

*golf*

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**SPECTACULAR MOUNTAIN** views provide the backdrop for a day of golf at Pala Mesa. Opposite page: Head pro Travis Inchcliff.

# PALA MESA STYLE

PALA MESA RESORT RANKS AS ONE OF  
SO CAL'S MOST BEAUTIFUL COURSES.

BY RICHARD LEMIRE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM DORSEY

**A fine golf course** is one that stands the test of time, and Pala Mesa Resort in Fallbrook passes that test with flying colors. Pala Mesa has maintained high standards of excellence that are evident throughout the property. Mature trees, in the form of elms, sycamores, pines and oaks, provide beauty and challenges on the golf course. Outstanding staff and facilities complete the memorable Pala Mesa experience.

The resort is a first rate location for a meeting, conference, weekend getaway or just a great meal at the Aqua Terra Restaurant. But no trip to Pala Mesa is complete without a round of golf on this tight and challenging track.

The two nines are well separated by the parking lot and clubhouse. Rather than using the traditional hole numbering of one through eighteen, Pala Mesa features a North 9 and South 9. We will start on the South 9, which opens with the 480 yard par 5 first hole. If you avoid the tight OB to the left and the bunkers that frame the gently ascending fairway, you could get a rewarding payoff on this short par 5.

The second is another short yardage hole, a 304 yard par 4 that doglegs sharply to the left at the green. Stay away from the left side, though. You can easily see how severe the drop off is as you begin to ascend into the hills. The bunker fronting that green is visible from the tee, and the ideal drive would come up just short of it on the right.



The third hole is a 501 yard par 5 in the pines. Trees on the left side force you to play into a narrow opening to reach the heart of the fairway. It's all downhill to the drainage trough before the fairway rises gently to the green.

The 403 yard par 4 fourth hole has a narrow opening off the tee to a slight dogleg right fairway that widens once you pass the trees. This hole heads west into the hills.

Hole number five, a 173 yard par 3, continues into the hills where you encounter home-lined fairways. Beware, this little par 3 is very well-bunkered.

The scenic sixth hole, a 416 yard par 4, is deceptive, at first meandering downhill, then taking a dogleg left sharply uphill to the hidden green. As you approach the green, be warned of two traps on your left approach. The green itself is sloping and is quite tricky to read.

Number seven is a tight, 155 yard par 3. Don't go too far right, as there is a severe drop-off beyond the trees.

The 351 yard par 4 eighth hole is one of the most attractive holes on the course. The tee box is on the highest point of the course and features a fabulous view of the Pala Valley below. The fairway itself doglegs to the right, but the most imposing feature is the steep drop off all along the right side. Don't chase your ball if it drops down—there is no way to get back up!

The ninth hole starts out on an elevated tee and then quickly drops down to the clubhouse level. A brush-covered hillside dominates the left view, and bunkers to the right dictate keeping your ball in the middle of this wide fairway. This par 4 measures 419 yards, and is an excellent finishing hole for the South 9.

A fairway long concrete wash and OB frames the left side of the fairway on the 407 yard par 4 first hole of the North 9. This course plays havoc on those of us who favor the left side, but that is just part of the challenge. Also challenging are the three bunkers surrounding this green.

The second hole, a slightly narrow dogleg left par 5, might excite you when you see that it is only 473 yards. I am very grateful that since my last visit to Pala Mesa, many trees have been trimmed or removed on this hole, making it a lot more friendly. A bunker fronts the left side of the green, which might alter your thinking for your approach shot.

The 396 yard par 4 third hole features a concrete river and tree-covered slope to the left and trees protruding into the fairway on the right. The fairway doglegs slightly to the left.

The 189 yard par 3 fourth hole features two gaping bunkers fronting a two-tiered green. Windy conditions could make this hole play even longer.

The par 4 fifth hole measures only 312 yards, with a notable big oak tree right of the fairway. The fairway slopes downward and doglegs to the right behind the tree. A mobile home park is OB to the left. Just to make things even more interesting, three big bunkers front the plateau green and obscure your view of the putting surface on your approach.

The sixth hole continues the ride along the hilly terrain. From the elevated tee, you can easily see not to place your tee shot too far right on this 397 yard par 4 or the trees will surely catch you.

Following a well-bunkered par 3, you reach the 525 yard par 5 eighth hole. I suggest staying to the left, on the Interstate 15 side of the wide fairway. This gives you a better view to the green, and avoids a slope and brush bordering the right side. Water lurks behind the green if you should overshoot your approach.

Pala Mesa's only water hazard also fronts the tee on the 419 yard par 4 ninth hole, but it will only come into play with an incredibly bad tee shot. Again, a ring of bunkers surrounds the green. Keep this in mind, as it takes two solid shots to reach the green here.

**PALA MESA RESORT.** 2001 Old Highway 395, Fallbrook (parallel to Interstate 15). (760) 731-6803. 18 holes. Head pro: Travis Inchcliff. Favorite hole: #8 South Course, 351 yard par 4.