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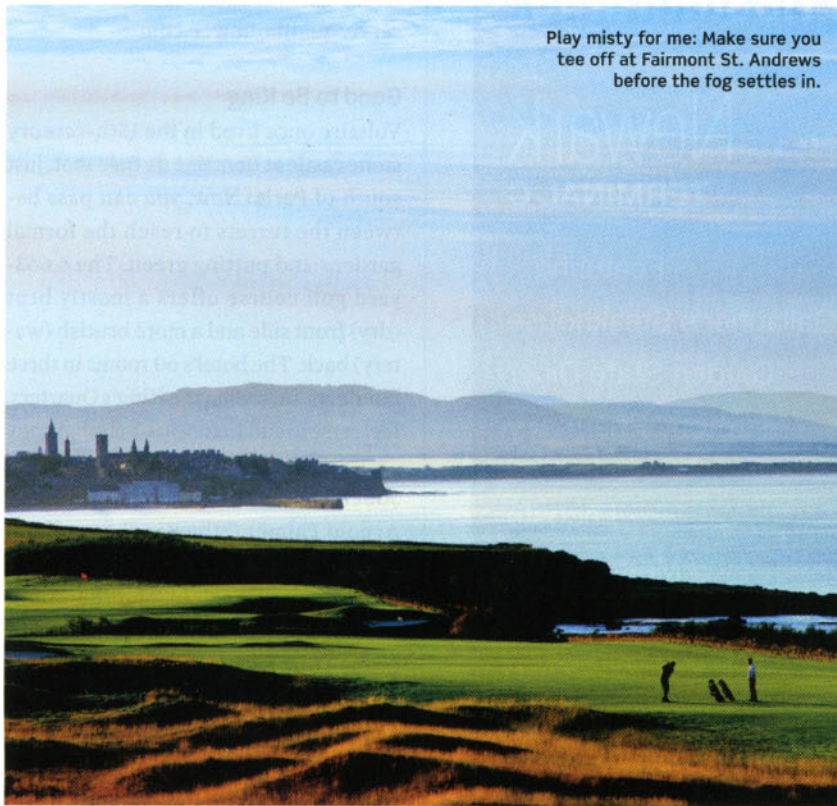
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Play misty for me: Make sure you tee off at Fairmont St. Andrews before the fog settles in.

First Resorts

These accommodating and mesmerizing destinations offer the last word when it comes to luxury golf resorts

By Jeff Wallach

WHAT COULD BE BETTER than a vacation where everything you need — from swimming pools to sushi bars, great rooms to golf courses — is within strolling distance? Toss in a concierge here and a kids' camp there, here a mai tai, there a horseback ride, everywhere a sense of spacious ease, and you've just described the perfect golf property. Consider the following places first when you're in need of a last resort.

The Haar

A comfortable drive (or many bladed wedges) from **Edinburgh**, the **Fairmont St. Andrews** offers a big, warm, American-style bear hug of a resort, with views of the Eden estuary and the skyline of the historic city. Two perky courses — one by Sam Torrance and

Gene Sarazen, and one by Bruce Devlin — sit atop cliffs and on occasion disappear into the "haar," an atmospheric Scottish fog thicker than Sean Connery's accent. fairmont.com/standrews

Four-Man Best Ball

Quail Hollow Resort and Country Club, 30 miles east of **Cleveland**, features a tight contest between two highly regarded courses. By most accounts, the 6,872-yard Tom Weiskopf/Jay Morrish design edges the Bruce Devlin/Robert Von Hagge layout, thanks in part to wide fairways roaming through oaks and maples and past lakes, creeks, and wetlands. The course features a potentially entertaining, drivable par-4. Both venues boast association with a Marriott

GO EXPLORE

Resort hotel in a historic natural reserve. quailhollowcc.com

Good to Be King

Voltaire once lived in the 15th-century stone castle at **Domaine de Belesbat**, just south of **Paris**. Now, you can pass between the turrets to reach the formal gardens and putting green. The 6,663-yard golf course offers a mostly brut (dry) front side and a more brutish (watery) back. The hotel's 60 rooms in three buildings, including the King's Quarters, feel remote and luxurious. belesbat.com

Just as Good to Be "the King"

Arnold Palmer ("the King" to golfers) designed 18 fine holes at **Turtle Bay Resort**, near **Honolulu**, and the 7,008-yard layout has hosted several Champions Tour events. On the front nine, sand, wind, and water conspire against you across rolling terrain, while the back side meanders through a jungle of ironwood trees and wetlands adjacent to a wildlife sanctuary full of taunting birds. The resort is also home to a stylish George Fazio course that hosted the first Senior Skins Game and an LPGA event. turtlebayresort.com

Hill Country Haven

Golf Digest places the No. 1 and No. 2 courses in Texas at the **Barton Creek Resort and Spa in Austin**. Tom Fazio's Foothills layout encompasses waterfalls, cliffs, hills, and caves. His Canyons course routes through red oaks and sycamores beside a limestone-lined creek. Coore & Crenshaw and Arnold Palmer also contributed layouts at this classic 4,000-acre Hill Country getaway. bartoncreek.com

Your Mission, Should You Choose to Accept It

Mission Hills Golf Club, 20 minutes from **Hong Kong** in Shenzhen, China, is the world's largest, with 12 courses — two of which are lit for night play, and all of which excel. Designers include Jack



Seek sanctuary at the
Kiawah Island Resort.

With swimming pools and sushi bars, great rooms and golf courses, these resorts are the perfect properties.

Nicklaus, Nick Faldo, Annika Sorenstam, and others. The largest of the three clubhouses sprawls over 300,000 square feet. missionhillsgroup.com

Brazilian Beauty


Búzios Golf Club and Resort, two hours from **Rio de Janeiro**, is like several courses in one. The Pete and Perry Dye links-style design begins in dense vegetation, moves into an open, windy valley with hillside holes overlooking lakes, and finishes in the flats among textbook Dye mounding. The 17th plays to an island green. The resort component consists of houses located along the course. buziosgolfe.com.br

What's Old Is New

Jack Nicklaus' **Old Greenwood** is one new ripple in the **Reno/Lake Tahoe** area golf scene. Particularly memora-

ble are two par-5s stretching more than 600 yards — unless you top your tee shot into the shrubbery, in which case you'll try to forget them. The course tops out at 7,542 yards, curling through ponderosa pines, blue sagebrush, and trout-filled lakes. Calling the resort's posh lodgings cabins is like calling Godzilla a lizard. oldgreenwood.com

Truth in Advertising

The aptly named Ocean Course at **Kiawah Island Golf Resort**, outside **Charleston, S.C.**, features 10 holes along the Atlantic — all designed by Pete Dye, who added eight other holes too. The associated five-diamond Sanctuary Hotel provides said sanctuary in a seaside mansion. The resort boasts four other courses, but unlike the Ocean course, those didn't host the 1991 Ryder Cup and won't host the 2012 PGA Championship. kiawahresort.com 

Jeff Wallach is Continental's "Front Nine" golf columnist.

Getting There: All the destinations covered in "Go Explore" can be reached by flying Continental. For more information, visit Continental Airlines Vacations at covacations.com.