

The Dragon at
Gold Mountain



NORTH LAKE TAHOE:

A Golfer's Paradise

These local links offer swing satisfaction for every budget and level of play. **BY SEAN KELLY**

CRISP, clean air. Enormous pines. Water lapping gently along the shore. Snow-capped, mountains and granite rock outcroppings. Natural wonders fight for one's attention all around Lake Tahoe. The Native Americans and pioneers that settled here knew this was a special place. Modern day golfers know it, too. After all, few golf locations can rival Tahoe's majesty, diversity, scenery, and pervasive quiet. In other words, it's that rare place where golfers can actually *hear* their swing thoughts.

More than 40 golf courses are within an hour's drive of Lake Tahoe. Visitors can spend a fulfilling lifetime golfing here, but the greatest concentration and variety of courses lies nearest to Tahoe's northern end. Roughly one-third of the courses in the area are located within a triangle that stretches from Tahoe City to Incline Village and on to Graeagle, to the northwest (see map, page 64-65). And that is where Tahoe Traveler has focused this guide: to provide you with a rundown of where to play on and around Tahoe's North Shore.



In the following pages you'll find information about everything from the newest, most challenging 7,000-yard courses—including the Dragon, Whitehawk Ranch, Coyote Moon—to more mature 18-hole courses, such as Tahoe Donner, Northstar-at-Tahoe, the course at Squaw Creek. Finally, there are those that are simply short and sweet: nine-hole and executive courses that encourage any level of player to get those sticks in hand, no matter how short on cash or time.

Anyway you slice it, which in our case is to the right, you're guaranteed to find the perfect links for your level of game. ↘

THE LONGEST YARDS

If you're looking for a long, challenging 18-hole course, the following comprise some of the best and most beautiful in North Tahoe area.

COYOTE MOON

Designed by former PGA Tour player Brad Bell on 250 secluded acres of rolling hills and majestic pines, the par 72, 7,061-yard Coyote Moon offers ample landing areas off the tee and large greens that will appeal to all skill levels. Approach shots funneling down to the undulating greens, however, place accuracy at a premium. Greens are well-protected by trees, sand, and water. As a bonus, the carts at the Moon are equipped with GPS systems.

Par: 72 | Yards: 7,177 | Rating: 73.7 | Slope: 136 | Fees: \$95-\$150, incl. cart
 10685 Northwoods Blvd., Truckee, CA 96161 | 530.587.0886
www.coyotemoongolf.com

NOTE:
 All yardages, ratings, and slopes are calculated from the tips.

THE DRAGON AT GOLD MOUNTAIN

At 7,077 yards and with a 73.5 rating and 147 slope, the Dragon has teeth. Near Graegle in North Tahoe's northernmost reaches, the course taunts low handicappers with its slogan

"Send me your heroes." The resort-style facility promises to deliver a golf "experience that captures the mind and soul, and triggers the adrenalin." The centerpiece of the Dragon and the surrounding Gold Mountain community—the "Nakoma" resort building designed in 1923 by world-famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright—is one of the most spectacular and storied clubhouses in the country.

Par: 72 | Yards: 7,079 | Rating: 73.5 | Slope: 147 | Fees: \$75 to \$130, incl. cart
 33 Bear Run A-15, Clito, CA 96103 | 530.832.4887 | www.dragongolf.com

THE GOLF CLUB AT WHITEHAWK RANCH

Whitehawk Ranch, located in the Mohawk Valley 38 miles north of Truckee and six miles south of Graegle, is a little shorter from the tips than other Championship courses in North Tahoe, but it sacrifices nothing in beauty. Streams here snake through the course's cedars, aspens, and pines, gathering in ponds and waterfalls. Although the course is mostly flat, fairway mounds will occasionally trouble golfers with uneven lies. Whitehawk's greens appear attractively large, but they're also undulating and fast, making par a challenge.

