



10 KILLER CLUBHOUSES

By Scott Kauffman



ASK ANY GOLFER ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOLF PROFESSIONALS AND COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS, AND YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO HEAR A RESPONSE SUCH AS, “YOU DON’T GO TO THE GOLF COURSE FOR THE HOT DOGS.” IN OTHER WORDS, THE VALUE OF THE COURSE FAR EXCEEDS THE VALUE OF ANYTHING THE CLUBHOUSE HAS TO OFFER. IN REALITY, HOWEVER, MOST PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN PRIVATE GOLF COMMUNITIES DON’T EVER SWING A CLUB OR SET FOOT ON A FAIRWAY, WHICH MAKES THE CLUBHOUSE MORE THAN JUST A PLACE TO CHANGE SHOES OR GET A QUICK SNACK. THE CLUBHOUSE IS THE VERY HUB OF ACTIVITY AND, IN MANY WAYS, THE ESSENCE OF CLUB MEMBERSHIP. HERE’S A LOOK AT 10 OUTSTANDING WESTERN CLUBHOUSES THAT ARE SERVING UP STYLE, COMFORT, LUXURIOUS AMENITIES AND, PERHAPS, THE OCCASIONAL HOT DOG.

BIGHORN Palm Desert, Calif.

When asked to describe her dynamic 36-hole private club community, Bighorn Marketing Director Theresa Maggio says, “We’re like a cruise ship in dock. You never have to leave campus.” Indeed, and at the helm of this ship is a spectacular 40,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse, a facility that hosts more than 70 events per year, including the LPGA Samsung World Championship. (Pro Annika Sorenstam does double duty as a competitor and Bighorn member.)

Set 1,000 feet above the Coachella Valley floor against the Santa Rosa Mountains, Bighorn’s fully appointed clubhouse is one of the industry’s most impressive venues, and its golf shop is perennially rated among the nation’s top 100. Just how elite is this high-class hangout? It might be the only clubhouse with its own diamond broker and a \$100,000 bauble currently on display.



IT'S EASY TO GET HAWAII CONFUSED WITH **paradise**, AND KUKIO, A DISCOVERY LAND CO. PROJECT AND THE FIRST PRIVATE EQUITY GOLF AND BEACH CLUB ON THE BIG ISLAND, ONLY MAKES THE LINE BETWEEN THE TWO EVEN BLURRIER.

But what makes this sleek and sophisticated yet entirely relaxed environment so appealing is the youthful nature of the club's membership. One of the most popular places to witness this spirited attitude is Pour House, the club's intimate cocktail lounge. Featuring indoor/outdoor seating for about 60 people, the lounge is regularly packed from 3 p.m. to midnight. Maggio notes, "[Club Chairman R.D. Hubbard] was just saying the other day in a sales meeting there's more business going on in this cocktail lounge than anywhere else [in the club]."

CASCATA Boulder City, Nev.

Cascata, which is Italian for "waterfall," was built six years ago by casino giant MGM Grand to compete with Steve Wynn's highly acclaimed Shadow Creek. This private Rees Jones-designed golf retreat—for which tee times were once strictly limited to high rollers with \$100,000 credit lines at MGM properties—now belongs to Harrah's Entertainment. Since the change in ownership, Cascata's guarded access has been opened up to all guests of the Harrah's/Caesars empire for a princely fee of \$350 to \$500.

Located about 30 minutes from the Vegas Strip, Cascata is more than worth the trip and admission ticket. The championship course offers awesome vistas at every turn (including the 3,600-foot peak at Red Mountain), but it's the show-stealing clubhouse that makes Cascata a must-visit. Taking a cue from its name, the property has a 418-foot waterfall that flows from the steep mountainside, tumbles over mammoth boulders and cascades into a river that roars through the clubhouse, eventually culminating in a tranquil stream.

Water and all, the Tuscan-inspired, 37,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse is more than just another tacky Vegas stunt—

boasting style and substance aplenty. For example, the cigar lounge's custom humidor is stocked with rare tobaccos, and the men's and women's lounges are equipped with sinkside flat-screen TV's.

KUKIO Kailua-Kona, Big Island, Hawaii

It's easy to get Hawaii confused with paradise, and Kukio, a Discovery Land Co. project and the first private equity golf and beach club on the Big Island, only makes the line between the two even blurrier. This oceanfront development has proven itself a golfer's glory—its 1,100 lush acres embrace Tom Fazio's first championship golf course in Hawaii and boast a separate 10-hole short course that rivals most 18-hole setups.

At the heart of this exclusive low-density community (Kukio nestles a mere 375 homesites) is a traditional-style clubhouse overlooking a dining pavilion, beach bar, infinity-edge pool, open-air cardio pavilion and outdoor spa. The emerald green Events Lawn (just a putt's distance from historic Hawaiian fish ponds, an archaeological preserve and the breaking surf) serves as the club's anchor.

