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# Austin/Hill Country

NOTEBOOK

STEVE HABEL, REGIONAL EDITOR





# Barton Creek Resort & Spa

The Best of Austin and Central Texas  
Come Together at a Hill Country Haven



Perhaps it's the name, eponymous with the lifeblood of Austin; or perhaps it's the fact that the piece of ground the resort inhabits was once a haven for Native Americans and cherished as a place to relax and enjoy a sense of well being. Then again, maybe it's the four championship golf courses that create an over-the-top experience at Barton Creek Resort & Spa.

In reality, it is all these aspects and many more that make this Austin-area stalwart one of the nation's top destinations for golf...and for just getting away.

with luxurious surroundings and featuring 312 nicely appointed rooms, Barton Creek has long been considered one of the top golf resorts in Texas. In addition to the 72 holes of golf, guests enjoy superior dining experiences, a full-service spa and state-of-the-art meeting facilities.

This fall, a two-year improvement project will be completed, which saw upgrades to the guest rooms, meeting space and clubhouse, as well as an all-new patio off of the Hill Country Dining Room, a new ladies' retail boutique and an upgrade of



Opened in 1987, conceived by Texas visionaries Ben Barnes and former governor John Connally (and refined later by oil maven Jim Bob Moffitt), Barton Creek is now operated by KSL Resorts. The resort--encompassing a 4,000-acre envelope in the heart of the Texas Hill Country that boasts some of the region's most breathtaking views--is a hybrid of sorts, sporting both a AAA Four-Diamond luxury hotel and conference center and a private club that has hundreds of members.

Combining Austin casual elegance

the resort's spa and fitness center.

"From the hotel and spa to our food and beverage options and more, no stone was left unturned to ensure that our guests continue to have an exceptional experience when visiting the Texas Hill Country," said James Walsh, Barton Creek Resort & Spa's general manager.

In June, Barton Creek unveiled technology Texas' first Callaway Performance Center, which provides a state-of-the-art environment for golfers to achieve a perfect fit paired with ideal equipment



**At the CPC, golfers can have their swing evaluated with the same cutting-edge fitting technology used by Callaway's Tour Staff Professionals from the PGA, LPGA, European and Champions Tours.**



## FAZIO IS FABULOUS AT BARTON CREEK

Two of Barton Creek's four courses were designed by Tom Fazio, and both are examples of one of the world's best golf architects at the height of his prowess.

The signature track at the resort, opened in 1986, is Fazio Foothills, a layout featuring dramatic cliff-lined fairways, natural limestone caves, waterfalls and pristine TiffEagle Bermuda greens. The track provides plenty of elevation change and visual impact and its undulating aprons and grass bunkers make the Fazio Foothills course a shot-maker's paradise.

Fazio's second design at Barton Creek is called Fazio Canyons, located two miles from the main resort, where it has its own pro shop and extensive practice areas. Canyons is like Foothills on steroids; you get the same quality experience except Canyons is not quite as green, not quite as manicured along its edges and is a beefier layout.

Canyons, which opened in 2000, is now considered the top-ranked resort course in Texas according to several polls. It offers numerous holes lined with stately red oaks and sycamore trees and features spectacular Hill Country views of Short Springs Branch, a beautiful limestone bed creek which meanders throughout the track.

Even though Fazio Canyons come in six places higher (at No. 71) than Foothills on Golf Magazine's list of Best Courses You Can Play, it would be hard to stand before a judge and say honestly which of Barton Creek's two Fazio courses is better. Let's just say this: both are a pleasure and a challenge to play and can leave you humbled if you don't bring your "A" game.

## GOLF TIMES FOUR MAKES BARTON CREEK PRICELESS

As good as Fazio's work is at Barton Creek, it is the resort's other two courses that make it more than a one-trick pony.



The Arnold Palmer-designed Lakeside course—perched on a hilltop overlooking Lake Travis, about a half-hour west of the resort—opened for play in 1986 as Hidden Hills. It was brought into the Barton Creek fold in the late 1980s. With a grand clubhouse sitting high on a secluded hilltop, Palmer Lakeside's holes run down the valley to the lake and back up again, playing 6,668 yards and to a par of 71. While shorter than many modern courses, Lakeside's puzzle asks for a combination of keen course management and length on demand.

Prowess with the driver is a plus for a good round of golf at Lakeside, as Palmer's course—like many of his designs—is a big-hitter's delight. But you'll need to hit layup shots off the tee on the 395-yard par-4 fifth and again at the 403-yard par-4 seventh—both of

which require approach shots over deep canyons. A cascading waterfall and native flora highlight Lakeside's signature 11th hole, a magnificent par-three.

The natural beauty of the Texas Hill Country is the focus at the underrated Crenshaw Cliffside course. Rolling hills, natural plateaus, soft contours and native vegetation are harmoniously woven into a playable championship layout that provides a variety of interesting holes.

Crenshaw admits his is an "old-style" philosophy. "We let the land dictate the routing rather than imposing ourselves on the landscape," said Crenshaw, who is an Austin native. Crenshaw Cliffside (which plays to a recently expanded 6,630 yards from the back set of five tees and to a par of 71) offers a rare taste of a traditional

"We let the land dictate the routing rather than imposing ourselves on the landscape," said Crenshaw

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*Prowess with the driver is a plus for a good round of golf at Lakeside, as Palmer's course—like many of his designs—is a big-hitter's delight.*

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layout in its design. The course features broad, rolling fairways, widely-varied green sizes and is a fitting tribute to the way the game was once played.

The course's large, undulating putting surfaces give golfers their biggest challenge. While the average golfer will attempt to use the natural slopes to aid an approach shot, the low-handicap player faces the challenge of positioning the ball at the most advantageous point for an approach putt.

There are a slew of great holes at Crenshaw Cliffside, most notably the 464-yard par-4 sixth; the 455-yard par-4 10th (which Crenshaw modeled after the famed 10th hole at Augusta National); the drivable, downhill 317-yard par-4 14th (which has plenty of teeth if your shot

is not perfect); the 590-yard uphill par-5 15th (which requires a 240-yard carry over a waste area of native grass before reaching the fairway); and, perhaps the best of all, the 393-yard par-4 finishing hole, where the approach requires a downhill carry over a creek to a green that looks like it will repel any shot.

Barton Creek Resort & Spa is just a 20-minute ride from the Austin airport and about that far from the city's famed Sixth Street and Warehouse districts, where renowned music and nightlife is found. Go west instead of east and you will find yourself at one of the lakes that surround Austin, where boating, water skiing and sailing can be enjoyed in spades. ♦