

# NCGA GOLF

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The Villages Golf & Country Club



# The Villages

The secret gem of Silicon Valley can be found  
atop the hills in San Jose

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY VERNON MCKNIGHT

It was one of the easier decisions for golf course architect J. Michael Poellot.

When it came to finding a place to settle down, Poellot, whose work stretches from the shores of Northern California to Beijing, had a lot of options.

Despite having access to many other wonderful and challenging courses, he and his wife would move to The Villages Golf and Country Club in San Jose.

Established in 1967, The Villages offers a spectacular championship golf course surrounded by distinctive neighborhoods. Historically an area of vineyards and agricultural estates, The Villages remains a haven of natural beauty.

"I wanted to make life simple. Just relax and make friends," said Poellot, who had a hand in the creation of The Preserve Golf Club and the renovation of Los Altos Golf and Country Club. "I spent my whole





life planning for others and not myself. I wanted quality of life, not quantity of life and I found it here at The Villages. It's just a whole different experience."

Located at the southern tip of Silicon Valley in the foothills of Evergreen Valley, The Villages, with its own gated security is a private country club community for adults aged 55 and over.

So what is it that makes The Villages so special?

For one, it's the Robert Muir Graves designed par-72 layout that is maintained by BrightView Golf Maintenance.

In an age where many courses go the rock star route with 7,000-yard tees, bunkers everywhere and

impossible greens, The Villages is classic Sinatra.

Featuring five sets of tees—including the new 'Family' tees that make the course even friendlier—The Villages plays to a maximum of 6,630 yards. That means you can get around the course in four hours.

With its generous fairways and minimal, but strategically placed bunkering, The Villages also isn't the type of course where you'll spend a lot of your time searching for lost balls. It's a golf course, not a torture chamber.

"Once I played it, as an architect, I was like 'Hey, this is a real golf course,'" Poellot said. "It's not specifically designed for seniors. It's the best kept secret in the Silicon Valley."

Among the unique aspects of the

A  
55+  
COMMUNITY



course, which features a mix of rye, bent and Bermuda grass in the fairways, is that it only has three par-3's and three par-5's. The pride of The Villages, and arguably the most difficult part of the course, is its poa annua greens, which by the end of summer can run as high as 13 on the stimp meter (tip: the locals will tell you everything breaks towards downtown San Jose).

Other highlights of the course include the par-3 6th, which is framed by towering eucalyptus trees and features a gorgeous waterfall into one of the course's numerous ponds. From



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the tee on the par-4 8th, meanwhile, one is offered a peek of downtown San Jose.

Over on the back-nine, the par-5 16th and par-4 17th are separated by yet another pond with two eye-catching fountains. The closing 18th will leave one double-thinking their shot into the green, as it's protected in front by a creek.

"It's a very forgiving layout but it can also still bite you, which makes it perfect for players of all skill levels," head professional Michael Reed said. "There's enough challenge here for everyone."

That partly explains why The Villages has become a hot spot as a tournament venue for numerous NCGA Associate Clubs based in the greater Bay Area.

The club accepts outside play, including unaccompanied guests when sponsored by residents. Of the 55,000 rounds hosted by the club last year, over 12,000 were guests.

But there's more.

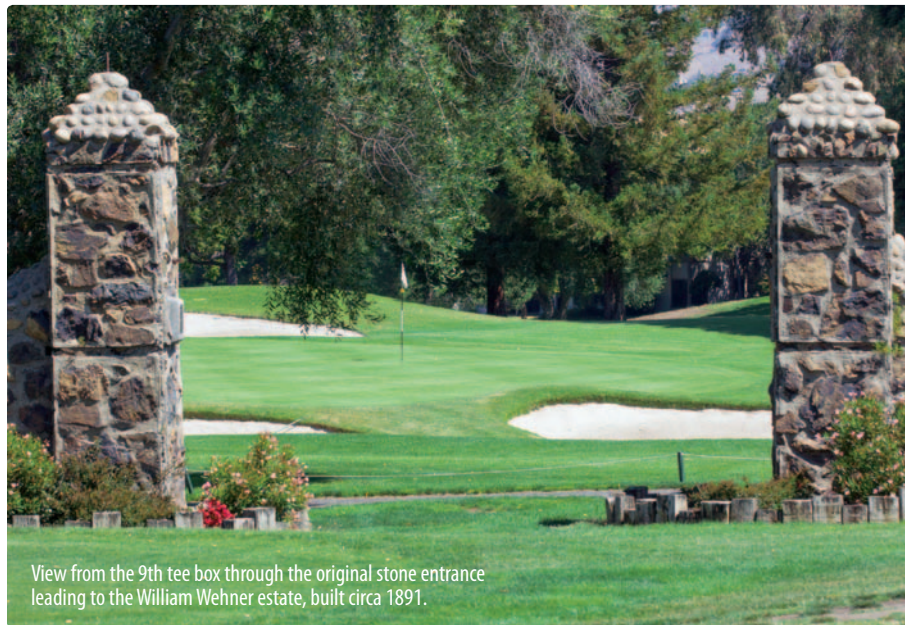
Other golf amenities at The Villages include a driving range and spacious 18-hole putting green plus two separate chipping practice areas. There's also an executive nine-hole course for golfers wanting to improve their short game. Only one hole on the par-3 course plays longer than 100 yards.

Inside the clubhouse, The Villages offers two outstanding restaurants. The main clubhouse dining facility offers an upscale menu highlighting seasonal ingredients and local produce. The club's new Bistro, on the other hand, is a casual affair where one can relax post-golf with refreshments and tasty quick bites.

All within easy reach from the Bay Area, Morgan Hill/Gilroy communities and the Monterey Peninsula, The Villages makes for a great day trip.

For those over the age of 55 thinking of the perfect place to retire or somewhere to live away from the hustle and bustle, The Villages only gets better.

Divided into 12 unique neighborhoods featuring 2,536 residences (a mix of condominiums, villas and single-family homes), homeowners



View from the 9th tee box through the original stone entrance leading to the William Wehner estate, built circa 1891.

automatically belong to the golf and country club.

Along with the golf, The Villages also offers USTA approved tennis courts, four pools and spas, a bocce court, pickle ball, and a state of the art fitness center. For the more adventurous, there's also an equestrian center and a slew of hiking trails, one which climbs to an elevation of 2,300 feet.

The Villages also has six individual golf clubs including the 18-hole Men and Women's Club and the 9-hole Men's and Women's Club. For those looking to improve their game, the club offers a full range of instruction for players of all abilities.

Overall, more than 100 organizations and clubs are available. Four separate clubhouses, ranging from 1,071 square feet to 15,000 square feet, provide among other amenities specialized rooms for residents interested in hobbies such as photography and woodworking. There's also availability for outside business conferences and events. The place even has its own post office.

All 'Villagers' can own their own golf carts for getting to the course or around the community. If one wants a taste of the city life, while it seems a world away downtown San Jose is just a short 20 minute drive.

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## The Villages Golf & Country Club

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Rated among the top 20 adult communities in the U.S. by New Choices for Retirement Living, The Villages also hosts charter outings where members can get in a Sharks or Giants game.

Among those also calling The Villages home is Roger Maltbie's 92-year-old father, Lin. A course fixture, the elder Maltbie regularly shoots his age. Roger, who once worked in The Villages pro shop, holds the course record, a 10-under 62.

"I've always enjoyed my rounds at The Villages," Roger said. "The course possesses some of the most deceptively challenging putting greens I've encountered...anywhere. In short, it's just plain fun to golf." ☺