

Gold Medal Resorts (Pebble Beach)



Pebble Beach

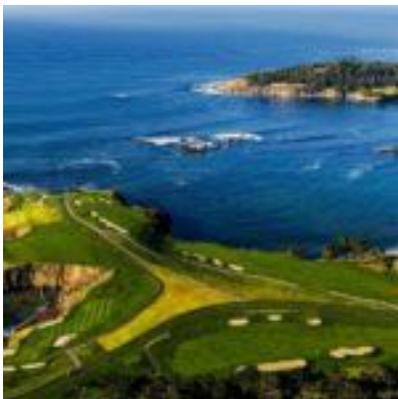
The 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics are fraught with controversy, which is nothing new. It seems all Olympic Games have budgetary and infrastructure problems as they commence, but Brazil's fortnight on the international stage is more problematic than most – or at least appears that way given how easily news travels in the digital age. Despite these varied issues, thousands of athletes from a hundred-plus countries are still fulfilling their Olympic dreams, and going for the gold.

Luckily, there's very little controversy regarding GOLF Magazine's recent unveiling of their Gold Medal Golf Resorts. The venues on the short list of the nation's finest destinations are 'bucket list' material, and all avid (or casual) players should make a pilgrimage to at least one, if not several.



Pebble Beach

It's no surprise that **Pebble Beach** earns a spot on the roster. Doubtless it will be there in perpetuity. Located on California's Monterey Peninsula, less than two hours from San Francisco's airport, this exalted spot on the atlas has been called by many the greatest meeting of land and sea in the world. Anyone fortunate enough to drink in this once-in-a-lifetime landscape of emerald fairways, jagged rocks and crashing surf would be hard-pressed to disagree. Five times the host of the U.S. Open, with a roster of champions as pedigreed as can be assembled, (headlined by Nicklaus, Watson and Woods) just the name Pebble Beach is enough to stir the imaginations of golfers everywhere.



Pebble Beach

A fast start is imperative at Pebble; the first four holes are simpler, shorter, calmer and slightly less mesmerizing than the holes that follow. Starting at the Jack Nicklaus-designed par-3 fifth hole and

through the tenth, the course becomes windier, more exacting, and visually overwhelming. All six holes are hard by the Pacific, and three in succession merit a quick mention; call them the “Amen Corner” of Monterey. The sixth is a medium length par five requiring a second shot that clears a steeply rising and substantial bank of rough to reach a level fairway lie for the approach towards the ocean. If the drive isn’t long enough to afford a long iron or wood up and over the obstruction, par becomes an improbability. The seventh is a teensy par three, playing about 100 yards downhill, perched on a jutting sliver of land adjacent to the water. Depending on the wind, it can be a half-hearted wedge, or a full-bore long iron. The eighth is a par four that no less an authority than Nicklaus claims offers the greatest approach shot in golf. An ocean inlet, found at the base of a practically vertical cliff, bisects the fairway. The tee shot requires careful placement, as a too-bold stroke will tumble into the sea. From the layup position, another wood or long iron must carry the gaping chasm to the bunker fortified green. The shot brings new golf meaning to the word “heroic.”



Spyglass Hill

While Pebble is the marquee venue, if time permits any visitor should also take time to play [Spyglass Hill](#), considered the most difficult course on the Peninsula. This Robert Trent Jones-designed beauty begins near the ocean, then turns permanently inland through the Del Monte forest after five holes. Spyglass has a haunting beauty due in no small part to the wispy fog that blows intermittently across the fairways.

Trent Jones once claimed his favorite self-designed par four is the fourth at



Spyglass Hill

Spyglass, a dogleg left of 360 yards with a green as long and narrow as a corridor. Said green is set between two monstrous humps covered with ice plants, a vegetation so insidious you'd have better luck blasting a ball off the bottom of the nearby sea. The short or mid iron approach must carry the first mound and come to rest short of the second. A par here will yield more satisfaction than almost any other smallish hole you could name. Spyglass tolerates the occasional wayward drive, but crowned greens place a premium on approach accuracy.

Great dining options abound, both at the resort and in the nearby town of Carmel. Everyone should make time to visit the famed [Tap Room at The Lodge at Pebble Beach](#), a handsome, dark paneled treasure trove of memorabilia that should be the model for 19th holes everywhere. It's a world-class steakhouse, with vintage wines and a wonderful array of draft beers. Among the dozens of worthy eateries in nearby Carmel, [Yafa](#) wins raves for fresh, innovative Mediterranean food. Kebabs, hummus, grilled octopus and a specialty dish called Mishmish chicken are among the most popular items. [Casanova Restaurant](#) is another of the town's more coveted reservations. Homemade Italian food like seafood fettuccini, gnocchi, and rack of lamb are specialties in a rustic, homey atmosphere.