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Swing Away

GOLF AND BASEBALL IN FORT MYERS,
SCOTTSDALE AND SAN DIEGO

Plus:
TOM
FRIEDMAN

NEW YORK TIMES
COLUMNIST ON
PLAYING GOLF
AROUND THE GLOBE



MEMBER BENEFIT OF THE MINNESOTA GOLF ASSOCIATION

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FEATURES

12 WORLD GOLFER

By Jon Roe

Minnesota native and *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman recounts his globe-spanning travels and his favorite game—golf.

16 GET WINTER FIT

By John Mugford

As soon as you hang up the clubs this year, you can start getting in shape for next season. Here's how to get started.

20 SAY 'NO' TO SNOW

By Dan Gleason

Lengthen short winter nights and shorten off-season days with a golf trip to Fort Myers, Scottsdale or San Diego.

34 WINTER SUSTENANCE

Compiled by Minnesota Golfer Editors

Check out this list of recommended golf books sure to get you ready to tee it up next spring.



ILLUSTRATION BY NANCY SPEIR

Good Winter Reads



PHOTO BY LOANNA TUCKER

20

On the cover: We-Ko-Pa Golf Club,
Fountain Hills, Ariz.

DEPARTMENTS

EDITOR'S LETTER	3
GREAT DRIVES 3 Must-Play Holes	4
Q SCHOOL Tips from the Pros Rules Primer Ask the Expert	6
MGA PROFILE Golf Course Architect Don Herfort	11
PUNCH SHOTS MGA News A President's Farewell	35
SCORECARD	38
ALLIED ASSOCIATIONS A List of MGA Partners	47
BACKSPIN A Sideways Look at the Game	48



PHOTO BY W.P. RYAN

11

Golf Course Architect Don Herfort

PHOTO COURTESY OF BARONA RESORT AND CASINO

Take

Barona Resort and Casino

... a Swings

By Dan Gleason

Take your game south for a little tune-up, some baseball spring training or just some warmer weather

Instead of tossing another log on the fire and longing for the big thaw, why not take your cabin fever and rusty golf swing to spring training where the big leaguers take theirs? All Major League Baseball teams train in either Florida or Arizona from late February till the end of March. Not only can you iron out the kinks in your golf game and gain an edge to win skins back home, you also can enjoy Major League Baseball where ticket prices are much cheaper and players are far more accessible than they are during the regular season.

If spring training baseball doesn't move your soul, you might add sunny San Diego to the list (see page 24). There you'll find major league golf and major league attractions like Sea World and the San Diego Zoo.

The Grapefruit League and the Florida Gulf Coast

Fort Myers, Fla., is spring training headquarters for the Twins, who count several golfers among them, including head coach Ron Gardenhire. The Grapefruit League, which competes there, is made up of 14 American and National League baseball teams. When you're not watching one of their games, you can play a wide array of wonderful golf courses, and when the day is done, dine in style. There are many excellent daily-fee layouts from Fort Myers southward to nearby Sanibel Island, Naples and Marco Island.

Stoneybrook Golf Club (239-948-3933) ranks as one of Fort Myers' top public golf facilities because of the scenery and conditioning. Lakes and lagoons come into view on most holes but not necessarily into play. Even with such an abundance of water, the course ranks as one of the most beginner-friendly courses in Florida. The signature hole is a toughie—a par 3 from an island tee to an island green. Because the fairways are generously wide, you can let out the shaft with Tiger-like fury. Green fees during February and March, inclusive of golf cart, run \$105 before 10 a.m.; \$90 between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.; and \$65 after 1 p.m.

Shell Point Golf Club (239-433-9790; www.shellpointgolf.com) is at the doorstep to Fort Myers and gorgeous Sanibel Island. Known for its great conditioning, this is a shotmak-



The Rookery

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ROOKERY

er's course where straight hitters gain an advantage over long knockers who spray the ball. The course requires a lot of shot placement. The signature hole is a par 3 over water that ranges from 123 yards from the front tees to an intimidating 241 from the tips. Green fees during the winter are \$119 until 2 p.m. and \$69 thereafter.

