

Explore some of California's best golf courses in Southern San Diego County and Temecula Valley and Northern Sonoma County while savoring the areas' best local wines.

BY MAURY WRIGHT & TOM HARACK



A GREAT FINISH

Mention wine and California, and the implication may be the state's northern Napa Valley or the central coast popularized by the 2004 movie "Sideways." But for sampling great wines and great golf, consider **Southern California** where you'll find generally better weather and outstanding golf.

Northern San Diego County and the Temecula Valley in southern Riverside County boast a long list of top-notch golf courses, and you won't likely taste the local wines unless you visit because most aren't widely distributed.

Temecula is part bedroom community and part tourist destination located about 100 miles southeast of Los Angeles International Airport and about 60 miles north of San Diego International Airport. Despite the creeping suburbia, the wineries provide

a window into the rural past with vines covering rolling hills and valleys that also prove to be a superior media for designers sculpting golf courses. Other popular activities in Temecula include visiting the shops and restaurants of Old Town, or taking a hot-air balloon ride over the vineyards. San Diego meanwhile offers fewer wine tasting options, but an even greater selection of golf courses and attractions such as the San Diego Zoo and SeaWorld.

The newest golf course in the Temecula

area, **Journey at Pechanga**, may also be the most spectacular. Indeed spectacle easily applies to the 62,000-square-foot clubhouse, the exceptional practice facility, the Wi-Fi enabled GPS system on the carts, and the course. The Pechanga Resort and Casino built the Arthur Hills-designed Journey on ancestral land of the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians. The routing incorporates or skirts features such as ancient live oak trees and sacred ground. Large oaks in the fairway of Nos. 7 and 9 force the player to use more brain than brawn in reaching the green.

JOURNEY ON ANCESTRAL GROUNDS

Journey at Pechanga offers incredible elevation changes and most holes require a carry and a tough decision on the chosen target line. From the fifth green to the sixth tee, the cart path climbs some 300 vertical feet. The player faces a downhill tee shot on the sixth with the fairway almost 200 feet below the tee level. Even one tee box forward from the tips, the ball must carry almost 300 yards to reach the fairway—although a typical 240-yard shot will reach with the elevation drop.

Generally, people consider No. 6 the signature hole. Scott Wasco, First Assistant Pro, unabashedly states, “We have 18 signature holes.” Ironically the fifth in the

Oaks is traditionally the best nine. You hit holes three through seven and come out asking what happened to me.

—Curtis Rowe, Temecula Creek Inn Golf Course

floor of the valley that precede the notorious sixth may be the prettiest on the course and is a perfect short par 4. The player can pick a safe or aggressive line for a fair carry over a lake. The short approach shot looks safe, but a falling brook guards the sloped green from back left to right front where it empties into the lake.

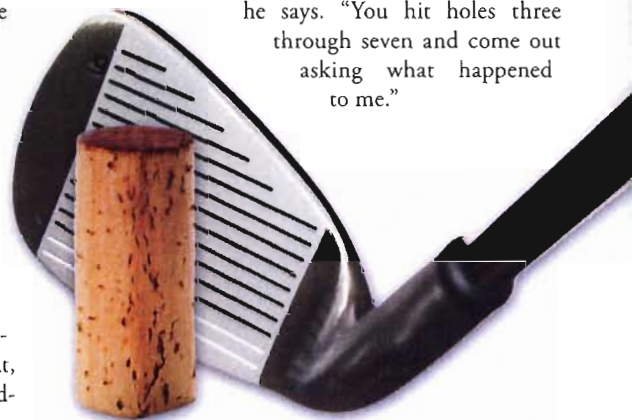
As for the forced carries off the tee throughout the layout, Wasco says, “It’s not as tight as it looks. There is more room in the landing area than the eye sees.” And Wasco is right, although you might not believe him the first time you play Journey.

Virtually adjacent to Journey, you will find the **Temecula Creek Inn** 27-hole golf facility. The three distinct nine-hole layouts offer something for just about everyone. The Creek nine is flat, and tree lined, with mostly ad-

joining fairways and doglegs that provide the challenge. The Oaks nine introduces minor elevation changes and winds its way through oak-lined back country. The newest of the trio, the Stonehouse nine, mixes blind tee shots with target golf and plenty of elevation as it is routed through and around rock outcroppings.

