

“WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CORI BRETT?”

June 2010

“LA QUINTA RESORT & PGA WEST”



The Stadium Course at PGA West

I’m always surprised when a big luxury resort turns out to convey an intimate feeling. That’s what happened at La Quinta Resort & Club. We strolled along winding pathways surrounded by fragrant citrus trees and lush colorful flowerbeds. Guestrooms are located within enclaves of cozy whitewashed casitas, some with enclosed courtyards and private spas. The resort spans 45 acres, with 41 swimming pools and 53 hot spas.

Located some 19 miles southeast of Palm Springs, La Quinta retains the aura of a secluded getaway which has appealed to Hollywood celebrities ever since it opened in 1926. The historic property so dominated the area that the city of La Quinta was named for the resort.

Golfers know La Quinta's reputation for great golf. The famous TPC Stadium Course has humbled far better golfers than me, and I soon found out why. It was my first choice among the five championship courses available at La Quinta Resort and PGA West, a master-planned country club community about ten minutes away.



The La Quinta Resort

I thought moguls were for ski slopes, but the Stadium Course is dizzy with them, making for some interesting blind shots. I knew something was up when we hit the par-five 16th. The Pro's Tips displayed on the GPS were emphatic: "avoid the bunker on the left on your drive, on the second shot, and at the approach shot." Typically I ignore the Pro's Tips because they apply to play from the back tees, but in this case, the advice suited all of us. Some 30 wooden steps descended into the greenside bunker, demanding an almost perpendicular sand shot. Pete Dye outdid himself on that one.

The tough island green on No. 17 was kind of an anticlimax. Although let's be clear on the term "island green." The only real island green I've ever seen is at Coeur d'Alene Resort, where a little boat motors you out to the floating island and back again.

Fired up after the exciting Stadium Course, we went right to the Nicklaus Tournament Course. It's more wide open, but no pushover. Both these courses are visually stunning, with mountain backdrops and more water hazards than you'd expect in the desert. I was pleased to find four tees rated for women, including a mix of tees called the Combo Course. New to me was seeing the yardage of my tee shot on every hole, indicated by a little flashing cart symbol on the GPS screen.

The Stadium and Nicklaus courses play out of the Tournament Clubhouse at PGA West. You might want to arrive a little early for your tee time. The path to the starter goes right through the pro shop, and that's when things came to a screeching halt for me. It's one of the biggest pro shops I've seen, with a terrific selection of merchandise.



La Quinta Mountain Course

Jagged mountains meet the edge of the fairway at La Quinta Resort Mountain Course. Several remote holes are so quiet. It's just the fairway, the rocks and you. I saw a shiny white golf ball wedged between rock piles high above the 6th green. It will probably remain there a very long time. The back nine climbs to a dramatic elevated tee on the par-3 16th.

Full-service Spa La Quinta soothes tired muscles with golf-specific massages, relaxing body treatments, outdoor showers and pools. You can pass an entire day there with no concept of time. We ended the day with dinner at Morgan's, which is fine dining without being fancy. I found the perfect non-sweet dessert – Buttered Popcorn Parfait. That's sea salted caramel ice cream with bittersweet hot fudge. Yummy.

A resort with five wonderful golf courses tops my list of great getaways, especially when it's only four hours from Phoenix! For more information, check out www.laquintaresort.com.

*"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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