

Golf in Thailand

Contributed by Mark Siegel
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When it comes to golf, Thailand has more to offer than any other country in South East Asia. There are, quite literally, 250 courses. Where ever there is any kind of tourism infrastructure, even in quieter areas, you will find at least one golf course. Generally they are of a high standard since Thailand has made a conscious effort to promote this side of its tourist industry. Standards may be high, but prices are very reasonable.

Add into the equation the fact that the weather is good all year round and many of the courses will be part of resorts also providing other facilities such as swimming pools, gyms, restaurants and spas. Golf first came to Thailand in the 1920's under the auspices of Rama VII in the royal, seaside resort of Hua Hin. The Hua Hin course is still very much in use and has a historical feel all of its own. The real explosion, however, came in the 1980s in parallel with Thailand's great leap forward in the tourism industry in general.

Top course architects, such as Nick Faldo, Gary Player and Jack Nicklaus, were recruited to design courses that would be different and challenging. Testament to the rapid ascent to respectability of golf in Thailand is the fact that it now hosts many major international tournaments such as the Johnnie Walker Classic. Bangkok may be an urban sprawl but it boasts some world class golf courses. There are over forty in and around the city and everyone has their favourite. For something unusual try the Thai Country Club. It has a very challenging and well maintained layout. Krungthep Kreetha Golf Course is only 30 minutes from the city centre which

makes it convenient if you are pressed for time. Lakewood Country Club to the east of the city virtually doubles as a botanical garden with more than 45 species of plants and more than 2,000 trees. The Alpine Golf Club is one of the most challenging courses in Thailand playing host to major PGA tournaments in Thailand and certainly lives up to its reputation.

Pattaya

may have its detractors as a beach resort, but when it comes to golf it would be impossible to find fault with it. Spread across the provinces of Chonburi and Rayong is an incredible choice of venues. The Siam Country Club was the first course in the region and dates from 1968 when Pattaya was still little more than a fishing village. It still holds its own, especially after the 2006 remodelling. Laem Chabang International Country Club about 25 km from Pattaya is a luxury course designed by Jack Nicklaus. Nearer town is the Phoenix Golf Club. There are many, many more. Also within reach of Bangkok is Kanchanaburi. Situated on the banks of the River Kwai, next to a national park in the shadow of jungle clad mountains, not far from the Burma border, there are many courses in the most beautiful of tropical settings.

The

Grand Garden Golf Club, Green World, Mission Hills Country Club, Nichigo Resort & Country Club, The River Kwai Golf Club and the Blue Sapphire Golf Club all have their own special qualities. Similarly rural with equally majestic settings, the mountainous north also boasts a number of very good courses. The Chiang Mai Green Valley Country Club set next to a beautiful lake is only 15 minutes from the Chiang Mai itself. Chiang Mai Highlands is right next to the mountains. The Chiang Mai-Lamphun Golf Club is an 18-hole championship course lying in a natural valley surrounded by rolling hills. The traditional architecture of the clubhouse and buildings give it a distinctively northern flavour.

It

is no surprise that Phuket, with all its international luxury resorts, also boasts excellent facilities for golf. There are some stunning courses where the luminous blue of the nearby sea contrasts with the rich greens of the fairways. The Blue Canyon Country Club, the Phuket Country Club, the Laguna Phuket Golf Club and the Mission Hills Golf Resort are four of the best known providing outstanding facilities. Where ever you choose to play golf in Thailand it is usually possible to book a whole package with all facilities included which leaves you free to step onto the course soon after stepping off the plane.

Companies

such as Golfasian.com, Golforient.com, and Golfthink.com can all arrange Thailand golf trips to suit any budget and preferences.

About the Author

Mark

Siegel is the owner of Golfasian and has played golf for over 30 years. He has lived and worked across Asia during the last 20 years and during this time has travelled extensively both as a tourist and also as a resident throughout all Thailand.

