

GOLF

A LIFESTYLE SPECIALIST COURSE



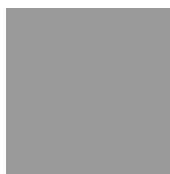


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**LESSON
1**

Introduction to Golf Travel

▶ LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- ✓ Explain what golf travel is and why it is an appealing niche for travel professionals.
- ✓ Identify why and when golfers travel.
- ✓ Define words and phrases that comprise a golfer's vocabulary.
- ✓ Describe how playing golf can be an advantage as a golf travel specialist.

BRAINSTORMING

Please answer these brainstorming questions **before** you read the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review your answers and make changes as needed based on what you learned.

1. Why is golf travel growing in popularity?

2. What are some reasons that people decide to travel to play golf?

3. If a client tells you, "I carry a 5 at Winged Foot," should you be impressed? Why or why not?

4. Can you have a golf travel specialty if you don't play golf?

Golf and golf-related travel is a multibillion-dollar industry. Golf-related travel expenditures are second only to equipment purchases and may exceed that number soon. Even during economic downturns, golfers will still travel the world to pursue their passion. According to the National Golf Foundation, American golfers spend approximately \$26.1 billion a year on golf travel, a figure that has held steady and even increased despite recent dips in the economy that have impacted other areas of the travel industry.

At one time golf was a pleasant pastime for people on vacation. However, in the past 20 years, playing golf has become the primary reason why many people travel to hundreds of destinations worldwide. To keep up with this trend, entire resort properties are built around one or more golf courses. In some locales, golf provides one common marketing niche that can bring people across continents to a region that otherwise might have a difficult time attracting guests.

In this lesson, you will explore some fundamentals about golfers and the golf travel market, including a basic definition of golf travel, when and why golfers travel, a brief review of basic golf terminology, and why playing golf can help you succeed in your golf specialty.

What Is Golf Travel?

Golf travel is any travel in which people want to visit a destination where they can play golf individually or as a group. Golf travel involves people traveling with the primary intent of playing golf. In some cases, it is the sole intent. They want to do nothing but play golf, eat (and drink), and sleep. In other cases, although golf is the main reason for the excursion, travelers may involve themselves in other pursuits, such as sightseeing or fine dining. In some destinations, they can even ski in the morning and play golf in the afternoon (with a few miles' commute). Other activities that travelers can combine with golf include white-water rafting, fishing, backpacking, attending the theater, and visiting friends and family.

Many golfers divide their time between golf and spending time with their traveling companions or family members who don't play. Nonetheless, the destination of a family vacation is often planned around golf. Even Walt Disney World has become a place where golf may be the first consideration, with the Magic Kingdom as a nice add-on for the family. Disney currently has five world-class courses at the Orlando theme park, and more will open soon.

Why Do Golfers Travel?

Traveling on a plane with a big, heavy bag of golf clubs in addition to regular luggage can be a bit of a nuisance, so what makes people embark on such a trip? Understanding what motivates the golf traveler is key to understanding the golf travel market.

- **Indulgence.** Golf is a fairly time-consuming game, and many golfers do not get to play as often as they would like at home, because of work, family, or other demands on their time. When they plan their leisure time, therefore, playing golf every day is the ultimate indulgence.
- **Fantasy.** Many golfers spend their cold winter weekends watching professional golf on television, and the sight of great golfers competing for millions of dollars on some of the world's most beautiful and difficult courses tends to create a sports fantasy that is perhaps unique to golf. After all, in what other sport can the average person hit a shot that is the equal to any pro's best effort?

TIPS AND TOOLS

The Majors

The four major—and most prestigious—tournaments in professional golf are known collectively as *the Majors*.

- The Masters takes place at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia, an ultraexclusive private club.
- The U.S. Open is held at different top courses around the country.
- The Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) Championship is held at different top courses throughout the United States.
- The Open Championship (better known in the United States as the British Open) takes place each year in July at different courses throughout England and Scotland.

- **The Foursome Factor.** For many golfers, the enjoyment of a golf vacation lives on long after the trip is over in the stories they share with members of their *foursome*, a term that means four people who play golf together (four is the maximum number of golfers in a group). There is a reason that the bar at a golf club is referred to as the 19th hole: the camaraderie and retelling of challenges and successes after an

18-hole round of golf is a great part of the game. On top of great golf and a fabulous resort, anything that adds to a unique golf experience is a lure: playing with celebrities or sports stars, encountering strange wildlife on the course, using fantastic new equipment such as a golf cart equipped with a GPS tracking system or air-conditioning, and so on.

Certain destinations have built-in 19th-hole potential. For instance, in midsummer, places in northern Sweden that are close to the Arctic Circle enjoy the Midnight Sun, which makes playing golf possible 24 hours a day. In Austria, New Mexico, and northern Vermont, it may be possible to ski and play golf on the same day during the spring. Many golfers get a huge thrill out of playing at courses high in the mountains of Colorado or New Mexico, because at high altitude, a well-struck drive can travel at least 10 percent farther than at sea level.

When Do Golfers Travel?

While different areas of the country may have specific golf seasons, common sense will tell you that in northern climes, snow and ice make winter golf impossible. Many snowed-in golfers look for a midwinter getaway to Florida, Arizona, or southern California to get them through the winter.

Early spring is a popular time for golfers to book a “golf school” vacation, especially those who have made a New Year’s resolution to improve their game.

In the summer months, golfers migrate to a number of northern destinations, including northern California; northern Michigan; Kohler, Wisconsin; Canada; and the British Isles (especially Scotland and Ireland).

While summer temperatures would seem to make golf unpleasant in Florida and the deserts of the Southwest, off-peak season bargains will still attract a hardy few. We will outline the attractions of these and other golf destinations in Lesson 4.

Can You Speak “Golf”?

One of the challenges facing many travel professionals who want to book a golf-related trip for a client is understanding and speaking the language of the game. Serious golf travelers speak in terms of tee times, course designers, distance from the back tees, range ball availability, mandatory golf carts, and other matters important to planning their trip.