From South Florida to Montana, from Hawaii to North Carolina, these following 41 communities provide top-of-the-line amenities, unique experiences, and lasting memories for discerning residents who expect nothing but the best.
The Bear's Club

Jupiter, Fla.

Located in the heart of South Florida's sun-drenched Atlantic coast, The Bear's Club is a pristine enclave just west of Juno Beach. With Barbara Nicklaus's design touches in the Mediterranean-style clubhouse and Jack Nicklaus's 7,164-yard layout that winds through forest and among wetlands and lakes, The Bear's Club is as much a lasting legacy for Nicklaus as Muirfield Village Golf Club in his native Ohio.

thebearscubecom

Bighorn

Palm Desert, Calif.

Bighorn has all the amenities you would expect from an exclusive golf community in the Southern California desert: two courses, one each from Arthur Hills and Tom Fazio, fitness center and spa, tennis, and several superb dining outlets. But Bighorn also has a couple of unexpected features: private jet service on the community's three planes and a personal jeweler who offers exclusive products and special pricing.

bighorn.com

Bridges at Rancho Santa Fe

Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

Nestled in the hills north of San Diego in one of the most affluent towns in the U.S., the Bridges at Rancho Santa Fe resembles a Tuscan village in its surroundings, architecture, and atmosphere. The center of this community is the clubhouse, where members and residents gather before and after rounds on the 7,000-yard course designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr.

thebridgesrf.com

Carlton Woods

The Woodlands, Texas

For decades, the master-planned community of the Woodlands has been the premier address in the Houston area. Recently, Carlton Woods and Carlton Woods Creekside have been the most prestigious neighborhoods within the Woodlands, thanks to amenities like golf courses designed by Jack Nicklaus and Tom Fazio that are two of the best layouts in the area.

carltonwoods.com

The Cliffs

Travelers Rest, S.C.

There are plenty of ongoing developments at The Cliffs, which now has seven communities in three regions of North and South Carolina: Mountain; Lake Keowee, and Asheville. Seven courses are open, including the latest, Gary Player's Cliffs at Mountain Park. The best part? A single membership provides access to a wide range of amenities across all seven communities, including clubhouses, golf courses, wellness centers, marinas, and more.

ciffeliving.com

Desert Mountain

Scottsdale, Ariz.

Residents at Desert Mountain can play a different Jack Nicklaus course for nearly every day of the week. On the seventh day, members may want to tackle a different type of turf—tennis on the only grass court in Arizona. All those outdoor activities leave very little time to relax in one of the numerous types of available homes, from cottages to custom estate homes on expansive lots.

desertmountain.com
For the serious golfer, nothing attracts interest in a community quite like a state-of-the-art learning facility. With its perfectly manicured greens and bright white bunkers, the 30-acre Learning Center at Berkeley Hall in Bluffton, S.C., near Hilton Head, resembles Augusta National in its perfection. Members can choose from one of the seven practice greens, three of which are for putting, two for chipping and bunker play, and two more for shots up to 185 yards in length, the distance of which you can pinpoint with the help of a laser gun located right next to the bucket of brand-new Titleist NXT Tour balls.

Or perhaps they want to do more swing analysis, in which case they can pop into one of four hitting bays with the latest in technology, including something called a Swing Catalyst. With one of the area’s best instructors, Andrew Rice, at the controls, members climb aboard the carpeted platform to get some unusual—and extremely helpful—feedback on their swing. In addition to four fully synchronized cameras, the $20,000 system features a 3-D pressure plate that measures rotational-force movement to show how well the golfer is using the ground to generate power.

Clearly, Berkeley Hall has really stepped up its game when it comes to offering everything it can to attract golfers who are serious about their game. “For somebody who really loves golf and is a golf geek who wants to work on their game, the Learning Center at Berkeley Hall is tough to beat,” says Rice, who grew up in South Africa. “It’s a huge factor in getting people to buy here.”

But Berkeley isn’t the only community with state-of-the-art practice facilities. They’re also a big attraction at Reynolds Plantation in Georgia and two communities in Florida’s West Palm Beach area, the Bear’s Club and Old Palm, which have such good ones that a number of PGA Tour pros belong (the latter even has three full-length practice holes).

Out west, Pronghorn in Bend, Ore., not only has three indoor/outdoor hitting bays, two short-game areas (one is over two acres), and a 50,000-square-foot bent grass practice tee, but it also has the latest teaching toy, GEARs Golf, a $40,000 system that can basically take an MRI of your swing to determine how the movement of your body affects the ball flight.

“Prospective members are amazed by the sheer size and scope of the learning facility at Pronghorn,” says Edward Jackman, director of sales and marketing. “The Learning Academy is an essential part of our golf lifestyle and utilized by our members to improve their games to better enjoy all the wonderful golf we have to offer.”

Desert Mountain in Scottsdale also boasts an impressive array of teaching technology at its new $1.6 million Jim Flick Golf Performance Center, including seven hitting bays, full-service club fitting, SAM putting lab, and four different short-game areas at its six courses.

“Our membership is very serious about their golf,” says Mike Scully, the director of golf. “They love to practice and get better. The performance center gets a lot of use. It’s the first stop on the tour when we bring prospective members in, and that’s by design. It’s a huge selling point. They’re blown away to know they have this at their fingertips.”

—T.C.