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"Best Golf Road Trips in Texas"

By Richard Durrett

If you're looking to play and stay, here are places to consider as a first resort

Horseshoe Bay Resort

Where: Horseshoe Bay

About the course: Three Robert Trent Jones championship courses are on site (Applerock, Ram Rock and Slick Rock). The original (and most forgiving) course, Slick Rock, has been around since the early 1970s.

Golf cost: \$115 to \$119. Golf packages have reduced rates.

Lodging cost: \$179 to \$269 at the new \$40 million Marriott Resort.

Amenities: Four swimming pools, a white-sand beach area, three dining facilities, a full-service spa and fitness center and a full-service marina offering watercraft rentals.

Area attractions: Lakes LBJ, Buchanan, Inks and Travis are available for fishing. There are wineries, horseback riding and shopping in Fredericksburg and Marble Falls.

Web site: www.hsbresort.com

Notable: Horseshoe Bay has a putting course, with Bermuda grass greens set in a tropical oasis of waterfalls, gardens and palm trees.

Ambush at Lajitas

Where: Lajitas

About the course: The 18-hole course was designed by Austin architects Roy Bechtol and Randy Russell. It is within 25,000 acres of the Chihuahuan Desert. From the back tees, the course, opened in 2002, is 7,400 yards.

Golf cost: \$125, but that will go up to \$165 around April or May when a \$1.5 million renovation is completed.

Lodging cost: There are 92 guestrooms on site in four facilities. Costs are \$215 to \$825 in the winter, \$195 to \$765 in the spring and fall and \$165 to \$685 in the summer.

Amenities: Three full-service restaurants, as well as a spa, and an outdoor outfitter, which has outdoor activities, including a shooting range, equestrian center and a hunt club. Ambush offers private jet service from any major city in Texas to its private airport.

Area attractions: Big Bend National Park is 20 miles away. There are also ghost towns and old mines from the turn of the century in the area.

Web site: www.lajitas.com

Notable: Ambush's 19th hole is a par-3 across the Rio Grande in Mexico.

Barton Creek Resort

Where: Austin

About the course: Barton Creek offers four 18-hole courses designed by Arnold Palmer (Palmer Lakeside), Tom Fazio (Fazio Foothills, Fazio Canyons) and Ben Crenshaw (Crenshaw Cliffside).

Golf cost: Greens fees on the weekend range from \$110 to \$240.

Lodging cost: \$139 and up.

Amenities: The biggest non-golf draw of Barton Creek is the spa. All kinds of packages are offered. Besides that, you can play tennis, swim in the outdoor or indoor pool, walk the nature trail or play miniature golf.

Area attractions: Barton Creek is a short drive from downtown Austin and the University of Texas. Sixth Street, the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and various museums are close.

Web site: www.bartoncreek.com

Notable: If you'd like to spend time learning the game, The Chuck Cook Golf Academy is on site.

The Cliffs Resort

Where: Graford

About the course: A tough par-71 at a little less than 6,800 yards. Some of the holes offer views of Possum Kingdom Lake. The course was designed by Bruce Devlin and Robert Von Hagge.

Golf cost: \$50 to \$85 depending on the season. Hotel guests receive a special rate.

Lodging cost: \$95 to \$235. Rooms are available at The Inn and in condominiums on site.

Amenities: Executive chef at The Chaparral Grille, swimming pools, fishing, full-service marina.

Area attractions: Graham Square, antique shopping and Possum Kingdom Lake.

Web site: www.thecliffsresort.com

Notable: Miss the fairways and it isn't just rough waiting for you. Many holes have ravines, rocks, cedar groves and native grasses.

Crown Colony CC

Where: Lufkin

About the course: Arthur Temple, who made his money in timber and paper goods, hired Robert von Hagge and Bruce Devlin to design and build a top-of-the-line course in East Texas.

Golf cost: A round plus cart is \$111 (specials in July and August are \$65).

Lodging cost: Crown Colony has 13 villas on site that rent for \$120 per night.

Amenities: Full or casual dining.

Area attractions: Sam Rayburn Lake, with fishing and boating, is 20 minutes away.

Web site: www.crown-colony.com

Notable: It hosts the Temple Cup, one of the top amateur team events in the state.

Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa

Where: San Antonio

About the course: The Hill Country Golf Club features 27 holes divided into three nine-hole courses. Arthur Hills designed the courses.

Golf cost: Resort guests pay \$125 per round, non-guests \$145.

Lodging cost: \$195 and up. Golf and room packages are available (\$300 for two golfers, \$249 for one golfer).

Amenities: Full-service spa, featuring 21 treatment rooms, a 4-acre water playground, nature trails and full-scale dining.

Area attractions: Sea World, Alamo, River Walk and downtown San Antonio are 20 minutes away.

Web site: www.hillcountry.hyatt.com

Notable: The course is a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, with areas that are protected for wildlife on the property.

Tapatio Springs

Where: Boerne

About the course: Tapatio Springs has 27 holes split off into the Lakes Course, Ridge Course and Valley Course. The course was designed by Bill Johnston.

Golf cost: \$40 on the weekday and \$50 on the weekend.

Lodging cost: Condominiums, apartments and hotel rooms are on site and are \$89 to \$465.

Amenities: A heated swimming pool and Jacuzzi and a fitness center.

Area attractions: There are antiquing tours and a theme park near the property. San Antonio is only 20 minutes away.

Web site: www.tapatio.com

Notable: The course is in a valley, and the signature hole is No. 3 on the Valley Course, a driveable par-4.

Waterwood National

Where: Lake Livingston

About the course: The Pete Dye course, which opened in 1974, is challenging with Dye's signature greens.

Golf cost: Greens fees are \$45 during the week and \$65 on weekends.

Lodging cost: Costs for cabanas and lodges range from \$40 to \$120 per night.

Amenities: Two pools, a marina on Lake Livingston with a boat launch, boat rentals and fish bait.

Area attractions: Huntsville offers shopping, museums, theaters and antique stores. Ravens Nest Golf Course, a Tripp Davis design off I-45 in Huntsville, is also a great value.

Web site: www.waterwoodnational.com

Notable: Perry Arthur, the director of golf at Stonebridge Ranch Country Club in McKinney, holds the course record with a 63, shot in 1981.

White Bluff Resort

Where: Lake Whitney

About the course: The resort has two 18-hole courses - both designed by Bruce Lietzke. The Old Course was opened in 1993 and the New Course in 1996.

Golf cost: \$50 to \$85 depending on the season. Hotel guests receive a special rate.

Lodging cost: \$105 to \$390 depending on accommodation. Guests can stay at The Inn, in a condominium or in a log cabin.

Amenities: Full-service spa, fitness center, fishing lakes with marina, tennis courts and The Lighthouse Restaurant, which features an award-winning chef.

Area attractions: Hillsboro Outlets, Lake Whitney and local shops.

Web site: www.whitebluffresort.com

Notable: The New Course was the site of the Texas State Open from 2003-05.