

# THE Golf Insider

thegolfinsider.com

If you play golf, play the best, and skip the rest.

Apr/May 2005

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## Spotlight on Hawke's Bay, New Zealand



Photo by Jaann Doer

*Cape Kidnappers is a dramatic peninsula jutting into the sea, and the perfect setting for a new Tom Doak golf course.*

By showcasing the stunning natural scenery and endless jaw-dropping vistas, the smash hit film "Lord of the Rings" has put New Zealand on the map as an A+ tourist destination. With unbelievable landscapes, a friendly populace, a thriving wine industry, plus a laundry list of outdoor pursuits, it is worth flying halfway around the world to visit. There are also plenty of courses, but the thing New Zealand has sorely lacked over the years has been high quality golf. One couple, retired financier Julian Robertson and his wife Josie, are changing that, one masterpiece at a time. We were fortunate enough to visit the Robertson's first project, the wonderful boutique resort and shockingly gorgeous

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## Golfing through History

No one ever wants to lose a ball. But if you had your choice, would you rather slice your tee shot into the woods, someone's backyard swimming pool, or a thousand year old castle?

If you are reading this, you love to travel. When you go on a non-golf vacation, you probably visit important historical sites. If you go to London you tour the Tower of London. In Egypt the Great Pyramid. In San Antonio the Alamo. No matter where you go, a lot of travel is about history. So why not step back in time on your next golf vacation?

When we say golf history, we're not talking about how many majors Jack Nicklaus won. We mean castles, ruins and sights that often predate the game by centuries. History can be an added benefit of a golf vacation, just like a spa or good restaurants. Many of the avid golf travelers we talk with have "been there and done that" in terms of must-play courses. They have walked the Old Course and had a pilgrimage to Bandon Dunes, and they are looking for something different, which is why we have seen a rise in unique offerings like golf cruises, golf and wine itineraries, even golf trips combined with art or photography lessons. But none of these are as widely accessible as historical golf vacations. And golfing through history answers the

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**Our Mission** is to be your trusted friend and advisor on golf travel. We cut through the clutter of the myriad golf publications and bring you truly useful information on golf travel and related topics. This means you get what you expect for your travel dollar, whatever your budget. We cover not only what is new, but also what is good and what is bad. Our highly critical staff has written for every major golf magazine, and when we're not writing, we're out there playing. We love golf and want you to see why.

## WHAT THE GOLF WORLD IS TALKING ABOUT

**Lansdowne Wins in a Landslide:** Just in case the Lansdowne resort in the Virginia town of the same name was not already the premier golf destination in the DC region, owners are taking steps to ensure that it will be. In February, a renovation of all 305 rooms was completed. The décor and furniture theme is country manor, fitting the Virginia "hunt country" setting.



*Just renovated, the Lansdowne resort added a Greg Norman design.*

This move is meant to usher in a welcome change from what was primarily a meeting destination into a vacation resort. April sees the opening of the new "multi-pool water complex," with an active pool for playing water volleyball and basketball, a pool filled with harmless sea creatures, a waterslide, a "pop jet fountain," whatever that is, and several Jacuzzis tucked among rock outcroppings. The entire complex is carved from rock, and the sections are connected with rope bridges and waterfalls.

But the biggest change is coming in July, when the second course, a Greg Norman design, opens. The front nine will run along the Potomac River, while the back will stretch from the river to Goose Creek. In a unique golf gimmick, Norman is closing with four holes totaling 1760 yards, exactly one mile. He promises us it will be "the hardest mile in golf." Overall the design will stretch nearly 7300-yds. and incorporate the riverfront, wetlands and even part of an old canal. Norman discovered an overgrown old navigational lock building while walking the site and decided to use it as a feature on the 13th green. The routing is also get-

ting a new 40,000 square foot clubhouse and a large practice center. For the intimidated, "Shark Bait," a less challenging Norman-designed 9-hole layout will open this fall.

Lansdowne already has an RTJ, Jr. parkland layout incorporating fields, woods, rock outcroppings and stone walls, so by this fall it will become a 45-hole facility. The final phase of the \$45 million renovation and expansion is a full-service spa, which should open by winter. While there are a lot of high-end daily fees in the area, the mid-Atlantic has a shortage of larger destination golf resorts, and hopefully Lansdowne will fit the bill. We will visit this summer and take a closer look.

877-509-8400, [lansdowneresort.com](http://lansdowneresort.com)

### **Take the Bite out of the Course:**

There are already too many things to think about during your swing -- bugs should not be one of them. There are plenty of regions where great golf can be found that are also bug-crazed: the northern Midwest, the northeast in summer, most of the eastern seaboard and also the heights of the Colorado Rockies. Even if you

are not among those fretting over Lyme disease and West Nile Virus, you probably don't enjoy getting bitten or even having bugs buzz around your head.

That's why we were taken aback with a new product, the Buzz Off line of clothing from Ex Officio. The company is well known in the adventure travel world, where they make gear for safaris, fishing and other outdoor and wilderness recreation in bug crazed spots. The new line has

insect repellent incorporated in the fabric itself, using permethrin, a man-made form of a natural insect repellent found in the Chrysanthemum plant. It is the first insect repellent clothing approved by the EPA, is completely odorless, and unlike conventional repellents, is against your skin rather than on or in your skin. Best of all, it works. The clothing has the added advantages of being both moisture wicking and offering SPF-30 sun protection. The only downside: the repellency does wear off after about 25 washings. The clothing is made to be functional, not fashionable, but they do offer a basic polo and khaki pants and shorts, as well as clothing for women and children. If bugs are your bane on the links, you may want to check this out. [exofficio.com](http://exofficio.com)

## News from South of the Border:

Feliz Navidad! Christmas came early in Mexico, when the Iberostar Paraiso Maya opened the first week of December. This is the first golf

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## WHAT THE GOLF WORLD IS TALKING ABOUT

resort in the area of the Yucatan Peninsula known as the Riviera Maya, a fast growing tourist destination.

The new resort sits on Playa Paraiso, a gorgeous beach midway between Cancun and Playa del Carmen. Until now, Cancun has had a monopoly on golf in the Yucatan, with several non-descript tracts and the better than average Nicklaus Signature course at the Moon Palace resort (Apr. 2003). But Cancun is touristy, while the Riviera Maya to the south is an eco-paradise and home to some very impressive ruins, including Coba, Chichen Itza and the coastal Mayan city of Tulum.