Par: 71 | Yards: 6,738 | Rating: 72.6 | Slope: 133 | Fees: \$80 to \$140, depending on day and season, incl. cart | 1137 Hwy. 89., Clito, CA 96106 | 800.332.4295 | www.golfwhitehawk.com

PHOTO: SEAN KELLY

The Mountain Course at Incline Village



GRAEAGLE MEADOWS

Opened in 1968 along the banks of the Feather River, one of eight nationally designated “Wild & Scenic Rivers,” Graeagle Meadows boasts a well-earned reputation for dramatic mountain and river views. One of the premier championship courses during its heyday, *Golf Digest* still rated the course as one of the “Best Places to Play” for 1997-1998. Graeagle Meadows is the farthest north of our North Tahoe selections, and is also quite possibly also the one boasting the most elevated tees.

Par: 72 | Yards: 6,740 | Rating: 72.1 | Slope: 129 | Fees: \$35 to \$70, incl. cart
Highway 89, Graeagle, CA 96103 | 530.836.2323 | www.playgraeagle.com

NORTHSTAR-AT-TAHOE

The back's the front and the front's the back. Northstar-at-Tahoe has switched the order of its two distinctly different nines this year to entice golfers seeking a little extra variety. Now the nine holes known for their more challenging, precise shot-making skills—holes with narrow, tree-lined fairways and miniature greens—come first. The more wide-open, links-style nine, with its many bunkers and ponds, lets players relax a bit on the back. Although the switch sounds simple enough, players will need to prepare early for what will be a noticeably different game.

Par: 71 | Yards: 6,897 | Rating: 72.4 | Slope: 137 | Fees: \$45 to \$105,
depending on day and season | 100 Northstar Dr., Truckee, CA | 530.562.2490
www.skinorthstar.com/summer/golf.html

OLD GREENWOOD

Tahoe locals are buzzing about the Jack Nicklaus Signature Course that will open this year (est. August 1). Both the course and surrounding development (see “Home, Sweet Second Home, page 21) are named after Caleb Greenwood, a mountain man in his 80s who led hundreds of pioneers across the Truckee Route of the Sierra into California in the 1800s, Old Greenwood will give a nod to the area's roots while providing modern day (golf) pioneers with their own hazards. The course at Old Greenwood sprawls across 600 acres of pine and sage and includes among its amenities a Golf Academy and full practice facilities.

Par: 72 | Yards: 7,542 | Fees: \$170, incl. cart | 12011 Old Truckee Airport Rd.,
Truckee, CA 96161 | 530.550.9400 | www.oldgreenwood.com

PLUMAS PINES

Situated against the Plumas National Forest and the Middle Fork of the Feather River (see also Graeagle Meadows), Plumas Pines captured a position on *Golf Magazine's* “Best Places to Play” list in 1998-1999. The walk to the driving range

gives a hint of what's in store with a handsome view of the first four holes of this Homer Flint course, designed in 1980.

Par: 71 | Yards: 6,504 | Rating: 71.3 | Slope: 132 | Fees: \$40 to \$85, incl. cart, depending on time and day | 402 Poplar Valley Rd., Graeagle, CA 96103
530.836.1420 | www.plumaspinestgolf.com

SQUAW CREEK CHAMPIONSHIP COURSE

Designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. and opened in 1990, the links-style Squaw Creek Championship Course was listed as one of *Golf Magazine's* “Top Ten Courses You Can Play” just three years later. The course rests snugly against the mountain and meadows at the base of Squaw Valley USA, one of the world's premier ski resorts and home of the 1960 Winter Olympics. The views from the course are awe-inspiring, adding to the reasons this course is worth a go on any summer day.

Par: 71 | Yards: 6,931 | Rating: 72.9 | Slope: 140 | Fees: \$85 to \$90 off season,
\$115 to \$120 high season, incl. cart | 400 Squaw Creek Rd., Olympic Valley, CA
800.327.3353 | www.squawcreek.com

TAHOE DONNER GOLF COURSE

While this semi-private course caters primarily to the members and guests of the Tahoe Donner residential community, the general public can play here, too. Course designer Bob Williams created this 30-year-old playground to force accurate tee shots into narrow tree-lined fairways, but eases up a little with large, more approachable greens. Tahoe Donner has a decent driving range, and if you plan to make a day of it, also features nearby tennis courts and an equestrian center.

