

## The Price Of Liberty

*If you want the finest golf in New York City, it's just across the water—for a price.*

New York City is known for a lot of things: award-winning theatre, endless arrays of restaurants and...golf? Other than Central Park, you're lucky to find enough room for a studio apartment let alone the links. However, just across the New York Bay, in nearby Jersey City, is an answer to put you in full swing: Liberty National Golf Club, so named because you literally get a view of Lady Liberty herself from the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole and even occasionally on the back nine. Designed by Bob Cupp and U.S. Open Champion Tom Kite, the views also encompass the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, where the Hudson and the Atlantic Ocean meet.

Adrian Davies, a former professional golfer in his own right and Liberty's National Director of Golf Development, says the cut of the greens reminds him of the tradition of Scottish links with the challenge of Shinnacock. "It's a tough golf course," he says, sighing as if from his own frustrating afternoons in the Liberty bunkers. "People say 'it ate my lunch,' and it does. You can play smart golf here and do well but if you think you can blast it like John Daly and then be offline with your other shots, you're done. We have the wind gusting off the water and the greens are small and quick." Davies says the 18<sup>th</sup> hole is among the most popular, extended to 501 yards from the original 465 for championship play. "It's uphill into a crosswind and will be the kind of hole which will turn losers into winners and vice versa. This isn't some easy public course."

Actually, it's not public at all. There will be roughly 100 members by the end of the year and Davies is looking to max it out at around 250. "We don't believe in having tee times here," he says. "Time is money to the professional athlete, so we want to be sure there's always room for you to play when you want and not be waiting on another group." But what if your friends aren't as gaga over golf as you and you can't get a foursome together? No problem, says Davies. "Don Brigham, our head pro and former PGA player, will be happy to join you free of charge. And if not him then Mark Diamond, a former European pro player. We wanted to hire guys who wouldn't just play well, but also were entertaining and friendly. They love to play and can offer you a good tip or least a good joke."

One thing that's no joke is the course helipad, allowing those with private aircraft to land onsite or, if they choose, one of several local airports, including Newark Liberty International. Still, since convenience is part of the savings, the cost of membership isn't cheap, with a one-off fee of \$500,000 asking only the serious lovers of golf to apply. But Liberty will be offering more than a course, several main courses, actually, with its restaurant set to open in 2009, overseen by Tom Colicchio of Bravo's *Top Chef*, who also owns world-famous Gramercy Tavern. And, if after playing you wish you didn't have to go home, you don't, with 4,000-5,000-square-foot homes also set to be erected before the close of the decade. The owners of both the course and the real estate are one in the same and will meet with you personally about becoming a member. "It's important for you to know our own passion behind our product and the \$500,000 one-off is completely

refundable,” Davies reminds. “We’re looking for lifetime members here, not unsatisfied customers.” Of course, Davies admits you may be woken up if you sleep late on a weekend, but for good reason—the 2009 Barclays tournament will be at the course, along with the first round of the FedEx Cup.

Though Davies won’t reveal the athletes who have joined thus far, he says you’ll find several notables here, along with NFL owners, who find this course particularly convenient because of league meetings in that illustrious Gotham City across the water. “Liberty could make a lot of your money back in the contacts and deals that will go on here,” he says. “Though we encourage privacy, I’m sure some wonderful business will find its way into the clubhouse.”

For more information, contact the club at 201-333-0531.

### **Triple Threat**

Though Liberty may be incredible, there’s more to life than the New York area and many more courses to choose from throughout the country. Here’s three other greens that might just have you yelling fore!:

### **Medinah**

Chicago has succulent deep dish pizza and out-of-this world architecture, but it’s prettiest man-made creation may be its most legendary golf course, Medinah. Built by the shriners and located in a town which bears the same name, its clubhouse alone is 100,000 square feet filled with an encapsulating mosque effect. Domed in Byzantine design style, it’s the shot CBS used again and again when the PGA Championship was held here. The course itself is 7600 yards with a giant oak tree effect throughout, says Mike Scully, the club’s golf pro who’s also a former pro football player for the Chiefs and Redskins: “It’s like walking into Wrigley—the Cubs are not always good but the park is reason enough.” It certainly has been for Roy Oswalt, Roger Clemens and Derek Lowe, all major leaguers who’ve found their way onto Medinah’s links. Scully believes there are two standout holes—the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup>—the 12<sup>th</sup> being 475 yards long with a fairway sloping at a 45-60 degree angle. “On your second shot you go uphill over an oak and there’s not one annoying bunker to deal with!” exclaims Scully. “When Reese Jones updated the course he said he couldn’t make the 12<sup>th</sup> any better so he left it alone.” For the 16<sup>th</sup>, it’s the parameters it puts on the tee shot, Scully says, that make it so memorable. “The back tee tour pros drive it 300 yards to have an angle for an uphill approach. It’s where Sergio Garcia made his name with the ‘shot heard ‘round Medinah,’ closing his eyes and running up in the fairway in celebration.” Home to last year’s PGA Championship and the Ryder Cup in 2012, Medinah’s best moments may well be ahead of it. For more information, contact the club at 630-773-1700

### **Bay Hill**

Offseason training finds many athletes in Florida and there aren't many better courses to play in the Sunshine State than Bay Hill, a mere 20-minute drive from downtown Orlando. Opened in 1961, everyone from Michael Jordan to Celine Dion has played the course, but there's one special retiree you can see teeing off most days in spring and summer: Arnold Palmer. In the middle of a residential neighborhood, picturesque houses can be seen up and down the 7400-yard course, which also backs up into the Butler chain of lakes. The most challenging hole, says Leigh Anne Mace, marketing manager, is the 441-yard, 18<sup>th</sup> because of the frustration of the "Devil's Bathtub," a water hazard meant to punish the overly aggressive. If you want to make a weekend of it, the 70-room lodge, adjacent to the clubhouse, overlooks the putting green and the ninth hole of Bay Hill. With a recent \$7 million renovation of not only all lodgings but meeting space, the course is also home to the popular Arnold Palmer Invitational. Memberships are \$6,000 for social with initiation fees of \$28,000 for resident and only \$14,000 for non-residents, with an even lower fee if you're under 35 years of age. And in case you play more like Charles Barkley than Tiger Woods, you can brush up at the onsite Arnold Palmer Academy, which offers something as light as half-day instruction or a full-on five-day clinic. For more information, contact the club at 800-523-5999.

### **Pelican Hill**

Beyond the smog of Los Angeles, there's Newport Beach's Pelican Hill, a 36-hole course designed by renowned golf architect Tom Fazio set to reopen this fall with only subtle changes to the original. Acacia shrubs will line the course as you view opulent sailboats out on the water, possibly even catching the sights of celebrity-filled Catalina Island in the distance. Tiffway II hybrid bermuda grass is boasted as what will be behind Pelican's more consistent fairways, though the year-long warm weather probably won't hurt either. Roughly 7,000 yards and originally opened in 1991, it has the best views of any course according to an interview with LPGA Hall of Famer Amy Alcott. Bay Hill's 18<sup>th</sup> may even take a backseat to the South course's final hole, otherwise known as Double Cross, a second shot decision which can turn easy birdies into mind-numbing bogies. With several 500-yard-plus holes, if you're a driver, this could well be the course you get even with your buddies on. An accompanying resort is slated to open in Fall 2008 with more than 200 bungalows and 100 villas. For more information, contact the club at 949-760-0707.