Iberostar is a Spanish-owned chain of all-inclusive resorts, but Paraiso Maya is their most luxurious project to date. It is the final phase of a large development that includes three other Iberostar resorts. However the company is trying to set this one apart as its highest tier, and guests will be privy to special services including personalized check-in with no front desk, luxury amenities, and special spa treatments. Likewise, two higher-end restaurants will be only for Maya guests, who also can use all of the services, pools and 33 restaurants and bars throughout the four resorts. Designed to highlight Mayan culture, the hotel lobby is a replica of the famous El Castillo Pyramid at Chichen Itza. The suites, centered around a flower-filled courtyard, are built in thatch-roofed buildings to replicate a Mexican village.

But the highlight is eighteen P.B. Dye designed holes opening next month. The last work of his we saw was at the Punta Cana Resort & Club in the Dominican Republic (Dec. 2002), and we were quite impressed. Here the highlight promises to be natural "cenote" or deep-water hazards. Fluent in Spanish, Dye has been personally overseeing construction of the 7000-yd. layout, with, amazingly,



*The coastal layout at the new Intercontinental resort in Cyprus looks stunning.*

over 100 days on site. While it is not an uncommon thing for designers to say, Dye predicts that this will be "...my best ever!" Later in 2005, a driving range and 9-hole par-3 course for families will open. This summer the resort will also add a new shopping center with 32 stores, a new fitness center and spa and several more dining establishments. Since summer is the off season and Mexican resorts usually feature attractive grand opening specials, we think it might be worth an early visit. This winter, upscale Fairmont resorts will be opening its own hotel, complete with a Greg Norman-design, in the Riviera Maya, which might just become the next big thing.

*iberostar.com*

### News From Abroad:

#### **The Love Goddess Tees It Up:**

The third largest island in the Mediterranean, Cyprus has recently become a sexy hotspot for cultural travel, with its many well preserved ruins and historic sites, including the birthplace of Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love. One thing it has not been is a golf destination -- until now.

On March 1, the flashiest golf resort in the nation opened. The Intercontinental Aphrodite is part of the Aphrodite Hills Resort, a village-themed development along the lines of Whistler, Mt. Tremblant, Sandestin and the like. The hotel anchors the

residential/retail/dining pedestrian village and the resort boasts a Greco-Roman bath-themed spa with a full array of water treatments; a championship tennis facility, and many other sporting diversions. For us the highlight is the two-year old golf tract, designed by Cabell Robinson, who we have never heard of, but the pictures of the coastal layout are stunning. Like the Los Cabos region of Mexico, the area combines mountains, ravines and desert with

ocean exposure on the azure Mediterranean. The layout spans two high plateaus separated by a dramatic gorge, which is crossed several times, all the while offering panoramic ocean views. Since opening it has hosted the Emirates Open and Chivas Regal classic, and the facility also features a 3-hole practice course and a European PGA teaching academy.

Off the course, the highlight is the area's history. Very close to the Intercontinental lies Pafos, the ancient Roman capital from the days of the Trojan War, which is now a Unesco World heritage site. Here you can tour Pafos castle, a Byzantine fortress from the 13th century and take in the Pafos Mosaics, the region's must-see tourist attraction, considered the finest in Europe. The birthplace of Aphrodite is less than 2 miles away and other nearby sites include the Tombs of Kings, a Roman theater, the Temple of Aphrodite and the Baths of Aphrodite.

Cyprus is an up and coming destination and this new property is a very welcome addition, bringing not just lodging but all the features of a vacation community, coupled with a near perfect year-round climate. Cyprus, a new member of the European Union and part of the British Commonwealth, is served by a host of international airlines and is surprisingly easy to get to. We hope to visit soon.

*ichotelsgroup.com* ■

# Golf Insider's Resort Close-up

## The Breakers

We have never been big fans of the South Florida golf resorts. At their best they feature luxury accommodations without the golf to match. At their worst they offer neither notable golf nor lodging. But we have a new South Florida favorite, one that actually delivers on both fronts, even though it is far from new. The Breakers, in the heart of Palm Beach, has it all: great service, gourmet food, fine accommodations, a wonderful location, and best of all, a brand new Rees Jones-designed layout that is a standout in the region.

The Breakers won us over right away with its simple business concept. The family-owned property reinvests most of its ample profits in maintenance and improvements each year, on a scale we have never seen elsewhere. Lots of resorts change hands or close and then reopen with very expensive renovations, but the Breakers never slows down. The hotel adds and updates its facilities in a noticeable way each and every year, to the average tune of \$15 million, so that even regular guests who have been visiting throughout its 100-year history will notice improvements each time they stay. To put this in perspective, the Breakers has spent over \$225 million on upgrades, including the new golf course, since 1990!

Not including the new layout, the hotel sits on a whopping 140-acres along the ocean on the island of Palm Beach, just off Worth Avenue, sort of the Rodeo Drive of Florida. Guests can walk to ultra-exclusive shops and restaurants, and it sits just 7-miles from the airport. This means that you enjoy a lengthy stay here without a car and not run out of things to do.

The Ocean course (Rating: 9), built in 1896, is the oldest in all of Florida, and its footprint is an amazingly small 84-acres. It sits immediately outside the front of the hotel, so that the grand entrance drive is carved right through it. Part of the course lies across a busy street, so golfers



*With a location that can't be beat, the Breakers lies between the ocean and downtown Palm Beach.*

here have ample opportunities to hit cars -- and be hit by cars. Between the tight parallel fairways and the traffic, this is one of the more dangerous designs we have seen. Still, the short tract has its charm. The walk to the first tee takes you over a beautiful stone bridge a la Augusta, which sets the tone in terms of the excellent conditioning. It was remodeled in 2000 by Brian Silva, who installed attractive framing bunkers to give definition to each hole. It is an easy course to walk, with caddies available.

While short, it is far from easy. You can rarely afford to hit driver on the razor-thin fairways, making it a natural favorite for anyone who is straight and consistent with their long irons. The exceptions are eight and nine, two drivable par-4s that will seduce big hitters. The best holes here are the par-3s, including the dramatic thirteenth, just outside the hotel lobby and visible from many rooms. Another good hole is the sixteenth, in relative terms the longest here (230 from the tips) featuring a green split into front and back sections by an encroaching pond.

The golf highlight is what used to be called Breakers West and is now the Rees Jones Course at the Breakers.

Surprisingly, this is the first time the low key Jones has ever allowed his name to be used on one of his courses. More of a rebuild than a renovation, Jones was helped by last year's hurricanes which ensured he could use little of the existing tract. The routing is off-site, about 20-minutes from the hotel, which runs shuttles, and is strictly for a very small membership and Breakers' guests. Getting a tee time is never an issue. Because of its location, this has always been the second choice for Breakers guests, but not anymore.

