

GOLF ODYSSEY

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO SOPHISTICATED GOLF TRAVEL

www.golfodyssey.com

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LORDS OF THE KIWI KINGDOM

Has New Zealand's remoteness kept it off your radar screen? Trips to this golf paradise are actually easier to swing than you think. We demonstrate how to experience the finest Kiwi courses and accommodations while only being out of the office a week. Our review offers first looks at Jack Nicklaus' Kinloch Golf Club and The Farm at Cape Kidnappers, sister lodge to Kauri Cliffs.

WHAT THE GOLF WORLD IS TALKING ABOUT

SPOTLIGHT ON LA QUINTA

In Palm Springs, no resort matches the patina of La Quinta Resort & Club. This relaxing oasis features five resort courses, topped by Pete Dye's notoriously difficult Stadium Course at PGA West.

THE CLASSIC CLUB

Arguably the best of the recent additions to public golf in Palm Springs, this Arnold Palmer design, host venue for the final round of the Bob Hope Desert Classic, presents big golf and a big challenge.

GOLF ODYSSEY is dedicated to the timely publication of honest and unbiased evaluations of great golf destinations in the United States and abroad. Independence and confidentiality are the cornerstones of our editorial approach.

We travel anonymously, pay our own expenses, and do not accept advertising from golf courses, resorts, hotels, or restaurants.

GOLF ODYSSEY serves its subscribers with practical information and discriminating advice.

DEBUNKING THE MYTH A WHIRLWIND WEEK IN NEW ZEALAND

If you have ever dreamed of taking a golf trip to New Zealand but nixed it because you could not fathom being out of the office for more than five days, this story is required reading. As we discovered on our recent excursion, the common advice that New Zealand holidays require at least two weeks is a myth. Not only is a shorter

off-putting. Not only is New Zealand remote, it's an island. Nothing is close—even Australia is 1,200 miles away. Yet surprising as it may seem, the 13-hour overnight flight from the West Coast allows one to land quite rested, provided one travels in business class or better. (Never was Ambien better prescribed than for this



Richard Brimmer

Golf's most sublime perch, Cape Kidnappers above Hawke's Bay

trip entirely manageable (even from the East Coast), it will leave you with indelible memories.

The prospect of traveling to the end of the earth across seven time zones as well as the International Date Line can be

journey.) Landing on Sunday morning following our Friday afternoon departure, we suffered no ill effects from jetlag. In fact, playing a gateway round after the transoceanic flight is much easier in New Zealand than in the British Isles or Ireland,

(Continued on page 4)

WHAT THE GOLF WORLD IS TALKING ABOUT

CHANGES AFOOT AT MUIRFIELD FAVORITE GREYWALLS

GOLF ODYSSEY subscribers traveling in the Muirfield realm have long enjoyed Greywalls, the classic and classy small castle turned hotel that sits beside the Muirfield clubhouse and looks over the links to the sea. While Muirfield itself has always had limited public tee times that book out a year in advance, Greywalls guests have enjoyed the ability to get a tee time at Muirfield on certain Monday mornings and Friday afternoons on much shorter notice.

We recently received word that Greywalls is changing directions. The property is now closed and has ceased hotel operations. When Greywalls reopens in April, it will be used exclusively as a venue for private events and house parties. Owners Giles and Ros Weaver still invite guests to stay there, but now they must rent out the entire estate. This means that if you book the property, your party will be king of the castle, and the staff will do your bidding. The Weavers say the new

direction is in keeping with the highly personal, intimate experience guests have always enjoyed at Greywalls. They vow that the same quality food and wines will be served and everything will otherwise be the same. However, Sue Prime, the very capable longtime general manager, is leaving.

The biggest question marks in this new venture will be: Can Greywalls maintain its high level of service in this new incarnation, and will it still be able to give its guests privileged access to Muirfield?

Tel: 011-44-1620-842-144
www.greywalls.co.uk

GOING ONLINE TO GET ON ST. ANDREWS' LINKS

If you've ever played the Old Course or even thought about playing it, you know how dear tee times are. The most common ways of securing a spot have always been contacting the Links Trust many months in advance with your tee

time requests, trying your luck on the spot in the lottery no later than 2 p.m. the day before you wish to play, or making arrangements with a tour company that contracts with the R&A for tee times, the most notable being **GOLF ODYSSEY** travel partner PerryGolf. Now another convenient option is available. The St. Andrews Links Trust offers golfers the opportunity to make advance online bookings (www.linksnet.co.uk) not only for the Old Course, but for all the Links Trust courses, including David McLay Kidd's eagerly anticipated Castle Course. Already all of the online tee time slots on the Old Course have been filled from May through October 2008, and slots for the Castle Course are filling up rapidly. Be advised that the online Castle Course ballots are only for rounds to be played Monday through Saturday between June 28 and October 31. The course will then be closed from November 1 through March 31, 2009. Unlike the Old Course, which may be booked only in conjunction with requests for reservations on a second course, the Castle Course



Greywalls is no longer an option for most visitors to Muirfield

The **GOLF ODYSSEY** Rating System

- A+** Perfect, as good as it gets
- A** Extraordinary, nearly flawless
- A-** Excellent, at times memorable
- B+** Very good
- B** Above average
- C** Average, uninspired
- D** Varying degrees of dissatisfaction
- F** Unacceptable, a disaster

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can be booked as a single round. Single players are not permitted to make bookings. There is no handicap restriction for play on the Castle Course. Be sure to read the online reservation guidelines very carefully, as all green fees are non-refundable and non-transferable. Golfers who do not see suitable times on the Linksnet system should contact the Links Trust Advance Booking Department at 011-44-1334-466-666.

www.standrews.org.uk
reservations@standrews.org.uk

TRUMP TRUMPED IN ABERDEENSHIRE? NOT SO FAST

Donald Trump thought he had made Aberdeenshire, Scotland, an offer it couldn't refuse when he announced plans to build what he boasted would be the world's greatest golf course at Menie estate. Trump's elaborate, £1 billion development blueprint included a second golf course, nearly 1,000 vacation homes, 500 private residences, and a luxury hotel. Trump's hand was apparently trumped, however, when local officials voted 8-7 to reject the project due to environmental considerations.

