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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007

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AMERICA'S TOP 100  
PRIVATE GOLF  
COMMUNITIES

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Tom Fazio Course at Pronghorn, Bend, Oregon





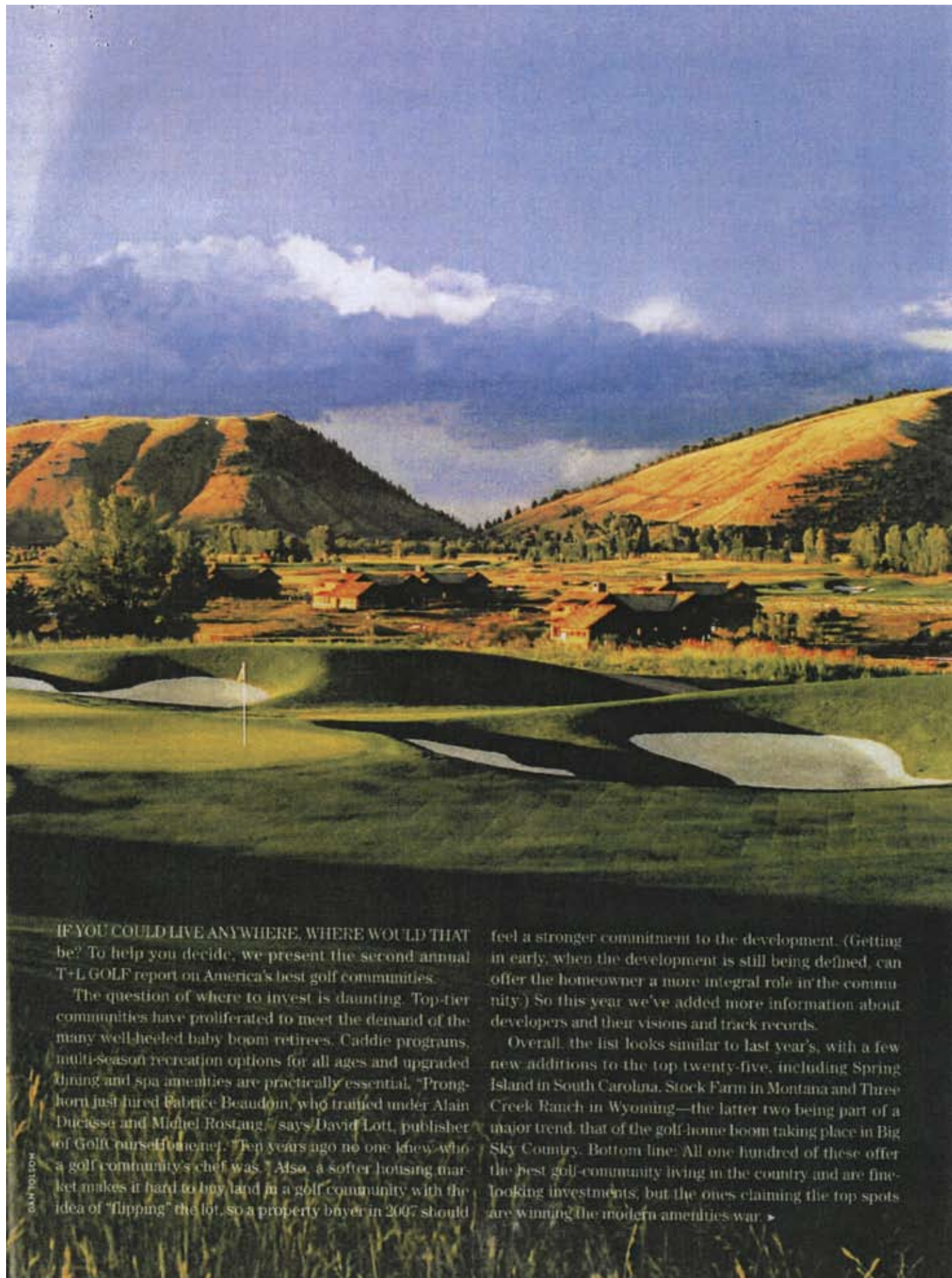
AMERICA'S  
**TOP 100**  
**Golf Communities**

TRAVEL + LEISURE GOLF's annual list of the best places to live—and live well

BY DAVID GOULD

Teton gazing: homes along  
the eighteenth at Three Creek  
Ranch, Jackson, Wyoming





IF YOU COULD LIVE ANYWHERE, WHERE WOULD THAT be? To help you decide, we present the second annual T+L GOLF report on America's best golf communities.

The question of where to invest is daunting. Top-tier communities have proliferated to meet the demand of the many well-heeled baby boom retirees. Caddie programs, multi-season recreation options for all ages and upgraded dining and spa amenities are practically essential. "Pronghorn just hired Fabrice Beaudoin, who trained under Alain Ducasse and Michel Rostang," says David Lott, publisher of GolfCourseHome.net. "Ten years ago no one knew who a golf community's chef was." Also, a softer housing market makes it hard to buy land in a golf community with the idea of "flipping" the lot, so a property buyer in 2007 should

feel a stronger commitment to the development. (Getting in early, when the development is still being defined, can offer the homeowner a more integral role in the community.) So this year we've added more information about developers and their visions and track records.

