

Alpine golf is defined by a course's proximity to mountains, or Alps. Golf in California's Sierra Nevada Mountain Range will provide an interactive definition of what encompasses an alpine golf experience. These alpine golf courses are worlds away from the urban pound of Chicago, and an equal contrast to life in suburbia. "Earthy and organic" meet "laid-back Sierra highs" is a synthesis of the local scene. Spectacular and dramatic are just the beginning of the string of adjectives this region's golf courses inspire.

Each July, there is one place where Hollywood, NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL stars gather to play golf. The American Century Championship is the best celebrity golf tournament on the planet, but it should not be mistaken for an exhibition match—these guys are playing to win. What makes this event so special is that these stars interact with the 30,000+ spectators. If you have watched its coverage on NBC, then you understand that this event is as engaging as The Crosby Clambake was at Pebble Beach. This shindig is hosted by Edgewood Tahoe Golf Club, and should be a bucket-list event for golfers

and stargazers alike. Be sure to bring a camera, a few Sharpie markers, and an appetite for golf. At Edgewood Tahoe, the red carpet is replaced with lush turf and a panoramic backdrop that will turn your head faster than Charles Barkley attacking a free buffet table.

While it is highly unlikely you can get a round in at Edgewood Tahoe (edgewoodtahoe.com) during tournament week, the rest of the summer is wide open for traveling golfers. The 7,555-yard, George Fazio-designed track showcases the Sierra Nevadas, Lake Tahoe, and the magic of South Tahoe. With sneaky doglegs and elevated



Coyote Moon Golf Course Hole 12

Alpine Cali Golf in the High Sierras

By Greg Jourdan



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greens, Edgewood Tahoe is manageable for all golfers, yet is a strategic journey for players looking to best old man par. The lake is featured on 14 holes, so bring a camera because this course could fill a 12-month calendar with awe-inspiring images that do not require Photoshop.

Truckee is gold for golfers and just 15 minutes from Lake Tahoe, and this is where Chicago's golfers should set up their base camp. Truckee is geared for tourist and has lodging options from cabins to motels to historic hotels.

For a comfortable room with breakfast, you cannot miss with a room at the Hampton Inn (hamptoninn3.hilton.com). After a day of climbing mountains, you will appreciate their comfortable beds and quiet rooms.

Established in 1873, The Truckee Inn takes guests back in time. It is also one of the hot spots for live music.

Truckee is a collection of boutiques, artisan galleries, and culinary surprises. It would be difficult to find a more charming alpine town. The downtown will remind guests of the old west, except this planked boardwalk offers charming coffee shops, terrific bars, and fine dining.

At 6,300 feet above sea level, Coyote Moon Golf Course (coyotemoongolf.com) is a journey in isolation. The property is free of home sites and manmade distraction. Coyote Moon surrounds your foursome with ponderosa pines, granite bluffs, and the peaks of mountain ridges. Set on 250 acres, each hole will leave you howling with delight as each challenge cascades over ridges and into valleys. If you only have time for one round in Truckee, tee it up at Coyote Moon for a full

serving of High Sierra golf on an impressive track.

The mountainous golf course at Tahoe Donner Resort (tahoedonner.com) is challenging and thrilling. The course received a complete bunker renovation project a few years ago. The results were a facelift that brought new life to the property. While the course is narrow, it is enchanting with unique green complexes that shine with gorgeous bunkering. Buena Vista, the finishing hole at Tahoe Donner, plays as a short par 5, where golfers must layup short of the creek, or a short, downhill par 4. When the tee is up, lace your shoes, and activate your launch sequence for one of the most thrilling shots in the High Sierras!

At 5,800-foot elevation, the immaculately groomed Grizzly Ranch Golf Club (grizzlybeargolfclub.com) is another high experience in isolation. The club is in Portola, 45 minutes from Tahoe, and home to grizzly bears, mountain cats, and deer. I did see a few deer, but thankfully, no bears had to play through. The heroic Bob Cupp layout, much like its namesake, requires power and skill to defeat it. The beauty and breathtaking views, not to mention 18 robust golf holes, will not be enough to satisfy your alpine golf fix. Consider a couple of nights at Grizzly Ranch's Wolf Tree Cabins. The three log cabins are well appointed and are a short walk to the pro shop and Lake House restaurant.

Each hole at Grizzly Ranch is unique, and the routing takes golfers on a journey that will be the talk of your foursome long after returning to Chicagoland. Hole 12 is a three shooter like none other. An elevated green is visible throughout the hole, yet it seems like



Tahoe Donner Resort Hole 18



Grizzly Ranch Golf Club Hole 18



Whitehawk Ranch Golf Club Hole 9



Nakoma Golf Resort & Spa Clubhouse

an impossible expedition to reach it. It takes three solid shots for an opportunity to grab a birdie; however, even a bogey feels respectable when you look green to tee after holing out.

Whitehawk Ranch Golf Club (golfwhitehawk.com), located 40 miles from Truckee, is a pristine layout that blends meadows with forests, and

golf holes seem to appear where the pine, cedar, and aspen trees steer the mowers. A speedy pace of play seems to be the norm at Whitehawk Ranch GC; both my rounds finished in less than four and a half hours.

It is not very often that a golf writer could scribble as many words about a clubhouse as he can about its

golf course. At Nakoma Golf Resort & Spa, the golf plays second fiddle to the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed clubhouse and prairie-style architecture that encompasses its community. This is Wright's only clubhouse design and it sat in his archives until fifteen years ago. When Nakoma gave life to the wigwam/alpine peak clubhouse design,

an awe-inspiring community and golf course followed. The Dragon, Nakoma's scenic yet ever so challenging golf course, is dramatic and penal. Slaying The Dragon requires practiced patience, steely nerves, and possibly a sword. The Nakoma experience is about more than slaying dragons. Nakoma is an experience where design

meets nature. However, be sure to include a round on this mystic golf course where a fire-breathing nemesis lurks around every dogleg.

In the High Sierras, each course is suited for multiple plays and this approach will ensure lasting memories. The charms of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range and cozy alpine

towns like Truckee will not leave you wanting more amenities, but they will leave you wanting more time on higher ground for another elevated experience among the ponderosa pines and snow-capped peaks.

For more information, visit www.tahoosouth.com, www.truckee.com, and www.mytahoevacation.com.