Just when it looked like the Aberdeenshire local officials had fired Donald Trump and The Donald was poised to entertain overtures to take his golf resort vision to Northern Ireland, the Scottish ministry intervened to stay the local ruling because the project was of "national importance." Once the national government stepped in, the local councilors reconvened and gave the project their "full approval." The council's reversal of course doesn't quite signal the ultimate go-ahead for Trump—that decision rests with Scotland's cabinet secretary—but both the community and the national government seem to be solidly behind the project. It looks like Trump will indeed be able to honor his Scottish mother's local birth in Aberdeenshire by building the project at Menie Estate rather than in Northern Ireland. For now, thanks to the receptive Scottish government, The Donald holds the trump card.

www.trumpscotlandgolf.com

OUR NEW RATINGS

This month's issue of *GOLF ODYSSEY* marks a notable change in our rating system. In order to provide you with an even clearer picture of the relative merits of golf courses, hotels, and dining establishments, we are switching from our 20-point system to a letter grading scale, much like you experienced on your school report cards.

As a rule of thumb, establishments in the "A" range are among the world's finest and not to be missed. Establishments in the "B" range still offer great merit, but fall short of "must go" status. Lower rated courses, hotels, and restaurants may not meet the standards of our discerning readers.

Keep in mind that our ratings are as much art as science. They are only a tidy summary representation. For a much more comprehensive picture of the qualities of each establishment, you should continue to rely on the detail provided within our reviews. As always, you should feel free to contact us directly with any specific questions.

While we caution against direct translations of our former numerical ratings scores to letter grades, the following guide may help you adapt our former numerical scores to our letter grading scale:

- A+** Perfect, as good as it gets
- A** Extraordinary, nearly flawless
- A-** Excellent, at times memorable
- B+** Very good
- B** Above average
- C** Average, uninspired
- D** Varying degrees of dissatisfaction
- F** Unacceptable, a disaster

WHAT'S NEW AT PINEHURST

Pinehurst Resort rates as a perennial contender for the honor of best golf resort in the world. Its eight courses, highlighted by Pinehurst No. 2, comprise the largest collection of golf holes at any resort this side of China's Mission Hills. While we prefer to revel in the smartly restored and updated Holly Inn on our visits to "America's St. Andrews," that boutique hostelry couldn't possibly satisfy the steady stream of golf-hungry groups, families, and individuals who come to Pinehurst to feast on golf. The centerpiece Carolina Hotel does that, and it has just undergone a much-needed renovation. Improvements to the guest chambers include the addition of flat-screen televisions, high-speed Internet access, updated bathrooms, and pillow-top mattresses. Come spring, the new

Presidential Suite will be available to guests as well. This 1,800-square-foot suite has its own private entrance to the hotel's veranda and West Lawn, living room with two large-screen televisions, spacious dining room, wet bar, fireplace, oversized bathroom, and posh bedding.

By the time the *Presidential Suite* opens, renovation work will also be complete on Pinehurst No. 1. This sporty Donald Ross course that runs right along Morganton Road will feature new Bermuda grass fairways, new sand in the bunkers, refurbished tee boxes, and USGA specification greens. We look forward to reporting on the Carolina Hotel and Pinehurst No. 1 in a future issue.

Tel: 910-235-8507
www.pinehurst.com

where the shorter overnight flight and accompanying loss of hours make for a tough transition. Upon returning home the following Sunday night, we found the jetlag no worse than if we had spent a week across the Atlantic.

Tucked away in the southwest corner of the Pacific Ocean, New Zealand was the last of the world's major inhabitable areas to be trod upon by human feet. The first arrivals, Polynesian ancestors of the Maori, may have touched shore after their canoes were blown off course. According to Maori mythology, the sky father (Rangi) and earth mother (Papatuanuku) pulled a giant fish to the ocean's surface to form New Zealand's North Island, now home to world-class golf links and accommodations. Some 400 courses dot New Zealand's verdant landscape (more per capita than Scotland), but only within the past several years—with the addition of Kauri Cliffs on Matauri Bay and then Cape Kidnappers on the tumultuous towering volcanic-ash headlands above Hawke's Bay—has this unassuming, peace-loving, and nature-revering country become a treasured spot on the golf traveler's map. We made our first pilgrimage to this sparsely populated paradise in 2001, when we reveled as much in the North Island's charming towns, rich wine regions, great lodges, and ecotourism as in the golf. In 2004 we returned for a rite of passage at Cape Kidnappers, Tom Doak's sublime golf wonder of the Southern Hemisphere.

This past October we journeyed to New Zealand again, albeit in a departure from our normal policy of anonymous and unannounced golf travel. Charter GOLF ODYSSEY subscribers Julian and Josie Robertson invited us to preview their new on-site luxury lodge, The Farm at Cape Kidnappers, and we also wanted to get a first look at Kinloch, Jack Nicklaus' first project in New Zealand, which was scheduled to open for play around press time.

DAYS 1 AND 2: CAPE KIDNAPPERS

After departing New Jersey late on Friday afternoon, we touched down in the Kiwi kingdom on Sunday morning local time (you pick up the day "lost" from crossing the International Date Line on the return home). Our first stop was **Cape Kidnappers (Golf Rating: A+)** and The Farm. To give you a sense of the scale of Cape Kidnappers, it takes as long to travel from Napier Airport

Richard Brimmer



View from the Ridge Suite at The Farm at Cape Kidnappers

to its front gate (20 minutes) as it does to wind and climb up the road from the front gate to the golf course and lodge. This magnificent 6,000-acre estate overlooking Hawke's Bay is not just a golf resort; it's a gigantic sheep ranch and wildlife sanctuary.

After lunching in the tastefully designed clubhouse, we warmed up at Cape Kidnappers' small but perfectly adequate practice area before taking on one of the world's most memorable courses, with holes that evoke memories of Pacific Dunes and views even more spectacular than Old Head. For perspective, Pebble Beach perches 100 feet above the Pacific Ocean, Old Head rises 300 feet above the Atlantic Ocean, and Cape Kidnappers soars 500 feet above the Pacific. Situated in a prominent earthquake and volcano region, the steep ravines and deep valleys of Cape Kidnappers bear witness to the severity of the earth's angry tumult. The game runs back and forth along towering bluffs, with the bay constantly in view and the wind seemingly ready to blow us off our perch.