Stepping into the breezy clubhouse unveils palm-framed views of the island of Maui. Meanwhile, thatched roofs, handhewn columns from indigenous ohia trees and meticulously crafted walls made of local lava rock create a relaxed, tropical oasis reminiscent of the Kama'aina estates of old Hawaii.

Whether you spend your day hanging out in a hammock with a book from the club library or relaxing in the garden submerged in a Japanese Ofuro tub, Kukio, as they say in Hawaii, this outpost is *no ka oi*, i.e., simply the best.





IRON HORSE Whitefish, Mont.

Offering the best of winter and summer recreation (with proximity to Big Mountain ski resort, Whitefish Lake and the natural wonders of Glacier National Park and Flathead), this part of Big Sky country is a virtual paradise for lovers of the great outdoors. And nowhere is there a better place to set up camp than Iron Horse, a luxurious low-density private golf club community whose 820 acres of rolling alpine terrain are also home to 18 holes of Tom Fazio-designed golf.

The centerpiece of it all is a unique 27,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse inspired by the grand lodges of nearby national parks. The clubhouse, befitting of its setting with massive cedar columns and floor-to-ceiling stone fireplaces, has a rustic elegance that is warm and comfortable, yet chock-full of all the first-class finishes and present-day amenities expected of noted developer Mike Meldman and his Discovery Land Co. properties.

While other clubhouses boast swanky fêtes spilling over with Champagne, Iron Horse guests prefer sitting fireside on the back patio while watching the sun set. Perhaps the best testament to this place comes from Meldman himself, who sets aside a month each summer for enjoying this Whitefish outpost.

MAYACAMA Santa Rosa, Calif.

At most golf clubs, green is the dominant color. At Mayacama, however, the club's perfect Jack Nicklaus Signature course is overshadowed by the splashes of red and white that are found inside the clubhouse. But what else would you expect from a members-only club located in the heart of Sonoma wine country?

After just one visit to this club's climate-controlled, vino-loving world, you'll find yourself eagerly toasting its devotion to the vintner's craft after a round or two. One of the highlights of the 675-acre, NoCal sanctuary is the cavernous wine cellar that houses custom wine storage and intimate locker-lined caverns available for member dinners or tastings. Further underscoring the gravity of the grape is the fact that the Tuscan-style, 40,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse lays claim to more wine lockers than golf lockers.

There's also an underground entrance to a members-only grotto, located just above the 18th hole. With just one push through the handcrafted entry doors hinged with hammered iron, golfers can access their private lockers the moment they "putt out" on the 18th green. Throw into the membership mix 29 of the area's top winery owners as special Vintner Members, and Mayacama is a match made in heaven for those who refuse to choose between their love of the game and their love of the grape.

SHERWOOD COUNTRY CLUB Thousand Oaks, Calif.

Widely regarded as one of the West Coast's most prestigious private organizations, this host site of Tiger Woods' Target World Challenge is a classic. The club nestles into the foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains and enjoys a pastoral setting with a lake and a bastion of ancient oaks, as well as 36 holes of Jack Nicklaus golf.

At the heart of this splendid SoCal landscape is Sherwood's magnificent Georgian-style golf clubhouse. Created by Zmitowsky Design Group of Boulder, Colo., one of the country's leading clubhouse architects, the 54,000-sq.-ft. showpiece is "just a classic and what a country club ought to be," says Bill Zmitowsky.

Though less than 20 years old, Sherwood exhibits a time-honored feel that evokes the history akin to East Coast clubhouses. The brick structure brims with amenities like clandestine men's and women's locker rooms (the men's has its own grill), an elegant conservatory, dining rooms and a private wine cellar. Further adorned with fine detailing, superb furnishings and million-dollar artwork, this stately retreat rooted in tradition (President Ronald Reagan was once a member) provides unparalleled service to its elite members, who include Wayne Gretzky and Will Smith and the likes.

SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN Superstition Mountain, Ariz.

Developer Lyle Anderson, whose Desert Highlands and Desert Mountain projects all but defined upscale golf course living in Arizona, might have saved his best work for last—or, at least his best clubhouse.

One of the West's most distinctive clubhouses can be found at Anderson's latest project, Superstition Mountain, which is about 30 minutes east of downtown Phoenix.

Overlooking the 18th holes of the Prospector and Lost Gold courses and its namesake mountain, the private club's 48,977-sq.-ft. clubhouse conveys a warm, authentic Old World quality thanks to a blend of Mediterranean, Italian and Spanish touches. To establish an authentic ambience, Oz Architects of Scottsdale devoted great attention to the clubhouse's architectural detailing, specifying materials like antique terra-cotta pavers from Italy, reclaimed antique timber and a 400-year-old fountain from a Mexican hacienda.

