

THE **GOLF** **POKER** ISSUE


FAVORITES + GREENS

Golf, Travel and Lifestyle for the West + Beyond

27

HOT SPOTS
SWING ALL DAY,
PLAY ALL NIGHT

Ray Romano

From the **Tables** to the
Teebox to the **TV Screen**,
almost everyone (and we)
still  **Raymond**

+

**AN NFL COACH
NAMES FAVORITES**

**MANOR OF FACT:
A CELTIC RYDER CUP**

 **POKER WITH
NO CARDS?**

**MONARCH BEACH
BOUNCES BACK**

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Seven Feathers

Myrtle Creek, Oregon

Location. Location. Location. At face value, Seven Feathers might not seem like the ideal property to tie into your next golf-poker vacation. But think of it this way — with its convenient location right off Interstate 5 in Southern Oregon, Seven Feathers is on the way to just about everything in the Northwest. Or you could just stay close and play underrated Myrtle Creek (*pictured*). But we're usually thinking much bigger than that. How 'bout a drive up from Medford? Or an overnight on your way to Bandon? After all, the hotel has plenty of rooms, and the casino offers a small cardroom with both limit and no-limit hold 'em action. We stay there every time we're passing through.



Pacific Palms

City of Industry, California

There is no poker room at Pacific Palms. But it's such a great place to stay, we couldn't resist adding it to our list. That and the fact that a 30-minute drive west on the Pomona Freeway (at the right time of day in L.A. traffic) will land you at the mecca of Southern California poker — Commerce Casino, where row after row of tables seat players from across the Southland and beyond in action as diverse as low-limit hold 'em to some of the biggest games you'll find in the West. Back at Pacific Palms, you can decompress with 36 holes of challenging golf, recently remodeled rooms with balconies overlooking the courses and some of the best food in the greater Los Angeles area.



We-Ko-Pa

Fort McDowell, Arizona

The day in February 2007 that we first laid eyes and 5-iron on Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore's new Saguario Course at We-Ko-Pa Resort was a watershed moment: Somehow the Texas-based design duo had managed to import a bit of Bandon's taste and texture to the Sonoran desert, 500-odd miles from the Pacific Ocean. A tall feat, but in a way, it was to be expected. When it comes to naturalist golf, these guys don't mess around. The Yavapai tribe who owns this full-blown casino destination just next door in Fort McDowell, about 45 minutes northeast of Phoenix, stacked the deck in their favor when C&C came on board. We're still hankering to return, but don't wait for us. Get out there and soak up some amazing links love — along with Scott Miller's 7-year-old Cholla Course, a local favorite offering its own rich, unencumbered views of surrounding peaks — especially now that the weather is getting just about perfect down that way.

Saguario invites a swing-for-the-fences mentality, a Crenshaw-Coore trademark owing to Gentle Ben's occasional wildness off the tee during his 30-year PGA Tour career, and his love of Augusta National, where he notched two Masters wins. They moved as little dirt as possible, laying those broad driving lanes over the dramatic but not extreme topography with a balanced, delicate hand. "This piece of land has some very interesting natural movement to it," Crenshaw says. "I think this golf course will be pretty unique for the desert. People will be induced to play different shots and find solutions to new challenges when playing this course."

There are forced carries over native flora — including many a majestic, prickly 20-foot-high saguaro cactus. That's an intrinsic part of the modern desert game. But negotiate them and the generosity of playable real estate feels Augusta-like, sans azaleas and pine straw. Saguario is nearly flawless in look and feel, particularly on the greens, most of which are on the large side. That's where this relatively short track will show its teeth. Angles of attack are important, and on the handful of sub-300-yard 4-pars, the closer one gets to the green, the tougher the approach.

Of course, you'll want to visit the Radisson Fort McDowell Resort & Casino next door for stay-and-play packages, plus if you're reading this, we're assuming that poker is part of your itinerary, so hit the cardroom — but keep in mind that games are not exactly true no-limit because of a \$150 wagering cap in Arizona.