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The Green Highway



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Left: Aspen Lakes; **Below:** The 8th hole on the Tom Fazio course at Pronghorn is a dramatic par-three.



f all the many delightful summer getaways in the Western U.S., Bend, Ore., stands apart. Not only does one find great public-access golf in Bend, but the accommodations, dining, residential opportunities, non-golf recreation (think fly-fishing, skiing, hiking and almost every other outdoor pursuit imaginable) and overall charm of this small, enchanting destination elevates it to a level of desirability not easily matched.

Bend's primary benefit is its location smack dab in the cradle of so much natural beauty. It's easy to fall in love with this high desert country in the shadow of Oregon's Cascade Mountains. The area is populated by outdoor enthusiasts who love to smile, laugh and challenge themselves. And although it can get breath-catching cold in the dead of winter, more than 300 days of sun make outdoor activities possible year-round.

More than 20 public golf courses dot the Central

Oregon landscape, most within a 30-mile radius of downtown Bend. No matter which course you play, the common jaw dropper is the dramatic mountain views. Mt. Bachelor, Mt. Jefferson, Three Sisters, Broken Top and other peaks ring the region, inspiring golfers to lean on their clubs, pause and feel humbled by nature's magnificence. The climate nurtures rolling fairways and firm, fast greens. The ball flies farther in the higher elevations too.



The Deschutes Brewery & Public House is one of downtown Bend's most popular watering holes.

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Bend's notable public courses include Aspen Lakes, just outside the nearby town of Sisters, which offers plenty of room for long hitters, with lakes and streams coming into play on half the holes; and Lost Tracks, where owner and designer Brian Whitcomb wove 7,000 yards of challenging shots next to the Deschutes National Forest, with enough Ponderosa Pines to ricochet a drive or two.

Sunriver Resort, 30 minutes southwest of Bend, offers four acclaimed courses, two of them public: Meadows, designed by John Fought, has seven of its 18 holes hugging a lazy river; and The Woodlands by Robert Trent Jones, that uses plenty of water and lava rock to coax accuracy. It is regarded as one of the Pacific Northwest's best championship courses. One thing is for sure: if you don't like one set of links, another 18 holes are a speedy drive down a juniper- and sage-lined highway.

Perhaps Bend's best courses, though, are found at the handful of top-notch private residential communities in the area. There might be a real estate slump underway elsewhere in the country, but it hasn't seemed to thwart development in Central Oregon.

Brasada Ranch's Canyon Course works to conserve the desert's natural beauty with liberal use of bunkers and grass only where it's needed. At 3,500 feet, it's all about the views, which is why course designers Peter Jacobsen and Jim Hardy elevated almost every tee. Women say they shoot their best scores on this very player-friendly course.

Brasada Ranch also features a large athletic center with a curving, kid-friendly, rock-framed water slide. There's a mammoth equestrian center and a horse trail surrounds the entire eight-mile property. At buildout, Brasada Ranch will consist of 900 residences, ranging in size from a .5 acre to 1.3 acres, and there are currently plenty of ground floor opportunities available for interested buyers.

Pronghorn has sold all but 28 of its 289 home sites, but also offers custom-designed villas and 76 shared-ownership villas at its Residence Club. Having a private Tom Fazio course and a Jack Nicklaus course side-by-side provides unparalleled variety and challenge. While the Fazio course is sloped to help players reach the green, the Nicklaus course almost exacts revenge.

“But what really sets Pronghorn apart is the Nicklaus Academy,” says Mike Lewis, its director. The newly-opened facility provides computerized and personal coaching using a launch monitor, a Motion Analysis Technology Powered by Taylor Made system and a putting lab.

Tetherow, a new 700-acre golf resort community on Bend's west side, will have a golf course and clubhouse (opening this summer), and a recreation center being built starting late 2008. Construction will follow on a 50-room luxury boutique hotel/spa/restaurant, recreation center, conference center, and a residential area with 589

homes and town homes. David McLay Kidd, who designed Oregon's famed Bandon Dunes course, designed the resort-private Tetherow Golf Course.

Just 25 minutes from downtown Bend, Remington Ranch plans nearly 800 home sites, 400 overnight rooms and 54 holes of resort golf, including Tom Doak's Wicked Pony course. Two of the three courses will remain private, and all will have panoramic vistas of Smith Rock, the Ochoco Mountains and the Cascade Mountains. The plan is to keep about 60 percent of the 2,079-acre development as open space.

Sunriver offers home sites on its members-only Crosswater course, which will host the 2008 JELD-WEN Tradition in August. Designed by Bob Cupp and built within a wetlands, you'll want to slow down, breathe and figure that the two boxes of balls you launched into the swamp was worth the amazing view of Mt. Bachelor. Next door is Caldera Links, another Bob Cupp-designed, family-friendly nine-hole course perfect for a quick, fun round.

Though it seems everyone in Bend loves to play golf, off-course activities abound as well. In warmer weather, Central Oregon is a fly fisherman's paradise with easily accessible rivers and lakes. There's hiking, biking and rock climbing at Smith Rock, about 25 miles away.

And during winter months, skiers delight that just 30 minutes from downtown Bend is Mt. Bachelor, the fifth-largest ski resort in North America with 3,683 acres accessible by 11 chair lifts, with 1,600 acres groomed daily. More youthful snow enthusiasts use boards to leap from jumps, sweep to and fro down half-pipes and shoot in and out of trees at high speed. The mountain also has oodles of cross country and snowshoe trails, tubing and even sled dog rides.

There's a wide range of medium-priced, comfortable accommodations available in the region, but for upscale facilities, you'll want to stick to the resorts. One popular choice for families is Sunriver Resort which offers quarters from upscale homes and suites to more pedestrian condos that are fine for an overnight stay. If you stay at Sunriver, you'll enjoy its expansive mall, full grocery store, old-fashioned soda fountain, tasty Italian restaurant (Marcello's) and shops to rent gear for all types of outdoors activity.

Just remodeled, the Seventh Mountain Resort is the closest lodging to Mt. Bachelor and is only five minutes from Bend. It has new condos, restaurants, lounge, heated pools, an ice rink and a conference center.

In downtown Bend, the Riverhouse Resort Hotel is a popular conference destination. Built along the Deschutes River, it has a steakhouse and the River's Edge 18-hole championship golf course next door. If you're looking for a great summer getaway not too far up the green highway, Bend, Ore., may be just the place for you. ☺



Left: The Tom Doak-designed Wicked Pony course at Remington Ranch; Above: Kayaking and other river sports are as popular with visitors as residents; Below: The landmark in downtown Bend is the Tower Theater.”

