

## TRAVEL

## When you think Disney World, think quality golf

BY R.D. AGINIAN  
GOLF WRITER

When the words Disney World come to mind, golf is not the first thought that pops into your head. We think of Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Goofy and their pals. Thinking about golf, if at all, is secondary. What a pity, especially for the golf enthusiast, because Disney World has 99 holes of championship golf spread among six courses.

But for those in the know, they had discovered this fantasy world's real treasure.

Disney has five championship 18-hole golf courses, and one 9-hole walking course. Some of the golf industry's best known architects are the designers. Tom Fazio, Pete Dye and Joe Lee. Disney World is also home to the Oldsmobile Golf Classic, which began in 1971. Each course offers four different tees to give every skill level, whether beginner or seasoned professional, a fair and fun challenge.

I recently played the Palm course (6,461 yards, a course rating of 70.7 and a slope of 129) from the white tees. And I took

on the Lake Buena Vista Club golf course (6,268 yards, a course rating of 70.1 and a slope of 123), also from the white tees. Slope and course ratings are the United States Golf Association evaluation of the difficulty of a golf course. The higher the slope and course rating, the more difficult the golf course is.

The Palm Course has been listed by Golf Digest as one of the nation's top 25 resort courses, and its 18th hole is ranked as high as the fourth most challenging hole on the PGA tour. Eight of the holes have water. The fairways are well-groomed, and the landing areas are wide. It's a pleasure to play the course. From the professional test, the course measures 6,957 yards, has a rating of 73 and a slope of 133 — a challenge for many golfers.

The Lake Buena Vista Course, although shorter, is not a pushover. Playing approximately 200 yards shorter, it has narrower fairways and not as many bunkers. Water still comes into play on eight holes. No. 16, from the white tees, plays at 166 yards, par 3, to an island green. From there, jumping to the 18th,

is a demanding 448-yard dogleg finishing hole.

As with Florida courses, the thick Bermuda grass rough, which is cut reasonably short, is a challenge because the ball settles down. The greens are cut to a "stimp" (speed of green) or nine, which is fast enough.

As with Disney World and the Magic Kingdom, service and amenities are outstanding, from the time you leave your clubs at the bagdrop, to when you complete your round and spend your time in the well-stocked and fairly priced pro shop.

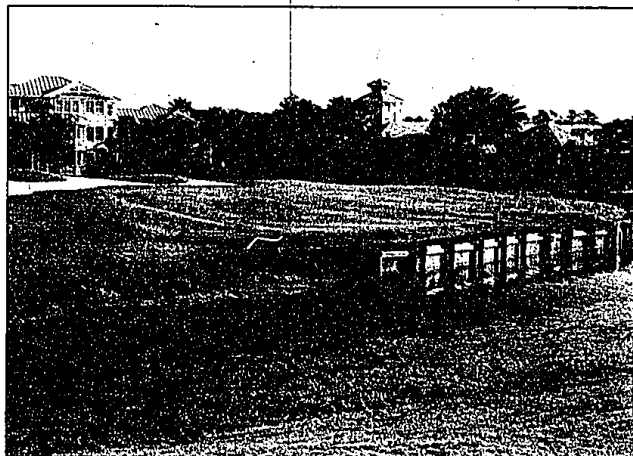
Greens fees for resort guests, including a cart and range balls, for a championship golf course are reasonable. For the peak period of Oct. 1 to April 26, it's \$100, from April 26 to Sept. 30, it's \$90. Rental clubs, Calloway, either steel or graphite are available for a reasonable charge, as well as shoes.

If you want to improve your game with lessons, they're available from teaching PGA professionals. Tee times for resort guests with a confirmation number may be booked 60 days in advance, a good feature in order to plan your time at Disney

The other courses available are Eagle Pines, designed by Pete Dye; Osprey Ridge, designed by Tom Fazio and the Magnolias, designed by Joe Lee.

Eagle Pines, from the back tees, plays at 6,772 yards, has a course rating of 72.3 and a slope of 131. Osprey Ridge from the talon tees, plays at 7,101 yards, has a course rating of 73.9 and a slope of 135.

Disney's attention to detail has helped the golfer determine what set of tees to play from by recommending tees for their handicap. The back tees are for the golfer with an established handicap of 0 to 6, while the traditional white tees are for an individual with an established handicap of 7 to 15. This helps the golfer have an enjoyable round, yet



**Catch 22:** The par-4 No. 15 hole at the Lake Buena Vista golf course at Walt Disney World Resort presents golfers with the best of two golfing worlds: an open fairway inviting tee shots of all shapes and altitudes and a challenging L-shaped, peninsula green guarded front and right by plenty of water.

still challenging.

Disney calls its ranger Player Assistants. They are friendly and helpful as they assist the golfer. With some courses it becomes an ordeal to play a round of golf in a reasonable amount of time. We played our round when the course was full, in 4 hours, 16 minutes to 4 hours, 30 minutes. This is very reasonable for resort golf play.

The Magnolia course is the course that the PGA tour plays on Sunday in the Disney/Oldsmobile Golf Classic. This is also the home of the signature Mickey Mouse bunker

hole. The Magnolia Course gets its name from the 1,500 magnolia trees on the course. It's also the longest course, playing at 7,190 yards, a course rating of 73.9 and a slope of 133. Water comes into play on 12 holes.