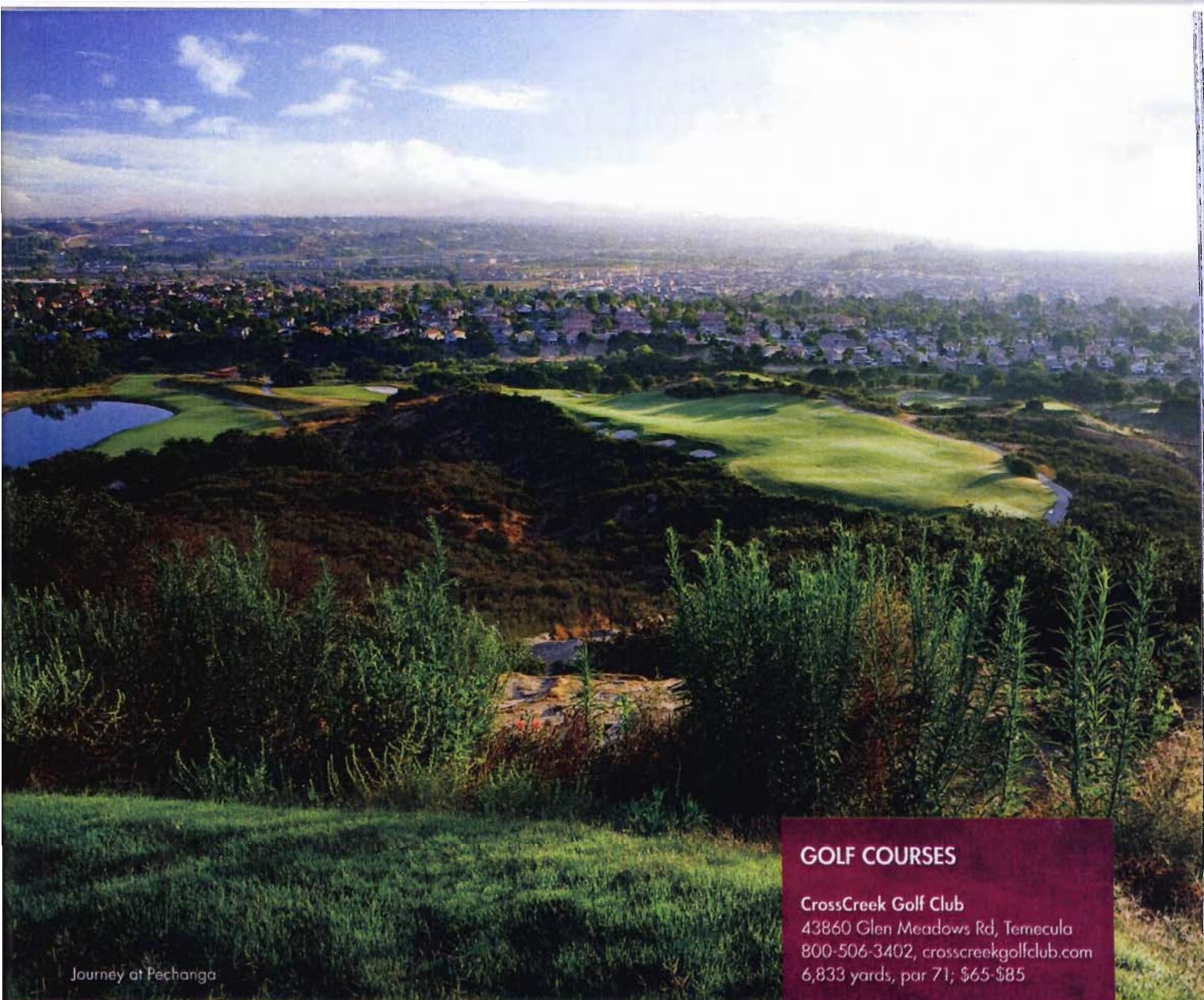
The Stonehouse is clearly the most difficult of the three nines for amateur players, although it’s also the shortest. You will score much better the second time that you play Stonehouse. About Stonehouse, director of golf Curtis Rowe says, “People either love it or hate it.” Rowe warns that you shouldn’t underestimate any of the three—even the Creek. “Once you hit it out of the fairway, you realize that your number isn’t going to be as low as you thought,” says Rowe. But clearly he prefers the Oaks.

“Oaks is traditionally the best nine,” he says. “You hit holes three through seven and come out asking what happened to me.”



Behind the fifth green at Journey at Pechanga





Journey at Pechanga

Stonehouse hosts the single best hole at Temecula Creek in the ninth finishing hole. The par 5 will be a three-shot hole even for low handicappers with a finish over water to an elevated green.

ISOLATION HIDES THE PROXIMITY OF CROSSCREEK TO SUBURBIA

Travel about 10 miles west and you arrive in the remote valley that offers up **CrossCreek Golf Club** and the serenity is shocking—even by Temecula standards. You quickly forget that Los Angeles is a mere 90 minutes away, and even the suburbia just to the east is forgotten. Golfers accustomed to lush greenery may find it difficult to consider the craggy canyons, scrub oak, and dense chaparral underbrush beautiful, but it's nature at its finest. You're likely to see eagles and

hawks overhead, and coyotes or even bobcats on the ground.

The Arthur Hills design features memorable finishing holes on both nines. Long par-4 challenges, the ninth is a slight dog-leg right hole with a lake protruding from the left on the approach to the green, while the 18th requires an approach shot over a ravine to an oak-shrouded green. A favorite for both fairness and beauty, the par-5 fifth requires a tough decision on the second shot with Sycamore Creek crossing the fairway in a prime layout area.

Moving back to the east, **Redhawk Golf Course** is a very nice public golf course with an outstanding mix of holes. But where Journey and Temecula Creek lie hard against the hills that frame the southern end of Temecula Valley, Redhawk, a mere two to three miles away is surrounded by suburbia. Now unlike a number of Southern-Cal-

GOLF COURSES

CrossCreek Golf Club

43860 Glen Meadows Rd, Temecula
800-506-3402, crosscreekgolfclub.com
6,833 yards, par 71; \$65-\$85

Journey At Pechanga

45000 Pechanga Pkwy, Temecula
866-991-7277, journeyatpechanga.com
7,219 yards, par 72; \$150-\$200

Maderas Golf Club

17750 Old Coach Rd, Poway
(San Diego)
858-451-8100, maderasgolf.com
7,115 yards, par 72; \$170-\$210

Redhawk Golf Course

45100 Redhawk Pkwy, Temecula
951-302-3850, redhawkgolfcourse.com
7,180 yards, par 72; \$70-\$90

Temecula Creek Inn Golf Course

44501 Rainbow Canyon Rd, Temecula
951-694-1000, temeculacreekinn.com
Creek Nine: 3,348 yards, par 36; Oaks
Nine: 3,436 yards, par 36; Stonehouse
Nine: 3,257 yards, par 36; \$75-\$95

Prices subject to change, please call ahead