

TONY'S GOLF GETAWAY GUIDE

This newsletter is designed to whet your appetite for golf anywhere in the world. Each issue highlights special programs and specific destinations. I specialize in groups from 4 to 24 and can custom-design an itinerary or book you on a pre-existing group package. I can arrange everything for you: airfare, ground transportation, hotels, and tee times. I have visited almost every property in this report, so can speak from first-hand experience. Contact me if I can be of assistance. I look forward to working with you! NOTE THAT I CHANGED AGENCIES AS OF NOVEMBER 19, 2008

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CLOSE TO HOME. I visited The *Homestead*, in Hot Springs, VA this August, and came away favorably impressed. New ownership is making good progress on its program to upgrade this 5* mountain resort less than 4 hours from Bethesda. The property recently was acquired by KSL Corp, which owns a number of 5* gold resorts, including *Barton Creek* in Austin, and *Vail Mountain Lodge*. I played the Donald Ross **Old Course** (great fun) and the classic **Cascades** (#11 in "Tony's Top Twenty"), which has been restored to the original William Flynn design.

ISSUE: During my visit, the pace of play on the **Cascades** was intolerably slow (it would have taken 6 hours had I finished my round). I discussed this issue at length with the General Manager and Director of Golf. Both assured me that I encountered this was a most unusual situation and guaranteed me that it would not happen again.

NONSTOP TO DUBLIN!! Beginning next summer, Aer Lingus will expand its nonstop service to 5 days a week from **Dulles to Dublin** (home of **Portmarnock, Royal Dublin**, and **The Island**, and jumping-off point for **County Louth, Royal County Down**, and the great courses in the north). Service will be Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and Saturday in both directions.

IRELAND TRIP REVIEW. I took a small group to Southwestern Ireland in June, and we had a fabulous time. **Waterville** and **Tralee** were our favorite courses, with **Ballybunion Old** a close third and **Adare Manor** not far behind. **Killarney Golf & Fishing** and **Dingle** were next on the list, with **Dooks** clearly the least attractive alternative. We stayed at *The 19th Lodge* in Ballybunion, a delightful family-run 4* guesthouse with huge rooms, the best shower ever, and very attentive owners. The good news is that The 19th Lodge is a long par-4 from the entrance to the Ballybunion Golf Club; the bad news is that there isn't a lot to do in Ballybunion. We also stayed at *Randles Court Hotel* in Killarney (a very friendly 4* property a 10-minute walk from the middle of town). **Killarney** is a great place to visit, with lots of restaurants, pubs, and shopping. I had so much fun that I'm taking my brothers and nephews back next year...

PLAY USA. The miserable performance of the US dollar against virtually every other currency will make overseas golf trips next year **a lot** more expensive. I would estimate that Ireland will be up 15 -20% over this year, with Scotland/England closer to 25%. Perhaps 2008 is the year to explore some great options on this side of the pond. Here are just a few to think about as the weather starts to turn cool again:

Georgia/Florida – **Sea Island** is a 5* resort on the ocean with three very good courses, spectacular accommodations, and wonderful foods and service. It's an hour from the Jacksonville airport **Amelia Island Plantation** near Jacksonville (4 courses; all my clients rave about the service), **Doral Resort** in Miami (5 courses, including *The Blue Monster*), or **Disney World** (4 good courses and lots of fun things to do when not golfing).

Phoenix – There are at least six 5* golf resorts in the area. A lower cost option is **Resort Suites of Scottsdale**, which has access to more than 30 area courses. See



#15 at the TPC of Scottsdale above (bring plenty of ammo!). Again, my clients rave about the service at this property, which is perfect for groups of up to eight.

Carolinas – I go to **Mid Pines/Pine Needles** every year and love both Donald Ross courses and the accommodations. **Pinehurst Resort** has eight courses, including #2, which hosted two US Opens in the past ten years. Don't forget **Kiawah**, 45 minutes from **Charleston** with a world-class hotel (*The Sanctuary*) and four great courses, including Pete Dye's **Ocean Course**.

Michigan – There are some fabulous resorts near Traverse City, including **Treetops Resort**, which has eight courses , including Rick Smith's **Signature** (shown at right) and **Treetops**, which claims to be the finest Par-3 course in the country. Both hotel and condo accommodations are available.



Wisconsin – The American Club, an hour north of Milwaukee, has wonderful accommodations and four world-class Pete Dye courses, including Whistling Straights, home of the 2004 PGA.

California -- San Diego has great courses, including **Torrey Pines**, which will host the US Open this June, and **La Costa** and **Hotel Del Coronado**. And then there's the Monterey peninsula (**Pebble Beach**, **Spyglass**, **Spanish Bay**, and **Pasatiempo**).

Last but not least, take a week to visit **Hawaii**, with many spectacular courses and a multitude of other sights, sounds, and tastes to keep you entertained.