Tom Doak's minimalist masterpiece features wide fairways, although some tee shots strike fear due to formidable forced carries. Utterly treeless, and rambling over dramatically tilted terrain, Cape Kidnappers plays tricks with one's ability to judge distances. Omnipresent wind lends a strategic element to every round on the hard turf. Putts roll fast on the large, undulating greens defended by exquisite bunkering. The sand pits sit below the surface, at times precariously, so much so we marveled at how some were even built.

Doak says that "if Cape Kidnappers were a book, it would be an epic." He's right. There's not a weak hole on the course, and excepting the final three holes, no two play in the same direction. While attention rightly goes to the back nine and the holes that extend onto towering, finger-like bluffs, Doak's inland holes are equally strong and challenging. On the par-five 4th, one must focus on a lonely aiming post for the blind uphill drive over a gully. Upon climbing toward a gargantuan fairway, we are greeted with a magnificent 360-degree panorama of the vast sheep ranch, The Farm, and Hawke's Bay.

A trio of the best holes follows. The par-three 6th, fittingly named *Gully*, leaves no margin for error short or left. On 7, a good tee shot is necessary for a chance to reach a narrow, well-protected green in regulation.

By the time we make the turn, our heart thumps with anticipation for holes 11 through 16—out-and-back tests that play on fingers of turf along vertigo-inducing cliffs. Twelve is like playing golf on an aircraft carrier; here any wayward shot en route to a green resembling an infinity-edge pool falls helplessly to the sea. The par-three 13th is short, but the green is tough to hold and the left-hand bunkers are brutal. Sharp falloffs and severe inclines define the challenge on 14. Fifteen is a somewhat longer—and more dramatic—version of 12. The 16th tee yields a view for the ages. Magnificent but difficult, Cape Kidnappers delivers one of the most unique experiences in golf.

Given its remote location and green fee beyond the means of most locals, Cape Kidnappers gets little play—25 rounds constitute a busy day. Despite the paucity of players, golf services are excellent. Easily walkable, the club maintains a caddie exchange program with Bandon Dunes. Carts are also available, as is a yardage guide.

With the November opening of **The Farm at Cape**

Kidnappers, guests can now stay on-site. Although the finishing touches were being applied during our October visit, The Farm may well become the finest single-course golf resort in the world (a distinction we currently award to Kauri Cliffs). The Farm's high perch provides spectacular views of the sheep ranch, Hawke's Bay, and the lights of Napier. Anyone familiar with Kauri Cliffs will immediately sense a different style. From the farm motifs to the use of lighter colors, The Farm is somewhat more informal—the tasteful handiwork of Josie Robertson and noted Aspen-based designer Linda Bedell.

Richard Brimmer



Interior of a Ridge Suite at The Farm at Cape Kidnappers

The centerpiece is the main lodge, featuring beautiful common rooms, two dining areas, an outdoor terrace, a wine cellar designed like the inside of a wine barrel, a “snug” (a romantic little sitting room), a fitness center, and four guest suites (room 4 offers the best view). Eighteen additional suites and the four-bedroom *Owner's Cottage* are a short walk from the lodge. All accommodations feature phenomenal views, plus flat-screen televisions, fireplaces, air conditioning, and spacious bathrooms with double vanities, soaking bathtubs, and separate showers. Guests also have access to a swimming pool and small spa. We're confident the dining will approximate the superb cuisine at Kauri Cliffs, for The Farm's head chef Dale Gartland was the sister property's co-executive chef for the last two years.

While our schedule did not allow us to spend meaningful time in Napier or the Hawke's Bay wine region, both are quite special. Napier, which was rebuilt in the 1930s following a devastating earthquake, holds great appeal for its art deco architecture. The entire Hawke's Bay region is called the “Tuscany of the Southern Hemisphere” and is renowned for its world-class wineries. We did visit the famed gannet colony which is located on Cape Kidnappers property but administered by the Department of Conservation. Thousands of the large birds with gold and black head markings nest at Cape Kidnappers from June through October. Eggs hatch after six weeks, and when the gannet chicks are 15 weeks old they make their amazing first flight—3,000 kilometers to Australia's Great Barrier Reef where they stay for two to three years before returning to New Zealand to live.

The Farm at Cape Kidnappers. 448 Clifton Road, Te Awanga, Hawke's Bay, NZ. Tel: 011-64-6875-1900. **capekidnappers.com**. 22 rooms and suites from NZ\$320 to NZ\$1,590 (\$241 to \$1,200) per person, double occupancy. Owner's Cottage: NZ\$3,500 to NZ\$10,000 (\$2,639 to \$7,541).

Cape Kidnappers. 448 Clifton Road, Te Awanga, Hawke's Bay, NZ. Tel: 011-64-6873-1018. **capekidnappers.com**. Green fee: NZ\$300 to NZ\$400 (\$226 to \$302). Caddies cost NZ\$70 (\$53) plus tip. Carts cost NZ\$35 (\$26). No coring.

DAYS 3 AND 4: KINLOCH, WAIRAKEI, AND HUKA LODGE ———

After two days and nights at Cape Kidnappers we drove two hours to one of New Zealand's most popular tourist destinations, Lake Taupo, which actually sits atop a dormant volcano. While somewhat touristy with its assortment of t-shirt shops, fast-food, mini-golf, bungee jumping and parasailing, this throwback town reminiscent of California in the 1960's has a certain charm.

On Tuesday afternoon we traveled 15 minutes from Taupo to **Kinloch Golf Course (Rating: B)**, the only Jack Nicklaus design in New Zealand. After years in the making, all 18 holes were finally scheduled to be open by press time. While Kinloch is not on the water, Nicklaus' stated intent was to create a Scottish links-style course, a design feat realized so effectively by Tom Watson at Cassique, one of Kiawah's two private courses. To be sure, Kinloch enjoys a beautiful setting in a giant punchbowl at the bottom of a valley ringed by farmland. Some of the holes are quite memorable, and the bunkering is interesting and attractive. However, this course feels more influenced by man than nature. Moreover, contrary to the spirit of Scottish links, the greens are often fronted by bunkers, thus ensuring that approaches must come via the air rather than the ground. The small greens undulate to no end; getting up and down from around the greens is exceedingly difficult. We would prefer to see them materially larger, less undulating, or both.