The redesign runs through the Breakers West residential community, but homes are well set back, not too close together, and do not impede play. The routing, which just opened in January, now stretches over 7100-yards. While Jones uses the classic runway tee boxes his father, Robert Trent Jones, Sr. was famous for, he also used a vast amount of teeing ground, with five different boxes on most holes, so the tract plays radically differently from the various tees. Scratch players will get all the challenge they can handle from the back. In a bit of a twist, Jones skipped the containment mounding that has become a trademark of his and opted

for very visually impressive high-backed bunkers, lots of them, edging the fairways. While intimidating off the tee, these help as much as hurt by keeping shots from running into the many bodies of water throughout.

The front has more homes, and the course gets off to a slow start with a series of good but not notable holes. At the onset it looks like a typical Florida course. Outbound, the best holes are the one-shotters, both over water to very nice green complexes. The side closes with a strong and long par-4 with a forced carry off the tee that will then require some players to lay-up.

The back is much different, with fewer homes and trees, more elevation changes and a wilder setting. Holes 9-15 are the heart of the layout, with one very good hole after another. Ten is an S-shaped par-5 with impressive bunkering, water in play on the second and third shots, and a peninsula green. The next few holes are in this vein, with both water and an importance on placement. Fifteen is a beauty, a short par-4 that plays downhill and downwind but over a fairway that is essentially a sea of bunkers.

There are few Floridian courses that have a seven-hole stretch to match this one, and it is definitely worth the trip out to Breakers West for a round.

The new clubhouse will keep you comfortable while you wait for the shuttle back (**Rating: 14**).

At the Breakers service was consistently excellent and there is plenty to do. If there is a weak link it is the rooms themselves, which are very well appointed but suffer from the bane of many historic hotels, simply that they are not overly large, and lack the immense bathrooms with walk-in showers popular in new hotels. The Breakers does have plans to consolidate and enlarge some floors, but for now, you will have to accept very comfortable but standard sized rooms. There are no amenities missing, however, from the high-end spa toiletries to high-speed internet and video games for kids. The Flagler Club rooms, located on the sixth and seventh floor, share a lounge full of gourmet snacks and spirits, plus a very helpful on-site concierge.

Dining is a highlight, and L'Escalier, the Breaker's flagship restaurant, is one of the best in the state, a formal French eatery for special occasions requiring jacket and tie. The Seafood Bar serves a full-array of fresh Florida seafood, including stone crab in season, in a casual but fun setting. Even if you do not eat here, a drink is a must. The bar itself is a complex aquarium made of transparent acrylic, and it offers the best ocean views in the resort. Our dining

favorite was Echo, a standout Asian fusion restaurant owned by the hotel but located a few blocks away in Palm Beach. It gives the famed Nobu a run for its money, and offers excellent variety. Our only disappointment was the Flagler Steakhouse, located in the clubhouse of the original Breakers course across the street. A world apart from the rest of the property, it offered mediocre service and food to match, the typical experience of a steakhouse trying to be high-end but failing. There are also several other bars, cafes, poolside dining and an Italian restaurant.

The spa is first-class, located in its own building next to the main hotel. The 20,000 square foot facility includes every type of treatment room, a state of the art gym with a glass wall overlooking the Atlantic, pools and hot tubs along the beach and a Guerlain beauty institute. This is also where the hotel beach club and another outdoor restaurant are located. The beach club offers more than 60 private cabanas, plus a full-service watersports center, including Scuba and deep-sea fishing. With wrecks, an old pier and a reef just offshore, the diving in front of the Breakers is said to be excellent.

The resort is also very family-friendly, and in addition to supervised children's programs for ages 3-5 and 6-12, it offers a large dedicated facility with offerings for all ages, including a full-sized arcade, an arts and crafts center, a movie theater just for kids, and a computer and X-box gaming center. There are also scheduled activities during the day and family fun nights every Friday.

Finally, the hotel houses a large shopping arcade with about a dozen shops ranging from news and sundries to Piaget watches and Aqua di Parma toiletries. There is also a large, full-service tennis center and oceanfront promenade. One criticism of some guests is that the property does not have enough beach, but the next big reinvestment is in a coastal reclamation project, since the Breakers never sits still. We would be happy to go back and see for ourselves.



*Like the entire resort, the oldest course in Florida is kept in immaculate condition.*

## Golf *Insider's* Expert Opinion

**S**am Baker is the founder and CEO of Haversham & Baker Golfing Expeditions, a high-end tour operator organizing trips throughout the British Isles and Continental Europe. He is a colorful character who puts as much emphasis on the off-course experience as the golf itself, making sure the local sights are part of the travel experience. For instance, it was Baker who insisted we visit the wonderful Oyster Tavern when playing Ireland's Tralee, and for that, we owe him one. When we offered Baker the chance to give his Expert Opinion on golf, he opted to cover bars instead.

### The 19th Hole

One of the more endearing aspects of the game of golf is how a fine golfing experience can linger long after the round is over. A clever shot, an even cleverer caddy and genial companions all live on in the remembering, the savouring and the re-telling. Yes, there are fish stories but they never quite match the appeal of a great golfing experience re-told. When is the last time you saw a collection of great fish stories? And a small book at that.

And so it is that those of us who love the game have come to love great 19th holes almost as much as collections of great eighteens. These are the kind of alluring places that become an intrinsic part of the round that one begins to anticipate early in the homeward nine, that invite the telling of a good golf story and that entice one to stay well past the appointed hour of departure. While Major Haversham and I have shared many such places, three in Scotland are amongst our all-time favourites:

For us, a proper round at the Old Course in St. Andrews concludes at the Dunvegan, about a seven iron from the 18th green. There our caddies, emboldened by our offering of several pints and a meat pie, are only too happy to review our accomplishments and foibles with an alcohol-induced honesty that can be as

painful as it is amusing. But such is the nature of this raucous pub, a gathering place for caddies, golfers of all persuasions and such noted St. Andreans as David Joy, the historian, artist and actor who often portrays Old Tom Morris.

Caddies are not a fixture in the bar of the nearby Kingsbarns Golf Links, but the vivacious manageress, Elspeth Barr, is and her charming presence is the equal of any ten caddies. Even without Elspeth the Kingsbarns bar would still offer positively stunning views of the course and St. Andrews Bay, heaping bowls of steaming chili and particularly comfortable seating that invites you to linger. Yet the bar is never quite so much fun as when Elspeth fills the room with her smile and plops herself on the lap of an unsuspecting and startled golfer.