The most impressive example of the selected elements, however, is a three-inch-thick solid wood door that marks the entry to the private dining room. Dating back to a 16th-century Spanish estate in Seville that was owned by an Andalusian nobleman, the "door within a door" is known as a picadero. In its previous incarnation, it was wide enough to allow horse carts to pass through, but another opening in the door's center offered enough space for individual passers-through.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS Las Vegas, Nev.

If you head to Sin City for the glitz, glamour and style, then Southern Highlands won't disappoint. Just 10 minutes south of the Strip, this high-end private club hosts a wonderful golf course, which was the fourth and final collaboration between famed architects Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Robert Trent Jones Jr. The links here will undoubtedly wow you; but truth be told, the golf experience is almost overshadowed by the striking 42,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse towering over the ninth green and 18th hole.

The Tuscan-inspired edifice resembles an Italian country estate. Designed by noted Phoenix-based Douglas Fredrikson Architects, the grand structure is a sight to behold with its grand staircase, marvelous archways and stunning wood beam ceiling. The clubhouse's highlight,



Iron Horse



Sherwood Country Club

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Mayacama

The Vintage Club

Photography by Jim Bartsch



Southern Highlands

SITUATED ON FIVE ACRES OF LAKES, THE AWARD-WINNING CLUBHOUSE AT THE VINTAGE CLUB WAS DESIGNED TO REFLECT THE ELEGANCE AND MAJESTY OF THE PALM SPRINGS AREA, AND IT DELIVERS.



however, is the wine room, an octagonal space with stone and cherry wood accents, a massive fireplace, 12 wooden armchairs and a big round table that some members call “King Arthur’s table.” There are also scores of other amenities, a particularly fabulous men’s locker room and killer views of the Vegas skyline.

One longtime industry observer sums up the Southern Highlands clubhouse in just four words: “simply over the top.” And that’s exactly why it goes so well with the Vegas vibe.

THE VINTAGE CLUB Indian Wells, Calif.

Situated on five acres of lakes, the award-winning clubhouse at The Vintage Club was designed to reflect the elegance and majesty of the Palm Springs area, and it delivers.

Designed 25 years ago by San Francisco-based Fisher Friedman Associates, the 85,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse has a distinctive roofline that is composed of tile-covered pyramidal forms and edged by pergolas in a post-modern style. The look is intended to be a fresher take on the mid-century modern California homes ubiquitous during the 1950’s and 60’s, while exhibiting characteristics of the ancient Egyptian pyramids and balancing luxury with natural beauty.

The massive structure’s roof, under which all 450 members (each plus one) can gather, has a pyramid shape that pays homage to the Santa Rosa Mountains’ Eisenhower Peak. The clubhouse’s nature-inspired aesthetic is rounded out by cascading waterfalls, airy terraces and sizable skylights. When dining at the club restaurant, members have the sense of actually being on the course, due to the extensive use of glass that puts the “artwork” of both Mother Nature and Tom Fazio readily on display.

TRUMP NATIONAL GOLF CLUB, LOS ANGELES Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.

The prestigious Palos Verdes peninsula has been elevated to even greater heights now that The Donald has taken over the once-defunct Ocean Trails Golf Course. Newly renamed and redesigned for a sum of \$260 million-plus, Trump’s

lone West Coast golf course community features a rare 2.5-mile stretch of oceanfront property and a 45,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse that is Trumpesque in every sense of the word.

Already honored with the Five Star Award by the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences, Trump National’s Mediterranean-style clubhouse is designed to manifest the opulence expected of a Trump venture without stealing the limelight from the 300-acre venue’s most distinctive characteristic: its panoramic view of the Pacific.

Trump recently gutted the top floor of the clubhouse and opened a new ultrafine dining restaurant he calls, naturally, Trump’s. Described as a “Mar-a-Lago West-type of restaurant” by Vice President of Real Estate Sales Andy Lemke (in reference to Trump’s palatial club in Palm Beach, Fla.), the restaurant features a ceiling pressed with 18-carat gold leaf, elegant handpainted murals and china handpicked by Mrs. Trump. “It’s like a palace out of Versailles,” Lemke says. “You feel like royalty.”

Fortunately, you don’t have to be royalty to enjoy the restaurant, course or clubhouse—all are open to the public. ✨

TO LEARN MORE

Bighorn, 888.551.5577, www.bighorngolf.com.

Cascata, 702.294.2000, www.golfcascata.com.

Iron Horse, 877.612.5900, www.ironhorsemountain.com.

Kukio, 808.325.4040, www.kukio.com.

Mayacama, 866.393.1818, www.mayacama.com.

Sherwood Country Club, 805.496.3036,
www.sherwoodcc.com.

Southern Highlands, 877.261.1010,
www.southernhighlands.com.

Superstition Mountain, 888.846.4801,
www.superstitionmountain.com.

Trump National Golf Club, Los Angeles,
310.265.5000, www.trumpgolf.com.

The Vintage Club, 800.637.5885,
www.vintageclubsales.com.