**52. GRAND VIEW LODGE (NR)**

Nisswa, Minn. **Score:** 70.00 **Contact & Directions:** [grandviewlodge.com](http://grandviewlodge.com), 800-432-3788 **Room Rate:** \$225 **New & Notable:** Two of its courses and a third course combining two nines carry 4½-star ratings from Golf Digest readers. Updates at the 27-hole Pines Course include widened fairways and more than 100 large pine trees.

**53. PINE NEEDLES AND MID PINES (30)**

Southern Pines, N.C. **Score:** 69.94 **Contact & Directions:** [pineneedles-midpines.com](http://pineneedles-midpines.com), 800-747-7272 **Room Rate:** \$195 **New & Notable:** Two Donald Ross courses are a primo draw. Pine Needles, site of the U.S. Women's Open in 1996, 2001 and 2007, now has permanent tees for junior golfers.

**54. GRANDE LAKES ORLANDO (NR)**

Orlando **Score:** 69.73 **Contact & Directions:** [grandelakes.com](http://grandelakes.com), 800-682-6647 **Room Rate:** \$359 **New & Notable:** Guests can stay at the Ritz-Carlton or the J.W. Marriott. Reciprocal privileges allow use of the Greg Norman-designed course and a 40,000-square-foot spa.

**55. SEMIAHMOO RESORT (NR)**

Blaine, Wash. **Score:** 69.71 **Contact & Directions:** [semiahmoo.com](http://semiahmoo.com), 800-770-7992 **Room Rate:** \$149 **New & Notable:** Loomis Trail was the site of the NCAA Division II Men's Golf Championship in May, and tee boxes on Arnold Palmer's Semiahmoo course have been reconstructed and enlarged.

**56. LA QUINTA (CALIF.) RESORT & CLUB/PGA WEST (42)**

**Score:** 69.69 **Contact & Directions:** [laquintaresort.com](http://laquintaresort.com), 760-564-4111 **Room Rate:** \$199 **New & Notable:** Three courses (out of five) have been updated: new GPS systems, bunkers and tee boxes at the Stadium and Nicklaus courses and a few new greens on the Mountain.

**57. KINGSMILL RESORT & SPA (54)**

Williamsburg, Va. **Score:** 69.50 **Contact & Directions:** [kingsmill.com](http://kingsmill.com), 800-832-5665 **Room Rate:** \$208 **New & Notable:** The state's largest golf resort has 425 rooms. The River, site of an LPGA event, is one of three 18s. It's an easy shuttle over to Busch Gardens or Colonial Williamsburg.

**58. TURTLE BAY RESORT (64) Oahu, Hawaii** **Score:** 69.29 **Contact & Directions:**

[turtlebayresort.com](http://turtlebayresort.com), 808-293-6000 **Room Rate:** \$371 **New & Notable:** The practice area at the George Fazio Course has more than doubled to 16,000 square feet to accommodate more golfers. The Palmer Course's range is even bigger.

**59. SANDESTIN RESORT (T-45)**

Destin, Fla. **Score:** 68.75 **Contact & Directions:** [sandestin.com](http://sandestin.com), 800-622-9767 **Room Rate:** \$245 **New & Notable:** Rees Jones' Burnt Pine Golf Club, one of four here, got a thorough makeover in 2008. Check out the 60-foot-high zip line at the Baytowne Adventure Zone.

**T-60. KAUAI (HAWAII) MARRIOTTRESORT & BEACH CLUB (T-60)**

**Score:** 68.57 **Contact & Directions:** [kauaimarriott.com](http://kauaimarriott.com), 800-220-2925 **Room Rate:** \$389 **New & Notable:** Despite a \$50 million redo, the resort has stayed open, using 12 holes from one Nicklaus course and six from another. When it's done, four holes will be cliff-side.

**T-60. KIVA DUNES (62)**

Gulf Shores, Ala. **Score:** 68.57 **Contact & Directions:** [kivadunes.com](http://kivadunes.com), 866-540-7100 **Room Rate:** \$215 **New & Notable:** The lodge is undergoing a \$3.5 million renovation, and the greens at its Jerry Pate-designed course are being re-grassed with Champion Ultra Dwarf Bermuda.

**T-60. WESTIN LA CANTERA RESORT (48)**

San Antonio **Score:** 68.57 **Contact & Directions:** [westinlacantera.com](http://westinlacantera.com), 210-558-6500 **Room Rate:** \$239 **New & Notable:** The resort celebrated its 10-year anniversary by redesigning all 508 rooms and creating a nature trail that wraps around the Weiskopf/Morrish Resort Course.

**T-63. BOCA RATON (FLA.) RESORT & CLUB (70)**

**Score:** 68.33 **Contact & Directions:** [bocaresort.com](http://bocaresort.com), 888-543-1277 **Room Rate:** \$299 **New & Notable:** Whoever said money can't buy happiness never considered the \$220 million just invested here. There are 36 holes, including one with an island green.