A magical course deserves a special 19th and so it is at Royal Dornoch Golf Club in the Scottish Highlands. Adjacent to the first tee stands the Royal Golf Hotel, and in this wee establishment is a bar that has few equals for globe trotting golfers. Old pine floors covered with the occasional oriental rug, a roaring fire, deep soft leather chairs and sofas, and a vast collection of malt whiskys. Many is the time the Major and I have retired to this bar with plans for a whisky and an early dinner, begun discussing the intricacies of Royal Dornoch, been joined in our debate by fellow enthusiasts and realized at some point well into the evening that dinner never came unless one counts the copious amounts of crisps and nuts consumed with even more copious amounts of single malt. More alluring than a good meal -- now that's a 19th hole!

Then there is the deliciously ordinary club claret on the terrace at Sunningdale, seafood chowder at the Oyster Tavern after a round at Tralee, rioja and local olives at Almenara's Veinteecho overlooking Valderrama...but those stories must wait for another day.

### *The Golf Insider* Weighs In...

Mr. Baker got us thinking about the true value of a fine 19th hole, and we have seen our share, so we thought we would augment his list. We agree that few courses are as deserving of a post-golf celebration as the celebrated Old Course at St. Andrews, and we too love the Dunvegan. However, we have two other suggestions, creating a 3-hole "practice course" of sorts for ales and whiskies. First, if you ever have the invitation or opportunity, a drink in the Royal & Ancient clubhouse is not to be missed. Surrounded by museum-quality golf memorabilia and settled into comfortable easy chairs, you will experience one of the finest traditions in the game. You will need a coat and tie, but you will not be befuddled by hard-to-pronounce whisky names: they serve only two choices, aptly called Number One and Number Two. At the opposite end of the spectrum lies the Road Hole Bar, atop the famous Old Course Hotel. The bar has sweeping views of the golf complex, and what is said, convincingly, to be the largest whisky menu on earth.

There are plenty of memorable 19th holes elsewhere in the world of golf. We wanted to move into the bar at Scotland's Machrihanish permanently, so welcoming is this, the quintessential old-school clubhouse bar. Unique in all of golf, the pub at Wales' Nefyn & District is not a 19th hole at all: it lies in wait on the beach between the 12th and 13th holes, waylaying golfers into 7-hour rounds. The upstairs pub at Whistling Straits' castle-like clubhouse is as important and accurate an Irish import as the modern links course itself. The Boys' Club feel of the over-the-top locker room bars at Sea Island, GA and Silicon Valley's CordeValle are without peer. And for themes, it is hard to be unmoved by either the Ryder Cup bar at Pinehurst or the James Bond bar at Stoke Park outside London, where Bond played an epic match against his nemesis in the film *Goldfinger*. Here we suggest you try a vodka martini, shaken, not stirred.



## Golfing through History

(continued from p.1)

question we are most often asked by frequent golf travelers: What's a non-playing spouse to do?

Choosing courses in historic areas adds a dimension to the golf trip. For instance, we have taken several very memorable trips to Italy, which is not a hotbed of golf in terms of renowned layouts. In fact, there is not an eighteen in the country worth a special trip. But Italy is a perennial favorite for tourists worldwide because of its history. We loved Masseria San Domenico, even though its course is somewhat forgettable (June 2004). Masseria is a fairly new golf property in one of the country's oldest regions, Puglia, on the southeast coast. Ancient rock walls dot the landscape, and buildings date back to the days of the Greek and Roman empires. The luxury hotel itself occupies one of Italy's oldest coastal watchtowers, built in the 14th century by the Knights of Malta, as well as a number of other impressive stone buildings built over the last several centuries. The golf course, which sits on the former site of a World War II airstrip, opened in 2003 after a lengthy delay caused by the discovery of a Roman archaeological site amidst the fairways. The surrounding area is rich in history, with Leche, a 17th-century village; Bari, a medieval town with a famed castle, and many other ruins. You can even take ferries to Greece. The resort is also first-rate, with a great spa, pools and its own vineyards and olive groves. It may not be great golf, but it is a great, and historical, golf vacation. (800-225-4255, [sanctuaire.com](http://sanctuaire.com))

This is just one example of a place where golf and history come together. Consider these others:

Palazzo Arzaga is another historic Italian golf property. A luxury hotel has been built within an impressive 15th-century monastery, complete with original frescoes, painted ceilings and a chapel. The 600-year old property includes two designs by Jack

Nicklaus II and Gary Player. The hotel is in Brescia, near Verona, an hour from Milan and two from Venice. ([palazzoarzaga.com](http://palazzoarzaga.com))

Portugal's Caesar's Park resort just outside of Lisbon is home to the Pehna Longa Golf Club. The highlight is the Atlantic Course, which incorporates ancient ruins, including a vast Roman aqueduct, whose arched walls run down the sixth fairway, a hazard you do not see every day. Golf Magazine was impressed enough to include it among its Top 500 holes. The resort has proven so popular that designer Robert Trent Jones Jr. returned and built a second layout, the Monastery, named for another important historical ruin it incorporates. ([lhu.com](http://lhu.com))

One of our favorite hidden gems is Northern Ireland's Ardglass. The first five holes run along cliffs reminiscent of Pebble Beach, and this layout begins and ends at a 1,000-year-old coastal fortress. Believed to be the oldest building in use as a clubhouse in the world, you will want to linger over a Guinness or Irish whiskey.

In Wales one of the things that impressed us most was the abundant castles on or around many of the top routings. One especially well preserved specimen overlooks the entire course at highly ranked Royal St. Davids, and is available for tours and extremely popular with tourists. At nearby Pennard, called "the links in the sky" because it sits on dramatic headlands 200 feet above the ocean, the ruins of 12th-century Pennard castle are very much in play.

Jamaica lacks ancient history, but in the northwest corner, an entire golf community, including three top courses and hotels from Wyndham and Ritz-Carlton, is built around the Rose Hall Great House. The allegedly haunted 18th century plantation home has an important island history of slavery and voodoo. Renovated as a museum of sorts, it is perhaps the premier tourist attraction in the entire country, and more than 1 million visitors annually walk its halls.

Even Australia, one of the world's newer nations, boasts some golf his-

tory. New South Wales Golf Club outside Sydney is a fabulous course, often ranked in the Top 50 on earth. During WWII it was turned into a defensive position because it overlooks Sydney Harbor, and the gun emplacements and bunkers remain an integral and interesting part of the layout today. Greg Norman is about to oversee a renovation of the club, at which he has been a longtime member, but hopefully he will leave history undisturbed.