Alistair Tod



The par-three 7th hole at Kinloch Golf Course

During our October visit, only the front nine was open for play (although we toured the back nine). The front consists of two loops that return to the clubhouse. We particularly enjoyed the 5th, a short dogleg-left par four with a punchbowl green set in a dell. The front's best test is the 8th, which begins down in a valley and climbs to a narrow elevated green; along the way we encounter 40 bunkers and a split fairway. The back side is somewhat more dramatic. On the par-three 17th, a do-or-die carry to a trouble-laced green will certainly ruin some good rounds. Kinloch is part of a real estate development, although few homes are currently underway.

That evening we stayed outside Taupo at one of the world's great retreats, **Huka Lodge (Rating: A)**. The guest experience starts with a dreamlike setting on the Waikato River, just 300 yards from Huka Falls. Now a member of the *Small Luxury Hotels of the World*, Huka Lodge has come a long way since its origins in the 1930s as an angler's hideaway with canvas-clad huts. Nowadays it's fashioned after a Scottish country manor, with deep blue and green plaids (matching the color of the river and surrounding forest), wood paneling, British game prints, woven wool fabrics, antique country furniture, and warm fireplaces. Huka's original interior designer, the renowned Virginia Fisher, recently returned to update the Lodge, the guest suites, and the *Owner's Cottage*. Rates include dinner and breakfast.

All 20 guest suites are spectacular. Each has a sitting area, outdoor deck facing the river, comfortable bed with luxurious comforters and linens, walk-in dressing room, and stocked mini-bar. The bathrooms, with their gorgeous fixtures and separate bath and shower, are heavenly. Four of the rooms have fireplaces, including number 13, where we stayed. Any room will suffice when the magical Waikato rushes just 20 meters from your door, but the most spectacular of all is the *Owner's Cottage*, which can be rented out at certain times of the year.

The setting inspired us to scout the natural surroundings. The staff, which is global in composition, helps arrange horse trekking, river rafting, sailing, and trout fishing along the river or at Lake Taupo. We explored the Waikato and Huka Falls via a sometimes hair-raising mountain bike ride. Back on grounds there's a tennis court and a small heated pool amidst lush gardens. While Huka Lodge does not have a spa, guests can get good in-room massages (even after dinner).

Our only disappointment was that for a property of such repute, the food is forgettable. Evenings begin with a cocktail hour where all guests mingle. The five-course set menu (alternative selections are available upon request) was a little too creative for our taste, such as our entrée of red wine poached poussin with cavolo nero, sun dried tomatoes, and tarragon cream. Breakfast, whether one chooses the buffet or something off the menu, is satisfactory.

On Wednesday, we ventured to nearby **Wairakei International Golf Course (Rating: B+)**, which has been rated among the world's top 100 courses. We won't flatter it with such accolades, but it is a beautiful parkland layout set in a valley and surrounded by mountains. Like the many travelers who bemoan playing even the best of parkland courses in the British Isles and Ireland, some may not feel the need to travel halfway around the world to play Wairakei.

After breaking out of the gate listlessly, Wairakei changes tenor on the par-five 3rd hole as subtle contours give way to much



Spectacular views await visitors on the 6th tee at Wairakei

more varied terrain as one moves into the foothills. After a steep climb from the 5th green to the 6th tee, we are rewarded with a spectacular view of Lake Taupo and the surrounding mountains. Players face the prospect of a plunging tee shot down into a valley. The well-struck ball seemingly rolls forever.

Starting with the 11th, one enters an oasis of holes etched into the back of a ridge that bisects the course. On 13, Wairakei's longest par four, a tall pine obscures the left front of a narrow green that falls off on the sides to deep bunkers. Fourteen, one of New Zealand's longest and best par fives, sweeps uphill to the right past a giant fir tree en route to an elevated, kidney-shaped green. A heavily bunkered downhill par three follows.

Alas, the finish is a bit anticlimactic, but the crux of the round, played on pretty, up-and-down land with nary a house in sight, already won us over to this no-frills club. Architect Peter Thomson came back a decade ago to update the course, which was in good shape during our visit. Be advised that the practice area (mats with stalls) is the pits. Thankfully, the clubhouse, shower, and locker facilities are more fitting of this worthy venue, and the sandwiches are quite good as well. While carts are available, we chose to walk, no easy task given Wairakei's elevation changes.

Following our round, we dropped our rental car at Taupo Airport and jumped on a one-hour flight down to Wellington for our overnight stay in New Zealand's governing capital, aptly known as "Windy Wellington."

Huka Lodge. Huka Falls Road, Taupo, NZ. Tel: 011-64-7378-5791. hukalodge.com. 20 rooms from NZ\$730 to NZ\$1,310 (\$550 to \$988) per person, double occupancy. Owner's Cottage: NZ\$7,640 to NZ\$11,215 (\$5,761 to \$8,457).

Kinloch Golf Course. Kinloch, RDI, Lake Taupo, NZ. Tel: 011-64-7477-8484. kinloch-golf.com. Green fee: NZ\$195 (\$147). Carts cost NZ\$40 (\$30). No caddies.

Wairakei International Golf Course. State Highway One, Taupo, NZ. Tel: 011-64-7374-8152. wairakeigolfcourse.co.nz. Green fee: NZ\$200 (\$151);

reciprocal club green fee: NZ\$145 (\$109). Carts cost NZ\$40 (\$30). No caddies. Course coring: late March, early October.

DAY 5: PARAPARAMU BEACH GOLF CLUB

Paraparamu Beach Golf Club (Rating: A-) is a 45-minute drive from Wellington. Located one kilometer inland, this site of numerous New Zealand Opens and home track of Tiger Woods' caddie Steve Williams was long considered New Zealand's premier course prior to the creation of Kauri Cliffs and Cape Kidnappers. Designed by Alex Russell, a protégé of Alister Mackenzie, "Paraparam" is a challenging and rugged layout through wind-swept dunes. Visitors will be struck by the tired clubhouse and gaudy housing that sits tight to the property, but as fans of Carnoustie can attest, great golf sometimes comes in unsightly packages.

Paraparamu's mighty reputation has suffered in recent years, in large part due to poor conditioning. The appearance of Tiger Woods at the 2002 Open was supposed to catalyze change, but poor weather plagued the tournament (Tiger finished in 6th place) and the Open, far from spurring the club forward, left it in debt. Happily, improved finances, coupled with the 2006 hiring of a new greenskeeper, have the club on an upswing. Conditions were good during our visit; fairways ran firm and fast and greens rolled consistently. Much attention had also been paid to the deep revetted bunkers that lurk throughout.

