

“WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CORI BRETT?”

December 2010

“TUCSON: ROMANTIC GOLF GETAWAY”



The Lodge at Ventana Canyon

I guess you could call us “golf nuts” – we met on a golf course and honeymooned at a golf resort. When a “big” anniversary came around, we splurged with a golf getaway at Loew’s Ventana Canyon Resort. Two terrific Tom Fazio courses, a romantic setting, fine dining, spa – we never had to leave the property. The hotel nestles into the foothills of the Catalinas, and trailheads take off right from the resort. Our private balcony faced a saguaro-strewn mountainside with a cascading waterfall.

We headed out for an early tee time on the Canyon Course. Both the Canyon and Mountain Course launch from the same tiny pro shop, which is a convenient short walk from the hotel. For more information, see www.loewsventanacanyon.com. The more intimate Lodge at Ventana Canyon was originally built for members and offers condo-style accommodations along the golf course.

Ventana Canyon is semiprivate and alternates courses daily between public play and private members. Both courses play along desert hills and canyons, with views of mountain ranges near and distant. Carts enter and exit from all directions along the $\frac{3}{4}$ - mile cart path that leads from the pro shop to the practice facility and starter. Watch the signs or you may end up like we did, apologizing profusely to the foursome we jumped in front of on the wrong course.



The third hole at Ventana Canyon's Mountain Course.

The 3,000-foot elevation allows for great valley views and slightly cooler temperatures. Fresh clear skies are ideal for stargazing. The hotel's "Celestial Concierge" uses a high-powered telescope to bring the galaxy's brightest stars up close.

New greens were installed several years ago on both courses. They're slick and hard to hold. Many times my approach shot would be sailing towards glory, until the moment it landed and rolled off into greedy greenside bunkers. Putts usually break away from the mountains.

Resort-goers tend to favor the Mountain Course for the opportunity to play and conquer the famous No. 3. The daunting par-3 requires carry over a deep canyon to a tiny green surrounded on three sides by mountains. It looks even smaller from the elevated tee. Play can bog down here for this show-stopper photo op.

The Mountain Course is tight and more compact, with a lower slope/rating, yet the longer Canyon just felt more playable. Holes No. 4 and No. 14 would be drivable par-4's for the long hitters among us. The Canyon's par-5 finishing hole plays into a pretty green framed by a long wall of cascading water that splashes into a koi-filled lake.



The 8th Hole at Ventana Canyon's Canyon Course.

The lake view is ideal for folks enjoying Happy Hour on the wooden deck of The Flying V, which is the resort's signature restaurant. The Flying V replaced the hotel's five-star Ventana Room. In a growing trend, high-end white-linen restaurants are giving way to more relaxed spaces where resort attire is the norm, yet the cuisine retains star quality. The Flying V invites romance with subdued lighting and warm southwest décor, while flat-screen TV's at the bar broadcast sports highlights for the after-golf crowd.

Hint to Santa: I'd love to find a return visit to Ventana Canyon in my Christmas stocking this year.

*"Escape with Cori" on assignment to fun and exotic golf destinations. First-hand impressions from an experienced golf travel writer and AWGA member. www.coribrett.com.
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