The newest hotspot of Mexican golf is the Riviera Maya (see p. 3), on the Yucatan Peninsula just south of touristy Cancun. Two brand new full service luxury golf resorts with designs by Greg Norman and Jack Nicklaus are readying to open, both a short drive from the ruins of Tulum, the only Mayan city ever built on the coast. Coba and Chichen Itza, two other key historic ruins, are also nearby.

Not every historical golf course is a secret. St. Andrews is hardly unknown to golf travelers, yet is perhaps the most historic golf venue. It has the virtue of being the world's first course, where people have been missing putts for five centuries. But the entire town is full of historic sites and ruins such as the old cathedral, cemetery and a castle. One of our subscribers, Bob Turrell, is the owner of Custom Golf Vacations in Scottsdale, AZ (888-596-9700, [cgolfvacations.com](http://cgolfvacations.com)), and he confirms the growing demand for historic golf travel, and is a big fan of the Birthplace of Golf. "On the outskirts, there are many worthwhile exploratory trips, including Glamis Castle, the childhood home of Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother and the birthplace of Princess Margaret. This is quite possibly the most spectacular of all Scottish castles, and was Shakespeare's setting for Macbeth. Nearby Falkland Palace, dating from the early 1500s, was the seat of James V and Mary Queen of Scots. People love to combine golf with more traditional forms of travel, so it is an extra bonus when golf and history coincide."

Bob, we couldn't agree more. ■



## Spotlight on Hawkes Bay, New Zealand

(continued from p.1)

design at Kauri Cliffs (**Rating: 17**) back in October 2002, and have been looking for an excuse to get back since. For his latest project, golf junkie Robertson teamed up with red-hot architect Tom Doak of Pacific Dunes fame, and the single word that best describes the result, Cape Kidnappers Golf Club, is “extraordinary” (**Rating: 18**). With his second project, in the heart of the popular Hawke’s Bay wine region, Robertson truly has earned the mantle of New Zealand’s “Lord of the Greens.”

Unlike most of the regions we visit, this area is a one hit wonder when it comes to golf. Since it is a long way to go to play a single course, no matter how fabulous, and for most golfers it will be their first visit to the region, we strongly suggest you have an interest in exploring New Zealand before you sign on. At the very least, plan to take in the top sights of the North Island, including Auckland, the nation’s largest city, and the wine district. A side trip to Kauri Cliffs (see sidebar) is also a must, whether you take the long but scenic drive yourself or opt for the fast but expensive hop in the hotel’s helicopter. If you have more than a week to spend, consider also visiting the south island, which has less golf but even more astonishing natural wonders.

Cape Kidnappers opened last January, on a 250-acre tract resting on the top of a dramatic promontory that juts out into Hawke Bay -- and climbs to a whopping 500 feet above sea level. This area is known as the Hawke’s Bay region, and sits on the eastern coast of the North Island, south of Auckland and adjacent to the town of Napier. The approach to the club is a microcosm of the adventure and natural beauty that are New Zealand’s signatures. The entrance road, estimated to have cost \$10 million, begins at sea level and then winds upwards for five miles through beautiful pine forests and pastures. About half way up, Hawke Bay sud-

denly comes into view, but you cannot see the course itself until you are within a few hundred yards of its understated and elegant clubhouse.

The Cape’s terrain is gently rolling and has several ridges and valleys that reach like fingers out to the sea. Steep seaside cliffs border half of the holes, and the Bay is visible from all eighteen. Acclaimed golf photographer Joann Dost, one of the top two or three in the world, recently shot the layout and told us, “Because of the way it is built on the cliff, it feels as if it is just sitting on the ocean. There is just nothing else like it.”

Doak first sketched his routing on a topographic map, and then followed it up with fifty days of on-site refining and shaping, far more than the handful of days most big-name architects spend on their “signature” projects. Not much dirt was moved, and the project was built in less than a year using Doak’s minimalist style. Dwight Segall, who was the wonderful director of golf at Kauri Cliffs and now oversees both facilities, said “If we pulled out the flag sticks, let the greens grow, and took out a few bunkers, the land would be a sheep farm again.” Doak’s design beliefs are rooted in the classical tradition, and at Cape Kidnappers, this includes Alister MacKenzie touches such as

heavy greenside bunkering and limited fairway hazards.

Ironically, Doak’s selection was somewhat accidental. Julian and Josie Robertson made the trip to remote Bandon, Oregon to play the heralded Bandon Dunes, and Julian was said to be very angry when the resort’s full tee sheet forced him to play its newer sibling, Pacific Dunes. His grumpiness quickly turned to bliss and during that round he decided that Doak should be his choice for Cape Kidnappers.

The routing is brilliant in a place where the scale is grand and epic. Except for a couple of bridges over 300 foot ravines, the holes seem to follow each other very naturally. On many, cart paths are not paved or even identified. The teeing grounds themselves are camouflaged by the terrain and are intentionally ragged at the edges. Similarly, the edges of the fairway merge and meld into the primary rough with a distinctly unmodern feel. The primary rough of two to four inches merges in turn into the native fescue -- sometimes waist high -- which is left to brown-out and shift in the wind.

And there certainly is wind -- on some days it hits 50 miles an hour. By design the fairways are accordingly generous and wide off the tee, and



*It may be hard to concentrate on your swing at Cape Kidnappers, with stunning views of the sea in every direction. Even the inland sections feature beautiful topography at every turn.*

Photo by Joann Dost

like Scotland or Ireland, they run hard and fast. The heart of the course lies around the greens where wide aprons, grassy mounds and numerous bunkers challenge not only the golfer's skill, but also the short game imagination. The bunkers use local river sand, which is grainy and coarse, but what really makes them distinctive are their edges, which are often uneven and edged with tufts of high grass. There are only a few deep pot bunkers. The putting surfaces themselves are gently contoured with very subtle breaks that make them look easier than they are. One thing we quickly learned is that the correct approach shot to the greens is seldom right at the stick.

There are no weak holes, and this consistency puts it in a league with the world's best. There are, however, some standouts. The sixth, "Gully," is a beautiful par-3 stretching 225-yds. from the tips over a deep ravine. It's a double-trouble-gully because if you clear it but do not quite reach the green, your ball rolls back down the steep approach. When this happens you might feel you have been duped, but as Dwight Segall explained, they call this experience "being Doaked."