Packed into a rectangular parcel, Paraparamu's two nines each return to the clubhouse. All sorts of humps, bumps, mounds, and hollows inundate the open, windswept duneland; several stands of small trees dictate angles and deflect the often-present winds. Paraparam's putting surfaces are elevated—some quite prominently. The holes are consistently strong, especially the par threes. On the short one-shot 5th, we missed left and found ourselves with a tight lie 12 feet below the putting surface. New Zealander Frank Nobilo once carded a 13 here in competition.

Players prone to hooking the ball must be wary on the back nine, as O.B. stakes separate homes from holes 9 through 14. Thirteen, a classic two-shotter and our favorite test at Paraparam, requires a well-placed drive and a near-perfect approach to hold a



Unsightly surroundings belie the beauty of the game at Paraparamu

heavily protected green that hangs ominously above the fairway. The march home is excellent, most notably the par-three 16th and the par-four 17th, which features a split fairway and deep bunkers guarding a sloping green.

Paraparamu provides minimal golf services. A practice range is available, but you must use your own balls and retrieve them yourself. Trundles and golf carts can be rented. An adjacent private airport allows for easy access via private plane or helicopter. Visitors with time on their hands should consider staying at the superb Wharekauhau Country Estate, one hour from the course and two hours from Wellington (see *GOLF ODYSSEY*, June 2001).

A round at Paraparamu should be part of any visit to New Zealand. After driving back to Wellington, we dropped our rental car and boarded the one-hour flight to Auckland. The connecting flight to Kerikeri is a mere 30 minutes, and Kauri Cliffs is but 20 minutes from the Kerikeri airport.

Paraparamu Beach Golf Club. 376 Kapiti Road, Paraparamu Beach, NZ. Tel: 011-64-4902-8200. paraparamubeachgolfclub.co.nz. Green fee: NZ\$90 (\$68). Carts cost NZ\$35 (\$26). Caddies cost NZ\$30 (\$23) plus tip. Course coring: March, mid-November.

DAYS 6 AND 7: KAURI CLIFFS

We cannot conceive of a more enchanting setting than **Kauri Cliffs (Lodging Rating: A+)**. Like Cape Kidnappers, it occupies a massive sheep ranch, though these sister gems strike us as more different than similar. Whereas Cape Kidnappers is bold and spectacular, Kauri Cliffs is the picture of tranquility as it overlooks the romantic Cavalli Islands rising out of the Bay of Islands. Guests enjoy access to the entire property, including three private beaches where you are likely to be the lone visitor of the day. We are not surprised that Andrew Harper's *Hideaway Report* recently named Kauri Cliffs the number one lodge in New Zealand. It is simply the finest single-course golf resort in the world.

Kauri Cliffs (Golf Rating: A) showcases the talents of designer David Harmon. Hardly a household name, Harmon had the good fortune to be given a perfect site and the good judgment to work with what God had provided. The par-72 routing comprises two loops that return to the clubhouse; four sets of tees play from between 4,940 and 7,119 yards. With its exposed grassy plateaus and ravines diving down to the deep blue ocean, plus six holes that hug the Pacific, comparisons to Pebble Beach are inevitable. Unlike Pebble Beach with its packed tee sheet, Kauri Cliffs feels more like a private club given the limited numbers who journey to this remote outpost.

While Kauri Cliffs is not tight, its tee shots are intimidating and its rough penal; shots that veer just a little further askance may disappear permanently. Thankfully, one often has the choice of an air or ground approach to the generous putting surfaces.

The opening holes descend from the lofty clubhouse situated on the lower level of the main Lodge. We especially like the 4th hole, a great par five called *Cambo* after New Zealand's own Michael Campbell. Be sure to take in the stunning waterfalls when crossing the footbridge that leads to the fairway on the short par-four 6th. Seven (*Cavalli*) is a long, all-carry cliff-to-cliff par three backdropped by the volcanic Cavalli Islands. The front side

finishes strongly with two steep uphill tests, the par-five 8th and par-four 9th.

As good as the front side is, the back is even better. Hole 14, a long downhill one-shotter, begins a magical four-hole march along the cliffs where the views can easily disrupt a golfer's concentration. Endless trouble left spells disaster for those who hook the ball. Your full attention is required on 15, a cape-style five par that dares players to bite off the left-side carry. The long par-four 17th plays like the number one handicap hole; we found it very tough to find the correct line off the tee. Happily, the par-five 18th, which leaves the cliffs for an uphill return to the clubhouse, provides a chance for a finishing birdie.

Golf services enhance each round at Kauri Cliffs. The scenic practice facility is nothing short of great. While carts are available, we highly recommend walking the course with a caddie. At the clubhouse turn, tubs filled with complimentary beer, soda, and water enable players to stock up for the back nine without disrupting their rhythm. Even the course guide is available in separate yard and meter versions.

"Tranquil" aptly describes the ambiance of Kauri Cliffs. The Lodge, done in a neocolonial style, is airy with high ceilings, roomy public areas, great fireplaces, a lovely dining room, and a wraparound veranda with a breathtaking panorama. The 11 two-unit cottages are but a short stroll away, followed by the *Owner's Cottage*. Each large and comfortable guest suite boasts a surpassingly beautiful view. Indeed, the sitting area on your private veranda is a spot you may never want to leave. Virginia Fisher's elegant interiors (with input from Josie Robertson) feature soothing color schemes, king-size beds with quilted bedding, huge closets and dressing areas, fireplaces, and wonderful bathrooms. The suites are outfitted with televisions, phones, and internet access. We loved the decadent stash of

homemade cookies and brownies accompanying the mini-bar's complimentary beer and non-alcoholic beverages.

Breakfast and dinner are included in the room rates and the food is excellent. Chef-prepared gourmet picnics make for an idyllic lunch on the beach. Dinner selections consist of three choices of appetizers, entrées, and desserts. Filet mignon, scallops, and duck are favorite main courses. Each was expertly—and simply—prepared using the freshest local ingredients. Never once did the chef feel the need to show off with excessive sauces.

During the nightly cocktail hour, guests gather to meet and compare their adventures of the day. Josie and Julian Robertson were the hosts, as they often are between January and March, the peak of the summer season. They and the staff, comprised mostly of Kiwis, strive to ensure that everyone has a great time. On most days there's a planned activity, ranging from a farm tour to a beach barbecue or nature hike.

