

“WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CORI BRETT?”

July 2011

“GRAND DEL MAR LOVES THE LADIES”



A view of the 12th hole at Grand Del Mar

Some of my fondest vacation memories are girlfriend getaways, especially when they include golf. Ideally, we'd locate at a beautiful resort with a course that's fun for all of us. Highly indulgent spa treatments would be part of it, and shopping too. Exotic beverages sporting little umbrellas would make us giggle, and secrets might come tumbling out.

Recently I joined a group of 12 women for a golf weekend that included all of the above, and more. We were at the Grand Del Mar, a resort that really caters to women golfers. It's located in north San Diego County, just 20 miles from the airport. A wide palm tree-lined entryway leads to a palatial Mediterranean-style hotel in the architectural style of Addison Mizner. His flamboyant design defined early resorts in Palm Beach and Boca Raton, Florida. We loved it. It's pricey, but we felt it was worth it for our special occasion. www.thegradndelmar.com.



The 4th green at Grand Del Mar

Our day started at the practice range. After warm-up stretches, we were divided into smaller groups and sent with an instructor to different parts of the range. The Grand has one of the best practice areas I've seen - three short game areas including chipping green, putting green and sand bunkers, plus a 5,000 square foot practice tee on the back-side of the range, where high definition video equipment captured our golf swings, flaws and all.

Complimentary custom club-fitting is offered for hotel guests, so naturally we wanted to try the latest and greatest equipment. They had a great selection of women's clubs. I ended up playing the entire weekend with a Cobra S3Max demo driver that I fell in love with and finally purchased. The ball just flies off the clubface when I hit it – maybe that's because it has a 15-degree loft?

The Tom Fazio-designed course winds through Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve and follows the scenic hilly terrain, stretching over 380 acres. We liked the variety of tee locations, from 4,895 to 7,160 yards in length. Two sets of tees are rated for women, and the scorecard displays both men's and women's handicap holes. A forecaddie is included in the fee for each foursome.

The course climbs to high ridges and winds down into the canyon. It's impeccably maintained and fun to play. No. 4 felt like the top of the world, with the entire resort laid out below us. It plays to a blind green with the wind in your face most of the time. A winding uphill cart path leads to No. 13 and back to the top of the world. We managed to recover some strokes on par-4's No. 14 and No. 15, both good scoring holes. Number 17 is a narrow par-3 over water, and number 18 finishes with a cascading water feature and dramatic waterfall.

Los Penasquitos Preserve covers more than 4,000 acres of rolling hills and provides a scenic backdrop to the golf course. Hiking, biking and horseback riding trails expand recreational opportunities for resort guests and local residents. The resort's brand-new Equestrian Center sits just off the third tee.



The 17th green at Grand Del Mar

At lunch we were joined by Kristen Muranyi, assistant golf professional. Director of Golf Shawn Cox says Muranyi was hired specifically to “concentrate on expanding and developing the Club’s growing spate of classes and programs for female golfers.” You gotta love a place that wants to expand and develop programs for female golfers.

One of the most popular programs is “Ladies Only Golf & Wine Experience” – golf instruction followed by wine-tasting and wine pairing tips. Jesse Rodriguez conducts the wine portion of the “Experience.” He serves as Wine Director and Advanced Sommelier at Addison, the resort’s signature restaurant. Rodriguez credits his tenure as sommelier at French Laundry in the Napa Valley for influencing his creation of Addison’s award-winning wine list. Honors include the Wine Spectator Grand Award in 2009 and 2010, among others.

Addison is San Diego’s first and only restaurant to hold the AAA Five-Diamond award, and the Five-Star award from Forbes (formerly Mobil) Travel Guide. After a fabulous five-course dinner, interspersed with tiny “amuse-bouche” plates to cleanse the palate, we couldn’t believe four hours had passed. With the talent of Chef William Bradley, enhanced by Jesse Rodriguez’s masterful wine-pairings, we could understand why Addison achieved such high rankings.

Gourmet cuisine, delectable wines and great golf – we can’t wait to repeat our Grand Weekend.

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