SPECIAL TOP 25 ISSUE

CIGAR OF THE YEAR

PLUS

TOP 25 REVEALED!
THE
BEST GOLF
IN VEGAS
Cigar-friendly Las Vegas has no shortage of golf courses.
We rank the very best that you can play

BY LARRY OLMSTED

Golf and gambling go hand in hand, and many players can’t even fathom teeing it up without a skins game or friendly bet on their match. But in 2018, two of the all-time best, superstars Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson, took this concept to new heights when they played in a high-profile mano-a-mano contest for $9 million—winner takes all. If you are going to roll the dice for such big bucks on the fairways and greens, where better to do it than in Las Vegas?

Neither player was a stranger to Sin City, and Woods—who recently tied Sam Snead for the most career wins, with 82—took home his very first PGA Tour trophy in the 1996 Las Vegas Invitational. The city has long been steeped in golf history, hosting PGA, LPGA and Senior Tour annual events, and Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Lee Trevino, Curtis Strange and Greg Norman are among many famous pros to win on the Strip. Las Vegas golf courses also have a long history of star sightings, from Rat Pack members Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. to modern-day superstars such as Wayne Gretzky and Michael Jordan, who can regularly be found teeing it up, often on the lush fairways of Shadow Creek. The NBA legend even keeps his own custom golf cart on property.

Today, the golf scene in Vegas is better than ever, with courses designed by Tom Fazio, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Pete Dye, Rees Jones, Billy Casper, Ray Floyd and more. And while Vegas wouldn’t be Vegas without over-the-top oddities (such as the fully lit Cloud Nine short course at Angel Park, comprised of a dozen reproductions of world-famous par-3s, and the largest TopGolf facility in the world at the MGM Grand), you can enjoy an exceptional golf trip here, with the bonus of stunning food, lodging and entertainment. These top choices include VIP-level experiences with sky-high greens fees that cater to high-limit gamblers and VIPs as well as courses that combine high-quality golf with surprising bang for the buck.
TPC Las Vegas

Only some of the Tournament Players Clubs comprising the PGA Tour’s TPC Network are open to the public. Las Vegas has two: the private TPC Summerlin, which hosts the annual Shriner’s Hospital for Children Open, and the public TPC Las Vegas, formerly TPC Canyons, which hosted a Senior PGA Tour event until 2001 and the Shriner’s PGA event until 2006. The course offers “stay and play” packages that include a complimentary shuttle from the adjacent and luxurious JW Marriot Las Vegas Resort & Spa, making it one of the more turnkey golf travel options in the area. Many golfers simply commute from the Strip, as Summerlin is a close suburb just southwest of the city. You can get there in 20 minutes without traffic.

Designed by Bobby Weed and Ray Floyd, it has a markedly different feel from the other Vegas courses, with a pronounced carved-from-the-desert aesthetic on a hillier and higher site, with more dramatic drops and climbs. Your shots will carry farther here, as the course sits more than 2,000 feet above sea level. There are several forced carries and it is one of the most challenging options in the area, with no shortage of opportunities to lose balls in the rugged dry washes, cactus-studded surroundings or occasional lake. It also features several distinctive risk-and-reward holes, such as the reachable yet penal 13th hole, a par-4 also known as “Death Valley.” And because it was designed for tournament play, it has an unusual six tee options to choose from, allowing golfers to eliminate some of the forced carries and pick the right length for them, from under 5,000 to more than 7,100 yards.

As is usually the case for TPC facilities, it boasts very good conditions, has first-rate practice areas with all sorts of short-game features, an elaborate clubhouse with a well stocked golf shop, full locker rooms and full-service restaurant.