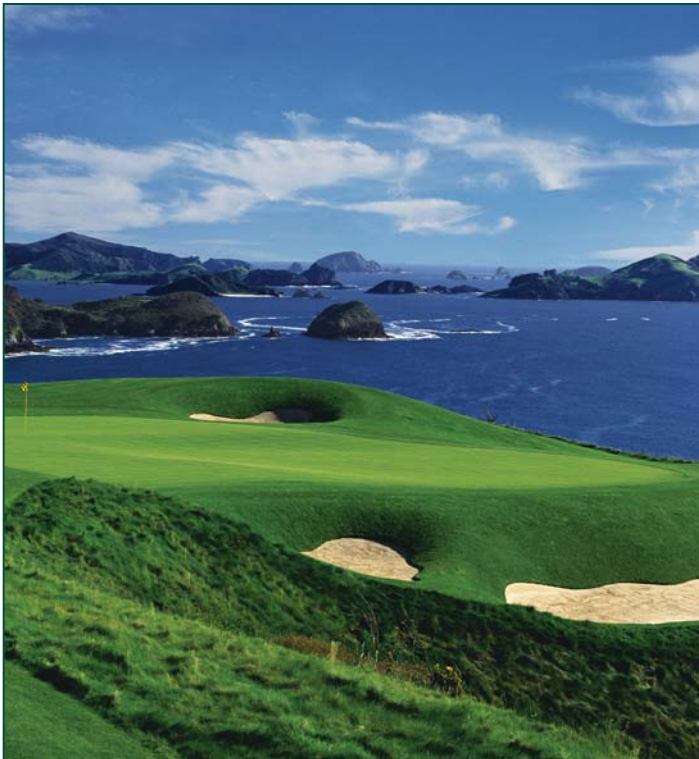
Activities, both on- and off-site, are plentiful. The infinity-edge pool provides relaxation, but those seeking adventure can spend the day playing tennis, quad biking, mountain biking, kayaking, fly-fishing, or sport fishing in some of the world's finest waters for yellowfin tuna and marlin. There's also on-site nighttime possum (a ubiquitous pest and prime threat to the flightless kiwi bird) and wild boar hunting. If hiking does not satisfy your desire to see New Zealand's natural beauty, helicopter tours are available.

The Spa at Kauri Cliffs, which also includes a fitness center, enjoys its own complex beside a winding stream bordering a totara forest. Treatments utilize indigenous land and sea products and are administered in treatment rooms or al fresco. The massage tables may be the most comfortable in the world.

Kauri Cliffs Lodge. Matauri Bay Road, Matauri Bay, Northland, NZ. Tel: 011-64-9407-0010. kauricliffs.com. 22 rooms from NZ\$660 to NZ\$1,040 (\$498 to \$784) per person, double occupancy. Owner's Cottage: NZ\$5,000 to NZ\$7,000 (\$3,770 to \$5,279). Lodge closed in June for renovations.

Kauri Cliffs Golf Course. Matauri Bay Road, Matauri Bay, Northland, NZ. Tel: 011-64-9407-0060. kauricliffs.com. Green fee: NZ\$300 to NZ\$400 (\$226 to \$302). Caddies cost NZ\$70 (\$53) plus tip. Carts cost NZ\$35 (\$26). Coring: early October. Course closes sporadically in June.

Kauri Cliffs



A view of the Cavalli Islands from the 5th hole at Kauri Cliffs

DAY 8: TITIRANGI, THEN HOME

On our final day, we took an early morning flight from Kerikeri to Auckland and had time for one final memorable round at **Titirangi Golf Club (Grade: B+)** before heading back to the US. Located in suburban Auckland about 15 minutes from the airport, Titirangi is the only Alister Mackenzie course in New Zealand. An easygoing atmosphere pervades the club, whose membership is welcoming and modest rather than hoity-toity. The facilities, which include a nice dining area overlooking the course and beautifully redone locker/shower rooms, are ideal for anyone who is just coming from or going to the airport.

Titirangi calls itself "the longest short course in golf." Measuring 6,616 yards (par 70), it is short by today's standards, but by no means easy. We loved Titirangi's personality and



Undulating, multi-tiered greens are typical at Titirangi Golf Club

movement. This tight little course is rich in risk/reward options. Most holes play uphill or downhill to small, steeply tilted, multi-tiered greens. Mackenzie wows us with his bunkering and his par threes, a quartet that may be the best in the country.

A few years back the club embarked on an extensive, still ongoing, course restoration project. We saw no evidence of any work, but to ensure that golfers can complete an entire round if a hole is out of commission, the club has created two holes out of its par-five 5th hole. First up is a par four (labeled 5A) that plays to a “temporary” green tucked behind a bunker off the left side of the fairway. Hole 5B, a par three, utilizes special tee boxes as it culminates at the usual 5th green.

We highly recommend Titirangi for an arrival or getaway game and a chance to see the artistry of Dr. Mackenzie. After the round we were able to take a refreshing shower and dress for our return flight.

Upon departing at 7 pm on Sunday, we had enough time for dinner, a movie, and a full night’s sleep on the 11-hour return flight to Los Angeles. We arrived on Sunday morning for our connecting flight, picking up the day lost on the trip over. Reflecting on our New Zealand golf odyssey, we can’t help but look forward to how fun—and feasible—it will be to return to the region again soon.

Titirangi Golf Club. Links Road, New Lynn, Auckland
7, NZ. Tel: 011-64-9827-5749. titirangigolf.co.nz. Green fee: NZ\$120 (\$91). Carts cost NZ\$35 (\$26). No caddies.

TRAVELING OVERSEAS?

As a **GOLF ODYSSEY** subscriber, you are eligible to receive special benefits when booking your overseas itineraries through PerryGolf, the world’s leading golf travel specialist and a **GOLF ODYSSEY TRAVEL** partner. Contact Jeff Anderson at PerryGolf by calling the **GOLF ODYSSEY TRAVEL** hotline (tel: 877-550-2286 x215), or send an email to travel@golfodyssey.com.