**T-63. SUN VALLEY (IDAHO) RESORT (38)**

**Score:** 68.33 **Contact & Directions:** [sunvalley.com](http://sunvalley.com), 800-786-8259 **Room Rate:** \$229 **New &**

**Notable:** The nine-hole White Clouds course, a 25-acre practice facility and the 58,000-square-foot Sun Valley Clubhouse opened last summer, joining Robert Trent Jones Jr.'s Trail Creek.

**T-63. TURNING STONE RESORT & CASINO (NR)**

Verona, N.Y. **Score:** 68.33 **Contact & Directions:** [turningstone.com](http://turningstone.com), 800-771-7711 **Room Rate:** \$229 **New & Notable:** An impressive 72 holes of golf, including two nine-holers (one a par-3 course), surround this casino resort. The PGA Tour competes at Tom Fazio's Atunyote.

**66. GRAND CYPRESS RESORT (55)**

Orlando **Score:** 68.08 **Contact & Directions:** [grandcypress.com](http://grandcypress.com), 800-835-7377 **Room Rate:** \$300 **New & Notable:** The villas, which got a \$3 million investment in 2007, now allow pets. Bring your clubs, too, as there are 45 holes. More rooms are available at the Hyatt.

**67. THE LODGE & SPA AT CORDILLERA (22)**

Edwards, Colo. **Score:** 68.00 **Contact & Directions:** [cordilleralodge.com](http://cordilleralodge.com), 800-877-3529 **Room Rate:** \$239 **New & Notable:** The Vail-area golf club and its three courses are under new ownership; the 56-room lodge is independent and open for business.

**68. HERSHEY (PA.) RESORTS (NR)**

**Score:** 67.86 **Contact & Directions:** [hersheypa.com](http://hersheypa.com), 800-437-7439 **Room Rate:** \$299 **New & Notable:** Nine instructors help players tune their games for 63 holes of golf. A \$67 million expansion added 10 cottages and a recreation center for 10 sports.

**69. BAY HILL CLUB & LODGE (74)**

Orlando **Score:** 67.74 **Contact & Directions:** [bayhill.com](http://bayhill.com), 888-422-9445 **Room Rate:** \$225 **New & Notable:** Home to Arnold Palmer and his popular PGA Tour stop, the course is getting a \$2 million upgrade (tees, greens and bunkers) to be completed Oct. 1.

**70. CAMELBACK INN (NR)**

Scottsdale **Score:** 67.73 **Contact & Directions:** [camelbackinn.com](http://camelbackinn.com), 800-242-2635 **Room Rate:** \$299 **New & Notable:** The resort has spent \$50 million upgrading its look, adding a 20,000-square-foot conference center and a restaurant. Shopping for new clubs? Try them on this resort's 36 holes before you buy.

**71. WESTIN MISSION HILLS RESORT (NR)**

Rancho Mirage, Calif. **Score:** 67.43 **Contact & Directions:** [westin.com](http://westin.com), 866-716-8132 **Room Rate:** \$239 **New & Notable:** A \$20 million renovation was completed in October 2008, updating all 512 rooms. Guests can choose from courses designed by Pete Dye and Gary Player in addition to hiking, biking and horseback riding.

**72. THE LODGE AT VENTANA CANYON (53)**

Tucson **Score:** 67.27 **Contact & Directions:** [thelodgeatventanacanyon.com](http://thelodgeatventanacanyon.com), 800-828-5701 **Room Rate:** \$199 **New & Notable:** The greens on the resort's two Tom Fazio-designed courses were changed from bent grass to Bermuda -- the Canyon's in 2008 and the Mountain's the previous summer -- ensuring consistent surfaces all year.

**73. THE WESTIN KIERLAND RESORT & SPA (67)**

Scottsdale **Score:** 66.82 **Contact & Directions:** [kierlandresort.com](http://kierlandresort.com), 800-354-5892 **Room Rate:** \$249 **New & Notable:** Two air-conditioning units per golf cart keep the driver and passenger cool. Take part in the Monday Choose-Up game for a friendly nine-hole match.

**74. WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT (73)**

Orlando **Score:** 66.79 **Contact & Directions:** [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com), 407-939-6244 **Room Rate:** \$82

**New & Notable:** The Magnolia and Palm courses host a late-season PGA Tour event each year. Take the kids to see Mickey, then take advantage of twilight rates starting in mid-afternoon.

**75. THE WOODLANDS (TEX.) RESORT (NR)**

**Score:** 66.57 **Contact & Directions:** [woodlandsresort.com](http://woodlandsresort.com), 800-433-2624 **Room Rate:** \$159

**New & Notable:** Two courses, the Oaks and Panther Trail, and a lighted putting green are highlights. Some argue that the 18th hole on Panther Trail is the best par 4 in Houston.

**Additional Reporting By Ashley Mayo, Mary Jane McGirr And Jeff Patterson**