Par: 72 | Yards: 6,931 | Rating: 73.5 | Slope: 132 | Fees: \$40 for members
and \$70 for guests (cart \$15 per rider); \$110 for general public, incl. cart | 12850
Northwoods Blvd., Truckee, CA | 530.587.9443 | www.tahoedonner.com

SHORT AND SWEET

Short on time but long on game? These North Tahoe short-play courses let you swing the sticks when you need a quick fix. They're also among the few in Tahoe where you can say you broke 70.

THE MOUNTAIN COURSE AT INCLINE VILLAGE

With four par 4s and fourteen par 3s, the Mountain Course is short, but that doesn't mean it's easy. Adjacent to the Championship Course at Incline (which won't open to the public until 2005), this 18-hole beauty has its fair share of elevation changes, not to mention a network of creeks and patches of pine and sage. You can finish a round in three hours here, but you're not likely to want to. The Mountain offers stellar views of the lake and excellent service across the



The Golf Club at Whitehawk Ranch

board. In fact, the Mountain Course offers such a tight game that it recently took the nation's Clasp Award—the National Golf Federation's top prize for customer loyalty.

Par: 58 | Yards: 3,513 | Rating: 56.6 | Slope: 94 | Fees: \$60, includes cart
| 690 Wilson Way, Incline Village, NV 89451 | 866.925.4653 (toll free) or
775.832.1150 | www.golfincline.com

OLD BROCKWAY

Built by Harry Comstock in 1924 as a source of entertainment for his celebrity pals, Old Brockway hosted the first two (though unofficial) Bing Crosby Golf Tournaments in 1934 and 1935. During a quiet stroll between shots one can only imagine what these greens have seen. During its Golden Years, Bob Hope, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, and Lucille Ball regularly teed 'em up and putt 'em down here. In fact, hole numbers 1, 2, 3, 8, and 9 are still collectively known both as "the Loop" and "Whiskey Run" after Dean Martin's famous drinking escapades. As legend has it, Martin would only play the first three holes before heading back to the bar, but he would emerge to finish his "round" over the final two.

Par: 36/72 | Yards: 3,300/6,600 | Rating: 70.6 (18 holes) | Slope: 131 (18 holes) | Fees: \$30 to \$38 for nine (carts \$17 more), \$50 to \$65 for a second go 'round, depending on season | 7900 Old Lake Blvd., Kings Beach, CA 94613
530.546.9909 | www.oldbrockway.com

PONDEROSA GOLF CLUB

Built in 1961 and family-owned and -operated since 1963, the Ponderosa Golf Club was another favorite of the Rat Pack, Bing, and Bob. Most interesting, the course still offers its players caddies, a service that's rare on modern 18-hole courses, and almost completely nonexistent on a short track such as this.

Par: 35/70 | Yards: 3,022/6,044 | Rating: 68.2 (18 holes) | Slope: 119 (18 holes) | Fees: \$32 for nine (\$16 for cart), \$52 for nine more (\$24 total for cart) 10040 Reynold Way, Truckee, CA 96160 | 530.587.3501
www.ponderosagolfclub.com

TAHOE CITY GOLF COURSE

The Tahoe City Golf Course is one of the oldest of the "old west" courses built in the area (1917). Not to be outdone, the course boasts that the Rat Pack came here, too. The southernmost of our North Tahoe courses welcomes hacks and bachelor parties as well as those more seasoned with the game. Speaking of seasoned, after kocking 'em around, check out the course's Old Tahoe Country Kitchen Par Bar. But leave your pistols at the door.


Par: 33/66 | Yards: 2,678/5,356 | Rating: 65.2 | Slope: 117 | Fees: \$30 for nine (\$16 for cart), \$50 for another lap (\$24 total for a cart) | 251 North Lake Blvd., Tahoe City, CA 96145 | 530.583.1516 | www.tcgcc.com 

PHOTO: SEAN KELLY