Overall, the list looks similar to last year's, with a few new additions to the top twenty-five, including Spring Island in South Carolina, Stock Farm in Montana and Three Creek Ranch in Wyoming—the latter two being part of a major trend, that of the golf-home boom taking place in Big Sky Country. Bottom line: All one hundred of these offer the best golf-community living in the country and are fine-looking investments, but the ones claiming the top spots are winning the modern amenities war. ▶



# AMERICA'S TOP 100 Golf Communities



*Frederica Flair*—This model home also serves as the community's guest house. Below, from left: the community's pool; a sun-warmed porch; inside the boathouse

## 1. SEA ISLAND, GEORGIA

Any of Sea Island's eight distinct communities would make for ideal living, but Frederica is one step beyond. Named for a Colonial fort built in 1736, the new development is on three thousand acres on Saint Simons Island, five minutes away from the hub of the resort. The plan calls for fewer than four hundred homesites (averaging from two to ten acres), offering ultimate privacy. Member-residents also have their own Tom Fazio-Sir Michael Bonallack private course and a boathouse from which to explore the surrounding four-hundred-acre lake. Plus, they have access to all of Sea Island's exceptional resort amenities, including the Beach Club, spa, stables, the recently redone Cloister and three (other) great courses.





# THE TOP 10 BEST OF THE BEST

## 1. SEA ISLAND Sea Island, Georgia

Number eight on last year's list, this Old South enclave shoots to the top on the strength of upgraded facilities and the new Frederica development (see opposite page).

## 2. PALMETTO BLUFF Bluffton, South Carolina

Once a hunting preserve for timber-industry executives, this is a Rockies-size property (22,000 acres) in the Carolina Lowcountry. The broad May River serves as a backdrop for several residential clusters, including a beautifully designed compact resort village. It moves up on the list this year thanks to its new "compound" concept—families can build multiple dwellings on lots of at least fourteen acres (see page 100). Boating, fishing, kayaking, an award-winning spa and an artful Jack Nicklaus course round out the picture.

## 3. SANTA LUCIA PRESERVE Carmel, California

There is space here for 130 golf courses, but the master plan calls for just one: a beloved Tom Fazio layout that tumbles through redwoods and oaks and plays its way toward distant peaks. The development offers every other amenity, including a sports complex, an equestrian center and a hacienda-style clubhouse. And if things get too quiet, fashionable Carmel and Pebble Beach are a short ride away.

## 4. MAYACAMA Santa Rosa, California

Mayacama merges two cultures—golf and wine—in a sublime Sonoma Valley setting. The personal Mayacama lockers include those of a few dozen "vintner members" who set a spirited tone of camaraderie and conviviality. And the property's 2001 Jack Nicklaus design showed him to be at a new level of grace and polish. Great caddie program, too.

## 5. KIAWAH ISLAND Kiawah, South Carolina

Now in its fourth decade, Kiawah has attained iconic status, yet it continually embarks on improvements. In anticipation of the 2007 Senior PGA Championship, a new \$20 million clubhouse is near completion at the famed Ocean course. With the arrival of the private Kiawah Island Club and Tom Watson–designed Cassique golf course several years ago, the lifestyle for residents rose another notch or two.

## 6. PROMONTORY Park City, Utah

One of the mountain time zone's premier addresses. This

summer, Promontory doubles its golf complement with the etching of a Jack Nicklaus Signature course. To take full advantage of residency here, you should know how to ride a horse, cast a fly, ski the glades, break ninety and hit a passing shot. Kids have their own hideaway: a five-thousand-square-foot clubhouse equipped with waterslides, lookout towers, a trapper's cabin and a climbing wall.

## 7. THE CLIFFS COMMUNITIES Travelers Rest, South Carolina

When Gary Player was asked to design the golf course at the planned Cliffs at Mountain Park community, he investigated further and decided to move his home and business to this scattering of luxury golf communities in the Greenville-Asheville axis. The attractions for Player were the Blue Ridge scenery, swank clubhouses (five of them in total), fine dining, Tour-tested golf, miles of hiking trails and a wellness culture as invigorating as the mountain air.

## 8. PRONGHORN Bend, Oregon

Ski Mount Bachelor, fly-fish the Deschutes River, roam through friendly and fashionable downtown Bend—then return home to this luxurious, family-friendly community with golf by Nicklaus and Fazio. (The Fazio layout is one of our "Best New Courses of 2006," page 40.) A full-service spa and fitness center are set to open in early 2008; for now, the Trailhead activities lodge offers temporary facilities.

## 9. THREE CREEK RANCH Jackson, Wyoming

Rees Jones worked just a hint of European formalism into the Teton landscape to create a handsome, hardy golf course that complements Three Creek's easygoing excellence. The community is 710 acres in size with low ridges and jagged peaks that form splendid panoramas. Fishing, the world's other great bragging-and-lying pursuit, takes place on world-class sporting streams that wander the property.

## 10. THE BEAR'S CLUB Jupiter, Florida

Personal service is so scrupulous here that if you happen to drop a name someone will be there to pick it up. The number of homesites is small for the acreage, and the layout has a human scale that promotes casual interactions among the elite. At the top end are the Vintage Estates homes, just thirteen of them. Coupled with the main eighteen is a flawless, Nicklaus-designed par-three course. >

### HOW WE COMPILED THE LIST

The goal in creating the Top 100, like last year, was to identify those communities that best combine superb golf with homes and facilities of the highest quality, an extraordinary location and a wealth of lifestyle opportunities. To be eligible, communities must offer property owners an opportunity for membership in an affiliated private golf club. Limited public access to the course, such as for guests at a resort, is allowed but may detract from a community's ranking. This year, a few newcomers, many of which are still under construction,

particularly caught our attention, and for some complex cases, other specific requirements were established.

Once we whittled down the list to a manageable number, each property was rated in five categories: golf (up to 30 points); quality of housing (20 points); community amenities and activities (25 points); location, including natural setting and proximity to cultural and other activities (20 points); and X-factor, such as buzz, eco-friendliness, tournament play, and if there's a celebrity resident or medical center (5 points). The points were then totaled to rank the top hundred.