

Club Leaders FORUM

Promoting Excellence in Private Club Leadership



YEAR 2006

America's Top Two Hundred Private Clubs, as selected by
Club Managers and Club Presidents nationwide.

Defined as private clubs offering essentially golf services only. They may or may not include the word "golf" in the club name.



YEAR 2006

TOP 15 GOLF CLUBS

CLUB	LOCATION
1. Augusta National Golf Club	Augusta, GA
2. Pine Valley Golf Club	Pine Valley, NJ
3. Seminole Golf Club	Juno Beach, FL
4. Cypress Point	Pebble Beach, CA
5. Winged Foot Golf Club	Mamaroneck, NY
6. Merion Golf Club	Ardmore, PA
7. Baltusrol Golf Club	Springfield, NJ
8. Shinnecock Hills Golf Club	Southampton, NY
9. Peachtree Golf Club	Atlanta, GA
10. Muirfield Village Golf Club	Dublin, OH
11. San Francisco Golf Club	San Francisco, CA
12. The Loxahatchee Club	Jupiter, FL
13. Jupiter Hills Club	Tequesta, FL
14. Pebble Beach Golf Club	Pebble, CA
15. Chicago Golf Club	Wheaton, IL

The next 20 golf clubs listed alphabetically

CLUB	LOCATION
Burning Tree Club*	Bethesda, MD
Butler National Golf Club	Oak Brook, IL
Castle Pines Golf Club	Castle Rock, CO
Caves Valley Golf Club	Owings Mills, MD
Conway Farms Golf Club	Lake Forest, IL
Desert Highlands Golf Club	Scottsdale, AZ
Detroit Golf Club	Detroit, MI
Laurel Valley Golf Club	Ligonier, PA
National Golf Links of America	Southampton, NY
Pinehurst Country Club	Pinehurst, NC
Preston Trail Golf Club	Dallas, TX
Robert Trent Jones Golf Club*	Lake Manassas, VA
Shoal Creek Golf Club	Shoal Creek, AL
Shoreacres	Lake Bluff, IL
The Bear's Club	Jupiter, FL
The Estancia Club	Scottsdale, AZ
The Honors Course	Chattanooga, TN
The Old Collier Golf Club	Naples, FL
Wade Hampton Golf Club	Cashiers, NC
Whisper Rock Golf Club™	Scottsdale, AZ

* New Platinum Club designee

What Makes a Club “Platinum”

The characteristics of America’s 200 most highly admired private clubs that distinguish them from 6,000 others?

❶ A History of Excellence

The top private clubs have been around for a long time. Many were founded over a century ago. Some, from their inception, and many others through accumulated passage of time, have been recognized by all who know them as being domiciles of excellence. Whether this heritage is perpetuated in a formal mission statement, membership admission practices, or informally passed along within its membership and staff, it is deeply imbued in the fortunate who belong or work there. The membership and staff alike consider the perpetuation of this history of excellence as a mission.

❷ Quality of Membership

No club can be great without having great members. This means a membership that represents the best qualities of those communities in which the club exists. Acceptance and compatibility transcend all discriminating issues. Members like each other and the staff that serves them. They are knowledgeable about matters that affect the club and treat the facilities as though they were their own – which, in a real sense, they are. Great members care so much about their club that they work hard to attract prospective new members who are equally great.

❸ Condition of Facilities

A celebrated golf course or magnificent clubhouse by themselves do not make a club great. Rather it is the total array of facilities, their general excellence and fulfillment of member needs in every function and activity. These clubs invest on a regular and planned basis in the maintenance, supervision, and replacement of the grounds, plant, and equipment. They ensure that each piece of equipment, all furnishings, and every facility is well maintained. They do not have to be brand new.

❹ Caliber of Professional Staff

Many is the club with rich heritage and renowned amenities that does not qualify as a great club. Without a staff of equally high quality, such a club is missing on its most important cylinders. This excellence must be as well exhibited by the newest dishwasher or waiter as it is by the club’s longest tenured staff. The club will be recognized in its community as a good place to work, where the pay, benefits, work environment, and job security are attested to as excellent year after year. Ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen is a maxim of the finest clubs.

❺ Enlightened and Consistent Governance

Great clubs are led by presidents, owners, and directors who understand that their roles are strategic and policy setting. It is the professional staff that carries out the policies and day-to-day operations. Boards of this caliber work hard at ensuring that there is continuity of effort and direction, term after term. =The nominating committee or owner takes their work seriously, ensuring that the best qualified members serve on the board – and that the board itself is broadly representative of the club membership as a whole.

❻ Adaptable to Changing Times

As social institutions, clubs themselves undergo change – gradual as that will be. A club that resists this, sometimes because of restrictive by-laws or the resistance of elements on the board or in the membership, will slowly wither and eventually perish as members join more vital clubs or quit. Great clubs work at anticipating their members’ – and prospective new members’ – needs and interests. Such clubs have a mission statement that says who they are and a strategic plan that says where they want to be. Great clubs view this plan not simply as a document to put on the shelf and refer to periodically but as a road map that they are now moving along.

❼ Member Devotion to their Club’s Distinctive Culture

Great clubs celebrate their heritage and religiously observe their time-honored traditions. They know that the member/guest golf event is always the third weekend in June, that the general manager gets dunked at the year-end pool party, and that all the ladies at the annual president’s ball must be wearing yellow rose corsages. There is pride and togetherness in observing traditions and practices handed down through generations of members – oftentimes the older and more non-sensical they seem, the better. There is a true cult of culture in great clubs and it is stringently observed.

❸ Spirit of Generosity In the Community

Many of America’s premier private clubs were founded around a spirit of giving to its community or the nation. This is particularly true of great clubs like the Union League Club of Chicago and the Union League of Philadelphia. Others have developed their philanthropic and participatory relationships with cause and community through the caring nature of members and over the passage of time. Their motivations for acts of generosity are not done to generate overt publicity for themselves but in the spirit of genuine care – with as little publicity as possible.

❹ Prudent Fiscal Management

No institution of any kind can go through decades and generations without from time to time encountering serious financial challenges. Many a great club barely survived the Great Depression or the dues deductibility issue of the late 1980’s. Great clubs have had the wisdom to plan well and invest well. Initiation fees go into a capital, not operating, fund. Dues and other revenues are set to fund operations, improvements, and depreciation, so that member services and facilities are maintained at an affordable and exceptional level. Their boards understand the need for regular dues increases and occasional assessments.

❹ Universal Acknowledgement of Greatness

Great clubs are widely known as such by the strata of American society that frequent private clubs and are well traveled. They tout them universally. This perception extends well beyond a club’s community or the venue (i.e., a great golf course, etc.) for which it is best known. From time to time a great club will have a poor leader or board – or even a bad apple or two in the membership – but the truly great clubs are like great families. They possess the wisdom to progress, cope, and have fun being together. The future for any great club is what it always has been: The ability to attract and retain the greatest new members it possibly can.