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4D LIFE

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10 GREAT PLACES

A true Player flags favorite golf spots

It takes more than well-placed bunkers or long fairways to make a memorable golf course, says **Gary Player**, a championship golfer and course designer. The South African urges travelers to look for beauty and serenity. "People



Gary Player
GARYPLAYER.COM

need to get away from the hustle and bustle. They don't need a course that's too tough." He shares with **Larry Bleiberg** for USA TODAY some favorite destinations and courses (including several he designed but in which he has no financial interest).

WESTIN MISSION HILLS RANCHO MIRAGE, CALIF.

The desert scenery and climate makes the Signature course here a joy to play, particularly in the cool hours of early morning and in winter. Player made a point of incorporating cacti into the environment when he designed the course. "I'm fascinated by them, to see this greenery in the desert. I love to see what's indigenous to the area," he says. 760-328-3198; playmissionhills.com

PEBBLE BEACH PEBBLE BEACH, CALIF.

The Pebble Beach experience starts even before you see the course, Player says. "The fresh air, hearing the sea lions, the beautiful ocean. There are not many places that have that ambience." The course's long history also makes it a memorable place to play. "It's steeped in tradition, and it all enters into the experience." 800-654-9300; pebblebeach.com

COUGAR POINT KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C.

Player says this is one of the favorite courses he has designed: "It's fun to play, day in, day out." But he's also taken by the setting. "It's along a beautiful, long stretch of beach. The breezes keep the air nice and fresh." 800-576-1570; kiawahresort.com

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TPC SAWORASS PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FLA.

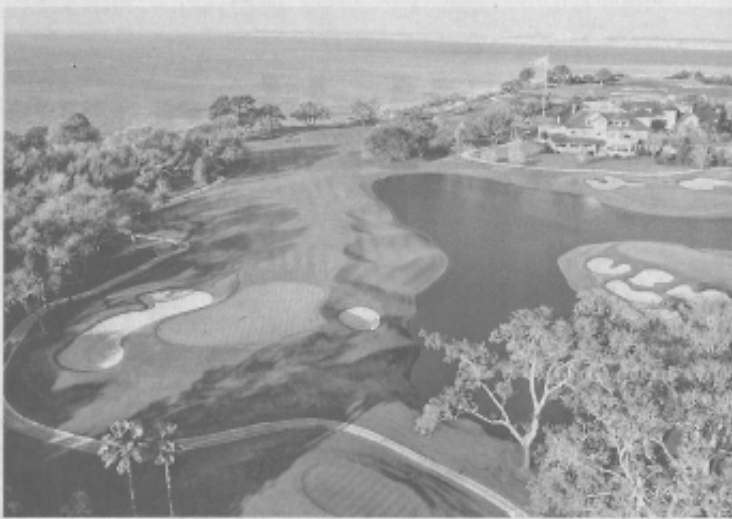
Golfers should do themselves a favor and use the forward tees on the Players Stadium Course near Jacksonville, which will make it much easier to play, Player says. "Otherwise they're not going to enjoy it. It's a very difficult golf course." But he says golfers will love putting on the same greens they've seen challenge tournament players. "You can feel a little bit of pressure and relate to it." 904-273-3235; tpc.com/tpc-sawgrass

COSTABAJA GOLF CLUB LA PAZ, MEXICO

This Baja Peninsula course sits atop a mountain ridge, offering wide-open sea views. "Some of the holes go to the edge of the ocean, and then you're playing on the edge of a mountain, and it's very different," Player says. "It was so hard to build because it was built out of sheer rock." 877-392-5525; costabajaresort.com

FAIRMONT BANFF SPRINGS BANFF, ALBERTA

Player loves the whole package here: the mountains, the nature and the historic Banff Springs Hotel on the edge of a Canadian national park. While the course isn't the toughest, it's the setting that wins him over. "It has a great peaceful feeling about it — the towering mountains and the enormous trees." 800-257-7544; fairmont.com/banff-springs



Augusta may be Georgia's most famous course, but Sea Island offers Southern character and ocean views.



THE GREENBRIER WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W.VA.

For Player, this mountain resort offers a bittersweet memory. "I remember losing in a playoff there to the late, great Sam Snead in one of my first tournaments in the U.S.," he says. But he calls the Greenbrier, which has three courses and now hosts a PGA tournament, "one of the great iconic resorts in America." 855-453-4858; greenbrier.com

WILDSTONE CRANBROOK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Player first inspected the site for this course on-his-back, an experience he remembers fondly. "Those Canadian Rockies are really something. Most of the time, you can go and see a little bit of snow on the mountains, and that's really nice," he says. People even fish in the streams that run through the course. 855-565-4653; wildstonegolf.com

West Virginian mountains provide a scenic background for the courses at The Greenbrier, where the pros will compete July 4-7.

SEA ISLAND GOLF CLUB SEA ISLAND, GA.

The Old South character of this classic resort charmed Player the first time he saw it. "Wow, the trees hanging with lots of moss. A lot of American history. It's just a true Southern treat," he says. The resort has three courses, including the Seaside Course, home to the PGA Tour's McGladrey Classic. 855-714-9204; seaisland.com

THE BROADMOOR COLORADO SPRINGS

This three-course resort in the shadow of Pike's Peak has hosted many men's and ladies' championships over the years, and it's certainly not an easy place to play, Player says. "Try reading the greens there... a real puzzle." Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Robert Trent Jones Sr. have all contributed to course designs over the decades. 855-634-7711; broadmoor.com