NEW ZEALAND TRIP TIPS AND ESSENTIAL FACTS

- ❖ Prime time for golf is November through April. Most courses perform green and fairway coring in October.
- ❖ If you plan on flying commercially within New Zealand, consider flying Air New Zealand (part of United’s Star Alliance) and purchasing your intra-country tickets when you arrange your international flight. Only by purchasing them as a continuous ticket can you avoid the severe penalties accrued for going over the baggage weight limit, which will surely happen when traveling with golf clubs. We found out the hard way—our penalties (roughly \$75) each trip were nearly as much as the Kiwi flights!
- ❖ Bring your own golf balls. The price of golf equipment in New Zealand is outrageous. A sleeve of ProV1s costs NZ\$30 (\$23).
- ❖ Use sunscreen liberally. The ozone layer is very thin and you can suffer extreme sunburn, even on cloudy days.
- ❖ New Zealand is in the Southern Hemisphere and across the International Date Line. The time difference is 21 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time.
- ❖ Currency exchange rate at press time: NZ\$1 = \$.77.

SELECT NORTH ISLAND COURSES



LA QUINTA RESORT & CLUB

PALM SPRINGS' CLASSIC RETREAT

No place in the Palm Springs realm matches the classic allure and patina of La Quinta Resort & Club. Dating from the 1920s, the resort, which is 35 minutes east of the Palm Springs Airport, was a getaway oasis for Hollywood celebrities like Frank Capra, Bette Davis, and Errol Flynn. La Quinta's low-slung Spanish-style stucco buildings and rippling red tile roofs make it the architectural antithesis of Palm Springs' mid-century modernism and current retro-modern vogue. Its quiet, low-key, old-style (some would say tired) ambiance is also at odds with the newer and glitzier (and sometimes self-consciously hip) properties now popping up in Palm Springs. La Quinta has a timeless, soothing air that is well suited for anyone seeking a relaxing retreat with multiple golf courses and nice spa and tennis facilities.

La Quinta's resort links comprise the Mountain and Dunes Courses right on campus and three more tracks a mile or so away at PGA West: Pete Dye's notorious Stadium Course; the Jack Nicklaus Tournament Course; and the desert-style Greg Norman Golf Course. Numerous excellent layouts are nearby, including the Classic Club (see page 11) and the newly opened John Fought Players Course at the Golf Resort at Indian Wells (see **GOLF ODYSSEY** November 2007 and February 2007, for more on Palm Springs). Also, bear in mind that most of Palm Springs' private clubs welcome some non-member play (especially in the off season) for those willing to open up their wallets. This is true of Mission Hills Country Club, home of the LPGA's Nabisco Championship, but at Stone Eagle Golf Club, Tom Doak's spectacular blend of desert and mountain golf that inhabits a world of its own up in the mountains, you must either know a member or be interested in becoming a member. (While we haven't played Stone Eagle yet ourselves, our friends who have rave about it.)

Palm Springs is an ideal winter destination offering perhaps the most reliably good weather in the continental US. Off-season rates kick in around mid-May, and late May and early June often provide comfortable playing conditions. In summer, when La

Quinta features unlimited golf packages, everyone tries to beat the heat by teeing off early. At midday, if you can stand the hot sun, you can often fly around an empty course in two and a half hours. Bargain hunters: be advised that course closings for aerification and overseeding are staggered at the resort tracks in July/August and October/November, respectively, though this year and biannually the overseeding may be moved up when La Quinta hosts the PGA Tour Qualifying Tournament.



Pete Dye's **PGA West Stadium Course (Rating: A-)**, built to be "the hardest damn course in the world," is synonymous with wrecked scorecards. The layout sparked outrage when the PGA Tour pros first played it during the 1986 Bob Hope Desert Classic. Today, aspiring Tour pros trying to earn their Tour cards at Q-school dread it. Dye relied on abundant deep bunkers, a good bit of water, testing approach angles to offset undulating greens with penal falloffs, thick rough, slanted turf producing awkward lies, and crosscurrent winds to accomplish his task. Our best advice is to avoid trying to overpower the course. Dye forces golfers to hit all types of shots on the Stadium Course. Since positioning is everything, give your driver a rest and refrain from attacking pins. Even then, nothing is easy.

Like its older Florida cousin, the TPC Stadium Course at Sawgrass, this course is full of memorable tests. The final three holes loom largest in our consciousness. On the superb par-five 16th, *San Andreas Fault*, watch your step going down the flight of stairs into the 20-foot-deep greenside bunker (Dye told his bulldozer operator to keep digging until he hit water). Next comes *Alcatraz*, a par three with an island green. Striving for a look distinct from the 17th at Sawgrass, Dye surrounded the green with ominous black rocks. Lee Trevino famously aced *Alcatraz* in the 1987 *Skins Game*. Eighteen features a narrow fairway lined by water left and bunkers, rough, and mounds to the right. While this three-hole march home is intimidating, it points to the fact that the Stadium Course is derivative of the more thrilling and engaging layout at Sawgrass. We much prefer the Florida original, but sometime when you're in California's Coachella Valley you should see if your game holds together on PGA West's diabolical Stadium Course.

The **Jack Nicklaus Tournament Course (Rating: B)**, which shares a very nice clubhouse with the adjacent Stadium Course, is more playable than its notorious neighbor, though it too has bite—74.7 par rating and 139 slope. Nicklaus utilizes design elements like angled tee boxes, mounding that mimics the distant mountains, split fairways, and peninsula and island greens, but the defining features here are the generous plateau fairways that fall off to swatches of rough, deep waste bunkers, and desert scrub.

The 1st, a short, slight dogleg, sets the tone for the round with its green perched high above the fairway. Nicklaus' wide carpet-like landing areas welcome the use of the driver, although trouble looms for balls that drop off the tabletop fairways. Water doesn't factor into the game until the par-three 8th (all carry to a shallow, well-bunkered green), but when it does, it's intimidating. The signature 15th is a par five that culminates at an island green.

La Quinta Resort



The par-three 17th, *Alcatraz*, at the Stadium Course at PGA West

Set in a valley amidst much less housing than the other La Quinta courses, the **PGA West Greg Norman Course (Rating: B)** provides a desert game. Norman made use of just 62 acres of grass, and if you're not in the fairway or on the greens here, you're in the desert. Extensive disintegrated granite waste areas, desert flora, and over 100 bunkers border the circumscribed emerald swatches. Several booming carries are required from the back tees, and the holes narrow considerably the closer one approaches the green. Still, this is PGA West's most player-friendly layout partly because the waste areas can work to your advantage. On the dogleg holes you can cut off distance by playing through the desert. The flat desert base yields lots of roll, usually permits a recovery shot, and even trails back to the fairway. Around the greens, close-cropped areas provide a welcome putting alternative to the usually obligatory wedge play at the resort's other courses.