Just south of Fort Myers is Naples and gorgeous Marco Island. The Robert Cupp-designed course at the **Marriott Marco Island Resort** (800-438-4373; www.marriott.com) is called The Rookery, and it's a dandy. The nearby **Ritz-Carlton Naples Beach** course (239-598-3300; www.ritzcarlton.com) was designed by Greg Norman and was laid out over lush interior land in the northernmost tip of the Everglades. Both courses feature huge bunkers, undulating fairways and rolling greens.

If you want to be in a more metropolitan area, several MLB teams train within an hour or so of Fort Myers, in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area. And you can still catch several Twins games because teams travel back and forth around Florida daily.

While there are dozens of wonderful courses in the area, if you want a treat, check out the **Renaissance Vinoy Resort and Golf Club** (888-303-4430; 727-896-8000; www.marriott.com). This charming hotel overlooks the St. Petersburg Waterfront and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Built in the 1920s during the big Florida boom, it was magnificently restored to period detail in the early 1990s. The golf course, also built during the 1920s, is challenging, scenic and always immaculately groomed. The course is open only to members and resort guests; green fees are \$160 during the peak season, but hotel golf packages reduce the rates.

The Cactus League and Glitzy Scottsdale

Thirteen big-league teams play in nine Arizona sports complexes, seven in and around Phoenix and Scottsdale. Golf fees will be at their winter peak, but you can reduce them with resort packages.

Most courses built around this area during the past two decades are "target" courses. To conserve water, they are designed with strategic grass areas that leave a lot of raw desert as hazard. Phoenix is surrounded by mountain foothills and giant Saguaro



Eagle Mountain Golf Club

PHOTO COURTESY OF EAGLE MOUNTAIN GC



Troon North's Pinnacle Golf Course

cacti that provide great scenery, and there are a few recommended courses strategically located close to Cactus League baseball parks. Maricopa County, which comprises Scottsdale, has more courses than any county in the United States—more than 150.

Award-winning **We-Ko-Pa Golf Club** (480-836-9000; www.wekopa.com) includes the original 18-hole Cholla course and the more recent Ben Crenshaw-Bill Coore-designed Saguaro beauty. Owned by the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, We-Ko-Pa is in Fountain Hills, just east of Scottsdale. The courses were built on land that yields dramatic views of the Sonoran Desert and surrounding mountains. Both were on *GOLF Magazine's* most recent "Top 100 Courses You Can Play" list, and both provide a variety of great golf holes and challenges. Green fees in peak season are \$210, but guests of the nearby Radisson receive reduced rates or can stay on a golf package plan.

Eagle Mountain Golf Club (480-816-1234; www.eaglemtn.com) incorporates the property's natural box canyons, elevation changes and native Sonoran Desert into the course experience. Views from the higher elevations are spectacular. This dazzler has earned numerous awards and accolades including "Best New Public Golf Course" by *The Arizona Republic* in 1996 and "Best of Phoenix Public Golf Courses" in 2006 by *The Phoenix New Times*. Green fees are \$195 at peak season; the separately owned Eagle Mountain Inn across the street offers a golf package and a tee-time booking service.

Both We-Ko-Pa and Eagle Mountain are just minutes from the Scottsdale Stadium and a short drive from Mesa's Hohokam Park and Tempe Diablo Stadium for spring training games. Also near Hohokam Park and downtown Scottsdale, **Longbow Golf Club** (480-807-5400; www.longbowgolf.com) is one of the area's best. Always in great shape, Longbow features strategic bunkering and distinctive native areas that come into play on many holes. Perhaps best of all, no homes or roads intrude on the interior of the course, which means from all points, the

scenery of the McDowell, Utery and Superstition Mountain ranges is spectacular. Green fees with carts at this time of year run \$115 during the week, \$135 on weekends, with reduced rates of \$70 in the afternoons.