The par-4 twelfth (460-yds.) is named "Infinity" in honor of its infinity edged green at the cliff's end and also because it is the most wide-open driving hole. The thirteenth hole, a short (130-yrd.) par three, is named "Al's Ace" because Julian Robertson's son Alex aced it during his first round. While this is surely Alex's most memorable hole, ours was the signature "Pirates Plank," the splendid 650-yrd. par-5 fifteenth, the number one handicap, which forces golfers to live dangerously on a narrow cliff-bordered fairway heading into the prevailing winds. Finally, we took sides with Doak on the controversial closer, which has gotten some rather rude comments. Its punch bowl green is nestled into the hillside and hidden from the clubhouse, offering golfers an intimate farewell to their round instead of a dramatic gambling finish. While some thought the layout should end with a stunner like fifteen, the cur-

rent closer is good enough that the New Zealand Open is rumored to be coming here soon.

## Accommodations:

Robertson's plan was to replicate the wonderful job he did at Kauri Cliffs with a small but decidedly upscale 24-room guest lodge on the site. Like his other project, he bought a whopping 5000-acres here, only a pittance of which is used for the golf. However, much to everyone's surprise, his application was rejected. He is now back at the drawing board and it will be several years, at least, before Cape

Kidnappers becomes a resort. That is the bad news. The good news is that the revised proposal will include not only luxury digs but also moderately priced lodging, since the Robertson's want to make the resort accessible to a broader swath of travelers.

More good news is that there are many choices of accommodations nearby. Our favorite, and the very best, is the Masters Lodge in the town of Napier, about 45-minutes from the course. The Lodge was built in the early 1900's by the founder of the National Tobacco Company and sits high on the bluff with panoramic views of Hawke Bay. Masters Lodge is now owned by Larry and Joan Blume, formerly of New York. The Blumes have painstakingly furnished the home in authentic art deco and there are just two suites. Dinner is prepared by their private chef and paired with wines from their premier New Zealand collection. This is an intimate experience not to be missed.

If proximity to the course is important, there are two choices very near the entrance. Merriwee Country Home House is a bed and breakfast where Tom Doak and his family stayed during construction, and the

Robertsons also visit regularly. Merriwee provides a wonderful breakfast and has lovely gardens.

Summerlee House is an elegantly furnished country home (still owned by the original owners of the sheep station that is now the course) that is rented to one party and sleeps up to



Photo by Jaann Doak

*Whether you make your putt or not, don't forget to look back once in a while or you might miss another dramatic vista.*

12 guests. Daily maid service is available, but the house is "self catered," meaning guests have to prepare their own meals and purchase their own groceries.

## Other Attractions:

Napier (population 55,000) is referred to as the "Art Deco City," and is fast-becoming a tourist destination in its own right. The city was rebuilt in the thirties in the then-trendy art-deco style after a major earthquake destroyed much of the area. Excellent guided historic tours leave several times a day from the Napier Visitor Information Center.

Even though the seasons are reversed from the US, Hawke's Bay has a pretty temperate climate and you can golf all year round. However, winter is definitely the best time to go. In our summer months, May-August, temperatures are usually in the high 50s and it is the rainiest time of year. From fall through winter it is drier and tends to be in the 70s.

For many visitors, the laid-back Hawke's Bay wine region will remind them of California's Napa Valley --



Photo by Joann Dost

*Tom Doak left plenty of opportunities for heroic and memorable shot-making on the Cape.*

about twenty years ago. Enjoying food and drink are popular pastimes here, and when not playing golf, it's easy to spend your days tasting the excellent Hawke's Bay wines at the numerous wineries. If you have had one of the crisp Sauvignon Blancs

New Zealand has become famous for, there is a good chance it came from Hawke's Bay. Still, most of these wines are not exported to the US, so it's now or never if you want to enjoy them. You might even bring a bottle or two home to relive your trip.

We especially recommend Clearview Estate on the road to Cape Kidnappers. Try the award-winning Reserve Chardonnay. The vineyard serves lunch on their terrace. Black Barn Vineyards, midway between Napier and the course, is in the upscale town of Havelock North. Besides wine tasting, Black Barn offers an outstanding gourmet lunch at its Black Barn Bistro. Craggy Range is one of the largest vineyards in New Zealand, and again, offers an excellent lunch or dinner at its Terroir Restaurant, rated one of the nation's best.

The Robertsons may have started with golf, but you can also visit their newest investment, Te Awa vineyards, for wine and lunch. They also own the Dry River vineyard in the Marlborough region, south of Hawke's Bay. If his success with golf translates into wine, France had better start looking over its shoulder. ■

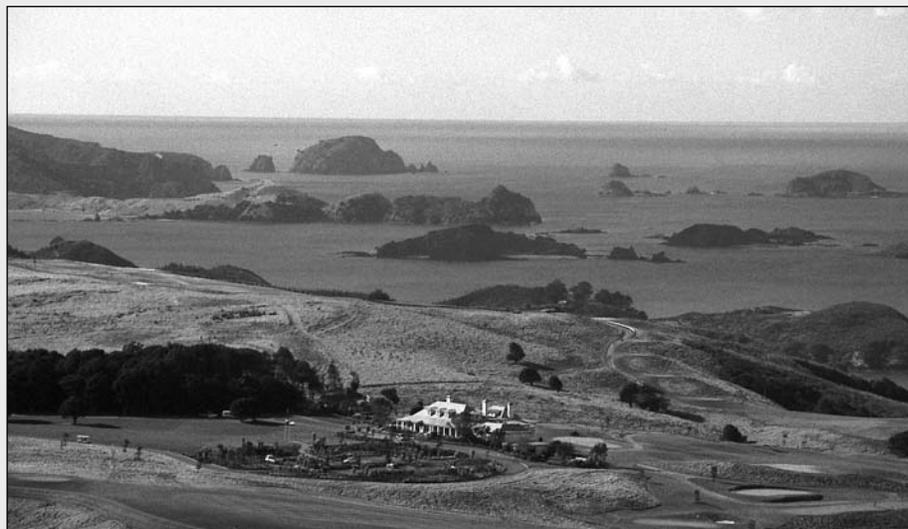
## Kauri Cliffs

The Robertson's first effort in the hospitality business remains one of the world's greatest boutique resort destinations (Oct. 2002). We would heartily recommend a visit to Kauri Cliffs -- even if it did not have a stunning golf course overlooking the Bay of Islands National Park, one of the top scenic attractions in a nation famous for them (**Rating: 17**). This small Relais & Chateau lodge offers deluxe accommodations in just 22 rooms, each a spacious cottage, with a sitting room, bedroom, wet bar, fireplace, huge bathroom with vast sunken tub and walk-in shower, plus under-floor radiant heat throughout. Or you can rent Robertson's 3-bedroom home, complete with private pool, when he's not there. The experience includes breakfast and dinner daily, and dinner is a sumptuous affair showcasing local produce and wines, with no repetition even through the longest stays. This is old school hospitality, with guests meeting for a cocktail hour hosted by the resident managers each night before dinner, and it is a true escapist experience.