Back at La Quinta, the **Mountain Course (Rating: B-)** is good for a warm-up round. Built by Pete Dye in 1980 on a floodplain, it was once a US top-100 track. Although claustrophobic housing spoils several holes, the setting turns inspiring when the routing runs hard by the Santa Rosa Mountains. The stretch from 14 through 17 literally inhabits the mountains. The par-five 15th wraps around the protruding slopes and culminates at a green further protected by bunkers. Next comes the photogenic, plunging par-three 16th—all desert and mountain save for the green and tees. Thanks to a recent upgrade, the sporty Mountain Course now has renovated tee boxes, reshaped and resurfaced Tifdwarf Bermuda greens, and new cart paths.

Skip Dye's **Dunes Course (Rating: D)**. By the 2nd hole, this bland, resort-style routing heads into the floor of an unattractive,

Jon Edwards



Wind is often a factor on the par-three 2nd at the Classic Club

steep-banked flood runoff area. The round concludes on more propitious ground facing the mountains, but it's not nearly enough to justify playing this course.

The practice facilities and clubhouses at PGA West are very nice; La Quinta's single clubhouse serving the Dunes and Mountain Courses is more modest. Range balls are complimentary to all golfers with a tee time; all others can hit balls all day for \$20.

An Instant Classic in Palm Desert

One of the more recent, outstanding additions to the public golf sphere of Palm Springs is the **Classic Club (Grade: A-)**. This Arnold Palmer design in Palm Desert now hosts the final round of the Bob Hope Desert Classic. It's a layout that proficient players will love for its exciting and challenging shot values. The difficulty comes in the form of big forced carries (though multiple tee options can make drives manageable), a couple of island greens, very quick putting surfaces, and often extreme winds. Like most area courses, the Classic Club is a parkland track, and it was in superb condition during our visit. This big golf course has 30 acres of lakes and occasionally some significant distances between greens and tees. The depth of the bunkers, the carries, and the water surrounding the greens make this course very tough on unaccomplished players. (In 2006, the first year the Hope was played here, the Classic Club was the toughest of all the tournament links.) From November through April, forecaddies provide welcome assistance for every group. The new clubhouse, practice ground, and golf services are exceptional, and for a course this good, the green fee is also an excellent value.

Classic Club. 75200 Classic Club Boulevard, Palm Desert, CA 92211. Tel: 760-601-3601. classicclubgolf.com. Green fee: \$145 to \$165, includes mandatory cart and group forecaddie. Aeration: late January; August. Closed for overseeding early October to early November.



La Quinta Resort & Club (Lodging Rating: B) exudes an Old California aura with its hacienda-style lobby and Spanish-style casitas grouped around gardens, small pools, and hot tubs to foster a private, residential feel. The setting at the base of the mountains is exquisite. Each building contains two guest chambers with pool-facing patios. Following a much-needed and overdue renovation in 2007, the units now have new carpeting, flat panel televisions, and upgraded bedding. We were very comfortable in our 462-square-foot *Deluxe Casita* with two queen beds, a fireplace, and a nice bathroom with an oversized soaking tub and separate shower. The staff was very helpful throughout the resort, although we had to wait in a long line to check in. We also were initially charged at a much higher rate than we had booked, so keep an eye on your statement.

COMING IN THE MONTHS AHEAD...

Bold new developments in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; San Antonio, Texas; this year's Open venue, Royal Birkdale; plus highlights from Hawaii and Florida

RESTAURANTS

We like La Quinta Resort's casual and engaging **Mexican Adobe Grill (Rating: B)**. The huge margaritas, served in hand-blown glassware from Guadalajara, are fantastic; the guacamole is prepared tableside; and the *Caldo de Mariscos* (Southwestern bouillabaisse) has a nice kick. At **Twenty 6 (Rating: B-)**, the resort's contemporary California restaurant with a bar, lounge, and terrace, our thick maple pork chop, covered in a bourbon-maple glaze, was tender and tasty, and well paired with sweet potato fries and sweet cider marinated slaw.

Azur (Rating: C+), La Quinta's fine dining restaurant, proved less satisfying. The open and airy dining room was virtually empty the night we were there, and we distinctly heard an exercise class through the walls. Though we were ably served, none of the French-influenced seafood dishes we had were particularly memorable.

Off campus, the famed **Arnold Palmer's Restaurant (Rating: C-, tel: 760-771-4653)**, a local institution, is much overrated. The place skews noticeably to an older demographic (the bar scene is known as "Viagra Alley"), and the food is mediocre.

If you're in Palm Desert, give stylishly casual **Pacifica Seafood Restaurant (Rating: B, tel: 760-674-8666)** a try. We recommend the salads and the house-specialty sea bass topped with coconut milk and set in a bed of ginger sushi rice. Many golfers flock here for the \$6 vodkas. Just don't try all 120 in stock.

We're looking forward to the re-opening of **Desert Sage Restaurant (tel: 760-564-8744)** in La Quinta. The original owners are back, this time with a new chef. Count on eclectic, contemporary American fine dining in a spectacular and luxurious setting. For additional dining recommendations, see **GOLF ODYSSEY**, February 2007.

NON-GOLF ACTIVITIES

La Quinta works best as a quiet getaway for golfers or non-golfers. We were quite content relaxing in the small pool in front of our casita, soaking up the rays, reading a book, and gazing at the imposing Santa Rosa Mountains. (Families with children will notice the absence of extravagant playgrounds and water-park style pools.) The spa is very nice. Tennis players will find a friendly full-service operation with plenty of clinics. Bicycles are also available for riding throughout the resort neighborhood. While there are boutiques at La Quinta, abundant high-end shopping awaits beyond the compound.

La Quinta Resort & Club. 49-499 Eisenhower Drive, La Quinta, CA 92253. Tel: 800-598-3828. laquintaresort.com. 1,000 casitas, villas, and suites from \$89 to \$2,939. Green fee: PGA West courses, \$75 to \$199; Mountain Course, \$75 to \$199; Dunes Course, \$35 to \$145. Includes mandatory cart. Courses alternate month-long closures for overseeding between late September and late November.

La Quinta Resort



Beautiful grounds surround the La Quinta Resort & Club