

Par excellence
The 16th hole at the iconic Cypress Point Club in Monterey, Calif., is one of the most famous par three holes in golf.



FAIRWAYS TO HEAVEN

THE MAJESTIC MONTEREY PENINSULA IS HOME TO THE FINEST OCEANSIDE GOLF COURSE IN AMERICA

words by **Michael J. Solender**

Perched on the most westerly point of northern California's breathtaking Monterey Peninsula, Cypress Point owns the highest ranking for an oceanfront course in this year's ratings of America's greatest golf courses by "Golf Digest." The course has occupied the list for 49 straight years, placing third overall this year and trailing only behind the acclaimed inland courses Pine Valley and Augusta National.

Cypress Point has both charmed and vexed pros and amateurs alike since it first opened in 1928. Immediately recognized as a masterpiece by golf's cognoscenti, its reputation has only grown in stature over the years.

Designed by the iconic Alister MacKenzie, this magical course is blessed with uncommon natural beauty and takes intrepid golfers through park-like woodlands, across undulating natural bunkers, past craggy sand dunes, and alongside precipitous drops from cliffs to the Pacific Ocean below.

Frank "Sandy" Tatum, former United States Golf Association president and member of the two-time NCAA Men's Golf Championship team at Stanford University has belonged to the exclusive club for

more than 50 years. Tatum, 93, began a life-long love affair with the course after first playing there as a teenager. "The course made quite an impression," recalls Tatum of his inaugural round. "I was captivated by its beauty, the sheer genius of MacKenzie's design, and the excitement I felt in playing there. There hasn't been a round I've played there since where I didn't enjoy that same thrill."

MacKenzie worked his artistry while challenging traditional design elements popular at the time. Three distinctive hole groupings meet players confronted with tall pine and cypress trees in the outward holes, challenging sand dunes in the next set of holes, and the most notable ocean holes often demanding forced carries on the inward trek.

A forthright Yorkshireman, MacKenzie learned the principles of camouflage while serving in the British Army during the Boer War. He employed these skills along with firm tenets in each of his designs and Cypress Point is no exception.

"The course should be so interesting," MacKenzie once commented, "that even the plus man is constantly stimulated to improve his game in attempting shots he has hitherto been unable to play."

Nowhere is that principle more evident than at the 16th hole, perhaps the most famous par three in golf – 200 yards-plus from each of the tees, safely reaching the tiny green demands players navigate swirling winds, carry the water and avoid the fronting rocks and bunkers in order to putt for birdie. The great Bing Crosby carded one of only a handful of hole-in-ones ever recorded here.

The grand lady still has plenty of bite and is one of the most sought-after invitations for a round in all of golf. Those lucky enough to be asked by one of Cypress Point's 250 or so members may run into members Clint Eastwood or Charles Schwab on the links. They may also spy former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice who frequently sharpens her game here.

Membership is by invitation only, says Tatum, and those interested will need sponsorship and considerable support to join the club.

Though long part of the rotation on the PGA tour stop AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am (formerly the Crosby Clambake), the venerable

course no longer shines on that stage. To its credit, the club membership has steadfastly resisted lengthening or redesign. As Tatum rightly says: "You don't remodel the Sistine Chapel." **OIH**

THE DETAILS

For more information on the Cypress Point Club, visit montereypeninsulagolf.com or call (831) 624-2223.



Pebble Beach



Pelican Hill



Bandon Dunes

OCEANFRONT GOLF COURSES PAR EXCELLENCE

Pebble Beach Golf Links, Pebble Beach, Calif.

The most storied oceanfront course in America, Pebble Beach Golf Links has hosted five U.S. Open Championships and is consistently rated the country's top public course. The views of Pescadero Point will take your breath away, and the very tricky putting surfaces won't give it back. pebblebeach.com

Pelican Hill Resort, Newport Beach, Calif.

Thirty six ocean view holes beckon at this enclave of civility and impeccable coastal golf. Architect Tom Fazio sculpted pure perfection in both the Ocean North and Ocean South courses. Losing a few balls to the surf is a small price to pay for enjoying a round here. pelicanhill.com

Bandon Dunes, Bandon, Ore.

An authentic Scottish links-style course, Bandon Dunes wasted no time after opening in 1999 in finding exalted status with critics and enthusiasts alike. The cool Pacific Ocean breeze is your constant companion along with a demanding course rewarding everyone who takes it head on. bandondunesgolf.com