As Disney has designed the course, the environment was kept in mind. Both Walt Disney World and Tom Fazio and Pete Dye, the course architects of Eagle Pines and Osprey Ridge, respectively, agreed that protecting the surrounding Florida wetlands was essential. It's evident in looking at the layout of the courses and the care Disney pro-

vides, that they are protecting the environment.

Playing golf at Disney is an enjoyable treat. We'll be back to play the other three courses. I suggest, when you make a trip to Disney World, that you put golf on your agenda. You'll be very much surprised and pleased at the quality of the courses and the enjoyable time you will have.

Richard Aginian is the president of HomeTown Communications Network, parent company of The Observer & Eccentric! Newspapers, and a resident of Bloomfield Township.



**Pall and shovel:** The abundant water and sand making up the par-3 No. 12 hole at the Magnolia golf course at Walt Disney World requires precision shot-making and careful course management.

## GREAT ESCAPES

Great Escapes features various travel news items. Send news leads to Hugh Gallagher, assistant managing editor, Observer & Eccentric! Newspapers Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 591-7279.

## TELL US YOUR STORY

We want to hear from you! Have you been someplace interesting this past year? Have you had a special adventure? Is there a quiet island you'd like to recommend or a highly promoted place you'd like to warn against? Do you have special tips for other travelers to make their journeys easier? Have you met some interesting people in other countries that you'd like others to know about? We want to share your stories and your color pictures on our travel page. Call Hugh Gallagher at 734-953-2118, or fax him at 734-591-7279 or e-mail him at hgallagher@oe.homecomm.net

## WINTER CYCLING

REI (Recreational Equipment Incorporated), 17659 Haggerty Road in Northville, is promoting Todd Scott to discuss "Winter Cycling: Staying Warm and

Upright." This instructional clinic will feature the fundamentals of winter cycling — clothing, nutrition, bike maintenance, lighting — at the various levels of participation, what to expect and how to stay safe and have fun. The program is Thursday, Feb. 6. For times and more information, call REI (248)347-2100.

## YOGA VACATION

The Center for Yoga, Relaxation & Health, 29121 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield, is sponsoring a weekend retreat March 28 through April 4 in Tulum, Mexico. Highlights of the week include a picturesque resort on Mexico's Quintana Roo Coast, yoga workshops and meditation classes. Ariel Abramsky will teach a Conscious Aging Workshop. In addition, there will be tours of pyramids, temples, nature walks, snorkeling and swimming. The vacation is all inclusive. For information, call (248)886-YOGA.

## CRUISE INFORMATION

Betty Swartz of Cruise Selections Inc. will speak on how to choose and prepare for a cruise 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 10, at the Troy Public Library. Admission

is free. For reservations, call (248)524-3538.

## SIBERIAN ROUNDUP

The Double JJ Resort in Rothbury, Mich., will host the "Siberian Roundup," the nation's largest Siberian pure-bred sled dog race Feb. 7-8, as part of its annual winter Snowfest. The Siberian Roundup represents the third leg of Michigan's "Triple Crown" sled dog racing competition.

Located near Muskegon, the Double JJ Resort sponsors, in cooperation with the White Lake Chamber of Commerce, a two-week winter Snowfest, which features sled dog, snowmobile and cross-country ski races. The Double JJ Siberian Roundup sled races include four-, six- and eight-dog sprint. In addition, spectators and children have the opportunity to mush sled dog team.

For more information, call the Double JJ Resort at (1800)DOUBBLE JJ.

## ROMANTIC WEEKEND

Marriott Hotels is offering a romantic weekend discount program. Can't Beat Friday. Couples have the chance to explore

their relationships and spend less per night on a weekend stay that includes a Friday night, with discounts up to 20 percent. Take advantage of rates as low as \$69. Reservations can be made by calling (800)USA-WKND (872-9563).

## SCOTLAND FLIGHTS

British Airways will resume non-stop service between Scotland and the United States this summer. The airline suspended non-stop Boston/New York/Glasgow flights last November because of losses particularly during the winter months. In its place the airline has been operating to Glasgow four times a week via Manchester. Beginning June 1, Boeing 757 aircraft will operate non-stop every day except Tuesday and Wednesday between New York's JFK Airport and Glasgow International Airport.

## NEW LODGE

The Bears Den Lodge in Kalkaska will officially open today to offer winter sports clubs, families and groups accommodations in an Up North setting. Located 30 miles east of

Traverse City on Manistee Lake, the Lodge positions cross country skiers, snow shoe enthusiasts and snowmobilers at the hub of winter activity.

The 6,000 square foot Lodge has 8 bedrooms, each with its own bathroom; a common living room; satellite TV; a huge fire place; and a wide range of special services.

For more information, call 248-258-9150 or fax to 248-258-9467 or e-mail: tanuga@earthlink.net.

## WINTER PICNIC

The St. Ignace Winter Picnic will be held Feb. 21 along the frozen downtown waterfront.

Sports enthusiasts can join in a game of broomball, a golf chipping contest (in snow, of course) and a Ping-Pong tourney. Other events include a magic show, carnival games, bonfire and marshmallow roast.

For information, call (800)338-6660.

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for selected Sept. thru Dec. sailings from San Juan	4 nts. fr. <b>\$409</b>
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