

## Golf Central

The measuring stick for world-class golf has always been the famed Monterey Peninsula – the home of the Pebble Beach Golf Links and the picturesque 17-Mile Drive.

And when it comes to the sheer amount of resort-type courses in a small geographic area, it's hard to top the Southland's Coachella Valley, which encompasses the Palm Springs area – probably the only place on the planet where a duck hook on one course could wind up on the fairway of another.

While those golf destination hot spots get all the attention for being the premier places where golfers most want to be, that certainly doesn't mean that our little neck of the woods should get overlooked.

In fact, the city of Morgan Hill is surrounded by a number of outstanding 18-hole venues that utilize the area's natural surroundings and rolling landscape to create some of the finest tests of golf anywhere. Most of them have sprung up over the last decade-plus as course developers sought out prime spots with enough land and open space to accommodate such projects.

"I think golf really took off down here as a result of the golf boom of the 1990s," said Coyote Creek Golf Club Assistant Professional Joe Dolby. "There was a bunch of Silicon Valley money for projects and this area was the only one that wasn't developed."

With those key pieces of the puzzle in place, golf lovers in Morgan Hill, Gilroy and Hollister residents soon

started reaping the benefits as legendary golf icons like Jack Nicklaus, Johnny Miller and Fred Couples would venture into the South County area to put their stamp of approval on golf course design projects that included their namesake.

### Cinnabar Hills

Cinnabar Hills was recently named by the Golf World Readers' Choice Awards to the prestigious Top 45 Golf Facilities in the USA list for 2009. And if you've ever had the pleasure of teeing it up on one of this 27-hole facility's courses, you'd understand why. Although it is one of only two profiled courses in this story that was not designed by a golf legend, it simply could not be overlooked. Located on McKean Road in south San Jose, Cinnabar Hills is about a 15-minute drive from Morgan Hill. The three 9-hole courses (The Lake, The Mountain and The Canyon) were designed by award-winning architect John Harbottle III in 1998. All three courses at Cinnabar Hills offer a number of different challenges, from demanding tee shots to challenging approach shots. Cinnabar Hills is meticulously maintained and each and every one of the 27 holes on the property is unique. About the only thing that is the same is the shocking natural beauty of the property -- every hole looks like it could be put on a post card thanks to its outstanding vistas that engulf the scenic natural landscape.

"We offer a quality experience 365 days a year out here,"



Eagle Ridge Golf Club

said Cinnabar Hills General Manager Scott Hoyt. “We have the best greens in California. The PGA Tour could come here tomorrow and say they wanted to start their tournament on the same day and we would need no additional preparation – our greens, fairways and overall quality is that good. Having 27 holes gives us the maximum flexibility of holes offered to a customer and allows us to monitor the speed of play better than any 18- or 36-hole golf course. We have the opportunity to move slow groups away from faster groups or vice-versa – our speed of play is the best around.”

For additional information on Cinnabar Hills, go to [www.cinnabarhills.com](http://www.cinnabarhills.com) or phone 408-323-7815.

## Coyote Creek

The next top-rate course to come into the area was Jack Nicklaus' Signature Tournament Course at Coyote Creek, which opened in 1999. Coyote Creek is a picturesque, 7,027-yard track that was the former site of the Champions Tour's Siebel Classic. Coyote Creek offers a challenging test of golf that forces players to use just about every club in the bag, regardless of the tee area they opt to play from. Coyote Creek's greens are slick and flawlessly kept, its fairways are rolling and the bunkers and water hazards are strategically located. The course is also diversified in that its opening holes are situated in a hilly area with numerous oak trees and challenging uphill, downhill and side hill lies, before leveling out into a more wind-prone valley setting over the inward half.

Two years after the Signature Tournament Course opened the final phase of the 36-hole Nicklaus project came to life in the form of the Valley Course. The Valley Course, which is adjacent to the Signature Course, opened for play in 2001. It sits on the site that was formerly the home of San Jose's Riverside Golf Course. Nicklaus and his design team completely redesigned, rerouted and rebuild the old Riverside track, adding water and bunkering while keeping much of the original layout as well as the slew of majestic trees on the property intact.

“A lot of people can't afford to join a private course but they still want to play something nicer than a local muni,” Dolby said. “And I think that's why golf in the Morgan Hill area has been so popular. People down here can get a nicer, country-club-type experience on a course that was designed by Jack Nicklaus.”

For additional information on Coyote Creek, go to [www.coyotecreekgolf.com](http://www.coyotecreekgolf.com) or phone 408-463-1400.

## Eagle Ridge

The very same year that the Golden Bear embedded his paw print into the Coyote Creek project Johnny Miller, a native San Franciscan and major championship winner himself, opened Eagle Ridge Golf Club in Gilroy, a demanding, 7,005-yard test that winds its way through a gated community of upscale homes. Eagle Ridge features deep bunkering, slick greens, tight fairways, numerous waste areas and undulating slopes -- a fierce test of golf from the back tees.

“Johnny Miller always said that in order to master the game, you have to perfect 12 different shots, and he clearly had that in mind when he designed this course,” said Eagle Ridge Director of Instruction Scott Krause. “It's very challenging, a great course.”

And Krause should know. In 2005, he was named the Northern California Professional Golfers' Association Teacher of the Year. In the years that he's been at Eagle Ridge, he has seen golfers come from all over the Bay Area to play the shotmaker's course. And Krause believes that the number of exceptional golf courses in the South County area has actually impacted play on the Monterey Peninsula.

“We have three Signature courses down here,” Krause said. “People don't have to travel from San Francisco to Monterey anymore to play top-rated courses – and the golf packages and prices here are often less than half of what they're charging in the Monterey area.”

In the South County area golfers can play for as little as \$24 -- the fee for an 18-hole weekday round at



Coyote Creek Golf Club



Gilroy Golf Course -- and no more than \$102, the weekend rate to play Coyote Creek's Tournament Course with a cart.

In contrast, Pebble Beach is \$495, Spyglass Hill is \$330, The Inn at Spanish Bay is \$260 and Del Monte is \$110.

## CordeValle

While those prices are high, there is one course in the Morgan Hill area with rates that rival those of Pebble Beach, and there's good reason for it. Simply put, the CordeValle Resort is one of the elite resorts on the planet -- and it's only a five-minute drive south of the Morgan Hill city limits in San Martin.

Like Cinnabar Hills, CordeValle wasn't designed by a Hall of Fame golfer but it was designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr., one of the top golf course architects in the world. Situated in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the 260-acre resort with its 18-hole championship course offers some of the finest amenities in the world, which explains why the resort has garnered some of the most prestigious golf resort rankings, including: *Condé Nast Traveler* - #13 Golf Resort Worldwide; *Golf Digest* - #2 Golf Resort in California, #11 Golf Resort in North America; *Golfweek* - America's Best Resort Golf Courses; *Golf Digest Index* - America's 50 Best Modern Golf Clubs -- to name a few. To discover more about CordeValle, go to [www.cordevalle.com](http://www.cordevalle.com) or call 408-695-4500.



Cinnabar Hills