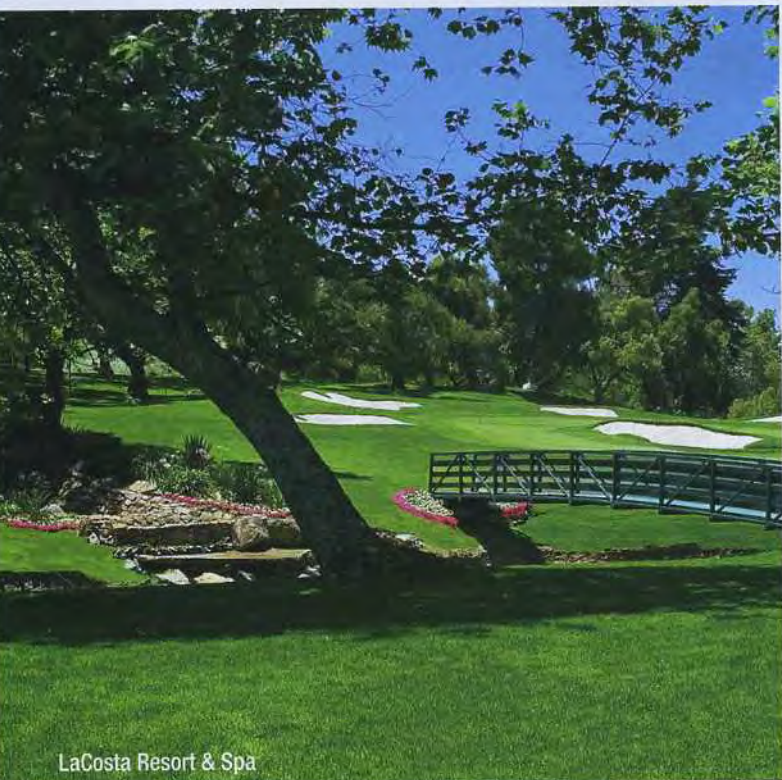
Last but not least on the "must play" list is **Trilogy Golf Club at Vistancia** (623-328-5100; www.trilogygolfclub.com), just minutes from the Peoria Sports Complex and a short drive from Maryville and Surprise stadiums, spring headquarters for several baseball teams. Trilogy was the only course in Arizona and one of just 23 nationwide to receive a five-star rating on *Golf Digest Magazine's* most recent "Best Places to Play in America" list.

Crafted by renowned Arizona golf course architect Gary Panks, Trilogy stretches to 7,259 yards from the tips. Accented by tall native grasses and breathtaking views of the surrounding desert and nearby mountains, Trilogy makes use of the natural flow of the terrain. While it rewards precise execution, with multiple sets of tees, it is flexible enough to be enjoyed by players of all abilities. Green fees are \$89 Monday through Thursday and \$110 Friday through Sunday.

The name "Troon Golf" has a particular significance to golfers worldwide. That brand name carries with it an assurance that the 185 courses it owns or manages will be in their best possible condition, the amenities will be top notch and the management will be responsive to the needs of the guests the facility serves.

Such is the case with Scottsdale's **Troon North** (golf shop: 480-585.5300; tee times: 480-585-7700), a daily fee facility that offers two very scenic, very challenging and very exciting courses—the Monument and the Pinnacle. Tom Weiskopf originally designed and recently renovated both courses, which wrap around the northern slopes of Pinnacle Peak. The fairways meander along the Sonoran Desert with giant cacti dotting a landscape framed by giant boulders.

Golf Magazine's "Top 100 Courses You Can Play" for 2008-2009 ranks the Pinnacle and Monument courses as the number



LaCosta Resort & Spa

PHOTO COURTESY OF LACOSTA RESORT & SPA

1 and number 4 courses, respectively, in Arizona, and nationally as number 21 and number 45.