The activities and scope of Kauri Cliffs are what make it so special however. Despite its quality, the golf course is perennially empty, and tee times, which are largely unnecessary, are spaced an unheard of half-hour apart. The 5000-

acre property has offerings we have seen nowhere else including three private beaches, one of which is New Zealand's only pink sand beach. Eager staff will prepare picnic lunches and whisk you to a beach by 4-wheel drive, where there is a good chance you will have it to yourself. Ditto for the property's two waterfalls, reached by hiking trails, one of which is a huge stunner that elsewhere would be the tourism highlight. Unusual guided activities include nocturnal viewing of the rare and endangered kiwi bird, which the resort is home to a family of, and even wild boar hunting onsite.

World-class diving waits just offshore, watersports of every type are available, surfcasting will provide the chef with more fresh materials for dinner, and sightseeing boat trips to the adjacent Bay of Islands National Park are de rigueur. Then there is the famous 90-mile beach stretching north from Kauri, which you can tour by jeep or the resort's onsite helicopter. Basically, Kauri Cliffs is heaven on earth, a place where romantics or outdoor lovers can easily spend a week or more. For the less active, a new small spa is the latest improvement.



*Robertson's first effort, Kauri Cliffs, has an equally dramatic setting overlooking the Bay of Islands.*

## Facts & Figures

### Hawke's Bay, New Zealand

**When To Go:** Seasons are reversed in New Zealand. December through April are best, when it is drier and in the 70s. However Hawke's Bay is one of the warmer and drier climates in the country, and can be played year round, but be prepared for wind and occasional rain, especially in our summer, May-August, when temperatures reach the high 50s and it is the rainiest season. Kauri Cliffs is nearly the northernmost point in the nation, our equivalent of south, and therefore has reliable golf weather year round.

**Getting There:** From Los Angeles and Sydney, Australia, both Qantas and Air New Zealand fly non-stop to Auckland. Air NZ also flies non-stop from San Francisco. From Auckland, Air NZ offers several flights daily to Napier. From Napier Airport, allow 90-mins. to the course. The Pro Shop can also meet your plane and transport you to the course.

**Lodging:** There is no lodging at the course -- yet.

**Summerlee House:** (011-64-6877-7985, *blackbarn.com*) An elegantly furnished 3-bedroom country home that sleeps up to 12 guests. Managed by Black Barn Vineyards. PROS: Just outside the entrance to the course, comfortable for groups. CONS: "Self-catered" meaning guests are on their own for food and groceries. \$\$\$ (per couple) NOTE: Black Barn Vineyards also offers several luxury cottages at their vineyard 30-minutes from the course.

**Merriwee Country Home House:** (011-64-6875-0111, *merriwee.co.nz*) Four-bedroom bed and breakfast where Tom Doak and Julian Robertson stay. PROS: Gracious host, wonderful breakfast, lovely gardens and orchards, dinner available as option, close to course. CONS: Some rooms do not have private baths. \$-\$\$

**Masters Lodge:** (011-64-6834-1946, *masterslodge.co.nz*) Best choice in the region, an award winning small luxury hotel in the art deco style. Only 2 suites and four guests, yet full-service hotel features. PROS: Gorgeous setting on bluff with panoramic views of Hawke

Bay, large wine cellar, gourmet wine pairing dinners with guest winemakers (included), upscale furnishings and amenities, massages available. CONS: 45-minutes from course. \$\$\$\$

**Dining:** Since this is wine country, the highlights are the restaurants found at almost every vineyard serving lunch and sometimes dinner. The best of the bunch is Terroir at Craggy Range, one of the best in the country. Clearview Estate and Black Barn both have very good lunch spots, and the Robertson's Te Awa vineyard also has a restaurant. (*craggyrange.com, teawa.com, clearviewestate.co.nz, blackbarn.com*)

**Golf:** Cape Kidnappers: 19, \$\$\$\$ (5182-7147 yds.) In a league with the world's best -- and even better views. The course is a par-71 and very challenging from all five sets of tees, especially when the wind blows across this one of a kind peninsula high above the bay. Caddies are available. (011-64-6875-1900, *capekidnappers.com*)

### The Breakers, Palm Beach, FL

**When To Go:** South Florida is hot and humid in the summer, but not always warm enough in winter, so we suggest spring and fall though you can play year round.

**Getting There:** The resort is a short cab ride from the West Palm Beach Airport, served by several major carriers. Unless you plan on leaving Palm Beach, you don't need a car, as the hotel runs shuttles and cabs are convenient.

**Lodging:** The Breakers (888-BREAKERS, *thebreakers.com*) World-class luxury resort that boasts both history and up to date facilities. PROS: Great in-town location, walking distance to top shops and restaurants, wide selection of food, beverage and retail outlets, very nice spa and fitness facility, strong children's programs, great location, good service, excellent club floor. CONS: smallish rooms are nothing special in the luxury marketplace, better golf course is 20 minutes off-site. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

**Golf:** Rees Jones Course (formerly Breakers West): 14, \$\$\$\$ (Yardages TBD) Near-total rebuild of existing routing with very nice bunkering, some good strategic holes, strong tee separation and a very solid stretch of holes on

the back. One of the area's best. Both courses kept in great shape. New clubhouse as well. Ocean Course: 9, \$\$\$\$ Oldest layout in Florida (1896), situated immediately outside the hotel, is very tight and somewhat claustrophobic, with busy road crossings. Best feature is convenience.

### Gasparilla Inn, Boca Grande, FL

**Getting There:** Boca Grande is about 40 miles south of the Sarasota/Bradenton airport and about an hour north of the Ft. Myers airport. A rental car is needed.