If you want to know more about your swing and how to improve it, Troon North houses a Callaway Performance Center complete with launch monitors and advanced ball flight simulators for instant feedback.

Nightlife in and around Scottsdale offers every imaginable type of cuisine and great entertainment. "Old Scottsdale" is quaint and is centrally located to several spring training venues.

San Diego: A Leisure Lover's Shangri-La

San Diego is in the laid-back, leisurely chunk of SoCal that the Beach Boys were really singing about in their hit songs. It's a paradise for jet-setters and surf-bunnies, and a place where some of the unemployment is a matter of choice. San Diegans love the outdoors, lying on the beaches, jogging, riding the waves or their bikes and, of course, playing all those wonderful golf courses that stretch from Carlsbad south through Del Mar, La Jolla and San Diego proper.

There are many high-quality golf courses here, but one you shouldn't miss is **Torrey Pines** (800-985-4653; 858-452-3226; www.torreypinesgolfcourse.com), the spectacular municipal venue that hosted this past U.S. Open Championship and the home



PHOTO BY LONNA TUCKER

Longbow Golf Club

course for the Tour's Buick Invitational in February. Situated atop the cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean, both the South and North courses are scenic. The South Course is priced for a municipal if you're not a resident (\$160 during the week, \$200 on weekends). Rees Jones redesigned the South Course, which now stretches to 7,600 yards (unless you want to suffer, you won't want to play your ball from the back tees). Rates on the North Course are \$90 during the week and \$113 on weekends in the winter.

Just north in Carlsbad is the storied **LaCosta Resort & Spa** (800-854-5000; 760-438-9111; www.lacosta.com). Its two 18-hole courses are renowned as sites for PGA Tour events ranging from the Tournament of Champions, the Mercedes Championship and the Match Play Championship. Created originally as a playground for movie stars and sports celebrities, LaCosta has undergone a recent, major renovation to all of its facilities, which include several dining rooms, shops and a world-class spa. Green fees can be reduced with package plans.



PHOTO BY WFP RYAN

Torrey Pines

Spring Training INFORMATION



>>FLORIDA GRAPEFRUIT LEAGUE

Check out the Twins or other teams that train on the Florida coast—below is ticket and stadium information. Call ahead for schedules. The Twins play home games in Fort Myers, Fla., but travel to several of the other parks listed below. Ticket prices depend on seating location.

For complete schedules and further information, visit www.springtrainingonline.com.

Minnesota Twins: Hammond Stadium, 14100 Six Mile Cypress Parkway, Fort Myers, FL 33912. 239-768-4270 or 800-33-TWINS. Box Seats: \$17; Reserved Seats: \$14.

Toronto Blue Jays: Dunedin Stadium at Grant Field. 727-733-0429. \$13-\$18.

Boston Red Sox: City of Palms Park, Fort Myers. 239-334-4700. \$24-\$44.

Cincinnati Reds: Ed Smith Stadium, Sarasota. 941-954-4464. \$7-\$14.

New York Yankees: Legends Field, Tampa. 813-879-224. \$12-\$18.

Philadelphia Phillies: Brighthouse Networks Field, Clearwater. 727-442-8496. Call for prices.

Pittsburgh Pirates: McKechnie Field, Bradenton. 941-748-4610. \$6-\$11.

Tampa Bay Rays: Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg. 727-825-3250. \$4-\$15.

Detroit Tigers: Joker Marchant Stadium, Lakeland. 686-688-8075. \$7-\$16.



Joe Mauer, Minnesota Twins

>>SAN DIEGO ATTRACTIONS

The following are some things to do in San Diego when you're not playing golf.

Balboa Park: 1549 El Prado, Balboa Park, just north of downtown. 619-239-0512. Visit www.balboapark.org. A beautiful place to relax, inundated with trees and greenery. There are 15 museums. Museum hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. Admission prices vary depending on the museum.