**Lodging:** Gasparilla Inn: (941-964-2201, *gasparillainn.net [coming soon]*) A rambling resort consisting of a glorious main house and detached cottages. Frozen in time, a throwback to rich and carefree days, with jacket and tie still required in the dining room. PROS: Nearly new golf course, world-class tarpon fishing, huge portions of classic cuisine, friendly service, attractive setting. CONS: A bit stuffy and low tech. \$\$\$\$ (NOTE: Rates include all meals)

**Golf:** 12, \$\$V New Dye course built over existing footprint, private for members and Inn guests only. Several good seaside holes, toned down for Dye, some really long holes but pleasant to play, and a bargain, especially for Florida.

## Key to Our Ratings

	<b>Lodging (Dbl. Occupancy/Std. Room):</b>
\$	less than \$100 per night
\$\$	\$101-\$200 per night
\$\$\$	\$201-\$300 per night
\$\$\$\$	\$301-\$400 per night
\$\$\$\$\$	\$400+ per night
V	Exceptional Value Regardless of Price
	<b>Greens Fees:</b>
\$	less than \$50
\$\$	\$51-\$100
\$\$\$	\$101-\$150
\$\$\$\$	\$151-\$200
\$\$\$\$\$	\$200+
V	Exceptional Value Regardless of Price
	<b>Quality of Golf Courses:</b>
19-20	One of the World's Best
17-18	Incredible
14-16	Worth Making a Special Trip
11-13	Very Good
10	Above Average
8-9	Average
5-7	Something is Wrong Here
0-4	We'd Rather Watch TV

## Golf *Insider's* Weekend Getaway

### Gasparilla Inn, Boca Grande, FL

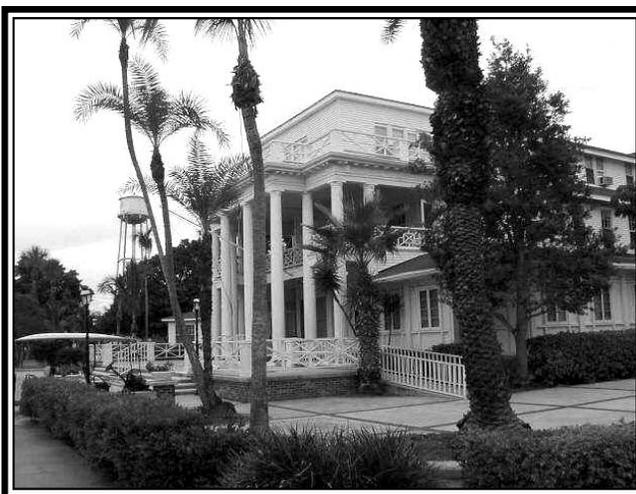
**S**hhhh. Don't tell anyone, but a new Pete Dye course just opened on the Florida coast.

Normally that would be neither a secret nor a shock, but for some reason, this one is being kept very low profile, almost like a national security issue. Maybe that is why President Bush and his family chose the little-known Gasparilla Inn for their Christmas vacation. In fact, the first family frequently relaxes and tees it up here. Like Nantucket or Bar Harbor, the wealthy enclave of Boca Grande on tiny Gasparilla Island is that kind of quietly exclusive place that time forgot, where the guy in baggy shorts next to you in line at the grocery store could be the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Past guests have included everyone from Henry Ford to the DuPont family. It is the kind of place where people drive golf carts around town and the pace is quiet, old Florida, far removed from the strip malls, fast food chains and gated communities.

Here is where you will find the Gasparilla Inn, a grand hotel from the turn of the century that still does not accept credit cards and is experiencing what in these parts is a technological revolution -- getting its web site up and running! Perhaps this will shake its stodgy image: the hotel is affectionately known as the Last-Gasp-Arilla Inn due to the age of its clientele, but the property is undergoing significant changes to attract a younger crowd, while being careful not to attract too much publicity. Change comes slowly here, but *The Golf Insider* sees all.

The Dye design opened on November 24th (**Rating: 12**). The original 1913 layout was closed last April and Dye left only vague traces of its original footprint while building this all-new routing that runs along a bayou and

wide-open Charlotte Harbor. It is already in good shape, and getting better, needing only some time to fill in the fairways. All greens and tees are new and the tract now stretches to 6869-yds. from the tips. Pete Dye fans will find something missing, as there are no railroad ties here, but there is a pair of back-to-back monster par 4's, at 475 and 448-yds. -- into the prevailing wind. Don't put your driver away just yet -- there is also a 240-yd. par-3 that requires a cut shot around a stand of trees.



*Gatsby would have felt at home at timeless Gasparilla.*

Length is not the only trouble you can run into at Gasparilla. A unique feature is the island's sewage treatment plant, located along the second hole. Due to space considerations, the Inn traded the land for the plant for exclusive rights to reuse the treated water for irrigation. When the wind is right, your nose can detect a whiff of what the locals call "the effluent of the affluent."

It does get better. The finest stretch of holes begins at the thirteenth, a 536-yd. par-5 along an active waterway with boats entering and exiting the harbor. Following in succession come a par-3, par-4 and another par-5, all perched along the edge of the bay. This strong series of holes then turns from the bay but does not run dry, as seventeen is a 175-yd. par-3 along yet another active waterway, and eigh-

teen leads back to the fine old clubhouse with its turreted dining porch.

In keeping with its well-to-do and secluded setting, the course is run like the high-end private club it is, with no tee times, and is available exclusively to Inn guests for outside play. Accommodations are not what we would call a bargain, but in this age of runaway hotel bills and frantic "luxury" construction, it remains quite reasonable, especially since rates, beginning at \$294 in the low season and reaching \$520 in high season, include all meals, the highlight of which is formal dinner. On top of this, golf is just \$65, barely more than many mediocre Florida courses charge for a cart. Inn guests also have use of the private beach club and fitness center.

The hotel itself is a perfectly preserved Victorian main house surrounded by cottages, the kind of place that would be haunted by the ghost of F. Scott Fitzgerald or his fictional Jay Gatsby. The cottages are rustic but spacious with nice porches, and most have their own kitchens. In addition to

the main dining room, which serves a belt-loosening old-fashioned multi-course dinner nightly, featuring the likes of shrimp cocktails and stuffed filet of sole, there are four other eateries on site. Non-golf diversions include a billiard room, loaner bikes for the island's miles of paths, and among the world's best tarpon fishing, for which Boca Grande is acclaimed. In fact, fishing is the main draw here and tarpon season in the spring is the only time the Inn relaxes its dress code requiring jackets for men after 6PM.

When we think of escaping the crowds, Florida hardly enters our mind, but if like the President you are looking for an upscale, quiet place to unwind, eat well and play a little golf without the distractions of crowds, traffic and late night parties, try the Gasparilla Inn. ■