San Diego Zoo: 2920 Zoo Drive, Balboa Park, just north of downtown. 619-231-1515. Visit www.sandiegozoo.org. Winter hours through March: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (grounds close at 5 p.m.). General admission: Adults \$28.50, Children \$18.50.

San Diego Wild Animal Park: 15500 San Pasqual Valley Road, Escondido. 760-747-8702.

Visit www.sandiegozoo.org. Winter hours through March: 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (grounds close at 5 p.m.). General admission: Adults \$28.50, Children \$18.50.

Sea World: 500 Sea World Dr. off I-5 north of the I-8/I-5 intersection. 800-257-4268. Visit www.seaworld.com/sandiego. Winter hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. General admission: Age 10 and over \$61, Children under 10 \$51.

PHOTO BY BILL GUERRRO

>>CACTUS LEAGUE

Fifteen teams make up the Arizona Cactus League; 12 are headquartered in the Phoenix area, three in Tucson. Below are stadium locations and phone numbers of Phoenix area teams. Mesa, Scottsdale and Tempe are on the east and northeast side of the city; Peoria, Glendale, Maryvale, Surprise and Goodyear are on the northwest side of the city. Call for ticket prices.

For more information and complete schedules, visit www.springtrainingonline.com.

Chicago Cubs: Hohokam Park, Mesa. 480-964-4467.

Cleveland Indians: Goodyear Park, Goodyear. 866-48-TRIBE.

Kansas City Royals: Surprise Stadium, Surprise. 480-784-4444.

Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim: Tempe Diablo Stadium, Tempe. 480-784-4444.

Los Angeles Dodgers: New park is yet unnamed, Glendale. 866-DODGERS.

Milwaukee Brewers: Maryvale Baseball Park, Phoenix. 800-933-7890.

Oakland A's: Phoenix Municipal Stadium. 877-493-2255.

San Diego Padres: Peoria Sports Complex, Peoria. 800-677-1227.

San Francisco Giants: Scottsdale Stadium. 877-4SFGTIX.

Seattle Mariners: Peoria Sports Complex. 480-784-4444.

Texas Rangers: Surprise Stadium. 480-784-4444.

A few miles outside San Diego in Barona Valley is **Barona Resort and Casino** (888-722-7662; 619-387-7018; www.barona.com). The hotel has several dining rooms, including a great steakhouse; a complete fitness center; a state-of-the-art spa, live entertainment and a truly magnificent golf course.

The course is rated the fifth-best course you can play in California by *Golfweek Magazine* and the 19th best resort course in America by *GOLF Magazine*. This links/parkland hybrid course doesn't have a lot of trees but is well bunkered with smooth and undulating greens. Six sets of tees keep things interesting and enjoyable for players of all calibers. Green/cart fees in the winter are \$120 (\$80 after 12 p.m.) Monday through Thursday; \$160 Friday and Sunday; and \$200 Saturday. However, you can sign up for a Player's Card at the casino, even if you're not a hotel guest, and get 20 percent off those rates.

There is a lot to see and do in San Diego. The San Diego Zoo is generally considered to be the best in America and is associated with the worthwhile Wild Animal Park. Sea World includes whale and dolphin shows, and also pools where you can interact with dolphins, which is extremely popular with kids.

Balboa Park is another great attraction, an oasis of green trees and Spanish architecture that houses 15 museums, from aerospace to dinosaurs. There is also a wide assortment of full-service resorts in San Diego and many bed-and-breakfast inns overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Winter's Delight

Wherever you go and whatever else you do this winter and early spring, you can be enjoying golf in the warm sun while your friends back home are blowing on their hands to thaw out after a late winter snowfall. Send them a postcard of a palm tree. **MG**

Dan Gleason is an author and freelance writer living in Tucson, Ariz.