

Looking for winter value? Check out these 6 under-the-radar golf destinations



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A couple hours by car from Las Vegas, great scenery and value awaits in lesser-known St. George, Utah. Courtesy of Sand Hollow G.C.

Going to Hawaii, Arizona, Palm Springs or South Florida in the winter is, for the most part, a pretty expensive proposition. But those are far from the only options for golfers who dream of teeing it up when much of the country is covered with snow.

There are, in fact, several destinations that are fairly reasonably priced in the winter. They offer good to exceptional golf, mostly affordable accommodations and a laid-back atmosphere.

They do come with some risk, of course, which is why most of them are a bit off the radar. Some do have the potential to be cold and wet. Playing golf with temperatures in the 40s in sideways

rain on courses that don't drain like coastal links course isn't just unpleasant; it's often impossible.

With that said, rolling the dice (your odds are good that the weather will cooperate) for these six destinations might be worth it. They all have average highs in the 50s, 60s and even 70s throughout the winter and can have stretches where it's much warmer than that. Just bring your warm-weather gear, a great attitude and your buddies for a fine time for a fraction of the price of most better winter destinations.

Santee, South Carolina



A sunny day view of a hole at Santee Cooper Country Club Santee Cooper CC

Average daily high temperature in degrees Fahrenheit: Dec.: 61 degrees. Jan.: 58. Feb.: 62.

When you think about South Carolina golf, Myrtle Beach, Hilton Head Island or Kiawah Island come to mind, but you might be surprised to find out that the Santee area, located in the south-central part of the state, has more than a dozen really affordable championship courses available, plus some pretty reasonable stay-and-play opportunities. For example, you can get three-day packages that include golf and accommodations in the winter for less than \$200 (per person, double occupancy). Plus, the area now offers the annual [Santee Winter 4-Ball Classic](#), a fun competitive event chock full of value and played at [Santee National Golf Club](#) and [Lake Marion Golf Club](#).

Other courses to consider include [Wyboo Golf Club](#), [Santee Cooper Country Club](#), and [The Players Course](#), which measures more than 7,000 yards from the back tees. Besides golf, the area

offers plenty of other outdoor recreation opportunities, including fishing and boating on Lake Marion, hiking and biking and a humble, but growing restaurant and accommodations scene.

St. George, Utah



The par-5 third at The Ledges Golf Club wraps around a series of large bunkers. Mike Bailey/Golf Advisor

Average daily high temperature in degrees Fahrenheit: Dec.: 52 degrees. Jan.: 54. Feb.: 59

When you think Utah, you're probably thinking skiing, not winter golf. But St. George, located in the most southern part of the state, is just a couple hours from Las Vegas, with a high desert climate that can certainly produce some cold days in the winter, but some pleasant ones as well. In other words, there might be frost delays, but golf is a 12-month activity in the area, where it's not uncommon to have a sunny 70-degree day in January. Plus, Mesquite, Nev., with several quality golf courses, including the Jack Nicklaus signature design [Coyote Springs](#) and some good casino value accommodations, is right next door.

Topping the list of St. George area golf is [Sand Hollow's Championship Course](#), a terrific John Fought design with large, red-sand bunkers framing holes that lead up to elevated greens, flanked by the backdrop of spectacular mountains that border nearby Zion Park. Sand Hollow is hardly the only option, though. [Sky Mountain Golf Course](#), [The Ledges Golf Club](#) (designed by Pete Dye's nephew Matt Dye) and [Sun Brook Golf Club](#) (Ted Robinson) are prime examples of the exceptional golf and scenery the area offers. Throw in a trip to nearby Zion National Park or Arches National Park, and you've got a pretty special trip.

New Orleans/Mississippi Gulf Coast



Bayou Oaks, the relatively new New Orleans "super-muni," may get the Zurich Classic someday. [Brandon Tucker/Golf Advisor](#)

Average daily high temperature in degrees Fahrenheit: Dec.: 64 degrees. Jan.: 62. Feb.: 65.

The New Orleans/Mississippi coast area benefits from the relatively warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and depending on whether or not a cold front has gone through, not only can you get pleasant days during the winter, but it can sometimes be downright warm. With all that said, the more resort-like courses are probably in the Biloxi/Gulfport, Miss., area, which is only an hour from New Orleans. Fallen Oak is a high-end amenity of the Beau Rivage Casino Resort, but there is affordable golf as well. You'll want to check out the Davis Love III-designed [Shell Landing](#) in near Biloxi, Miss., the Jack Nicklaus-designed [Grand Bear](#), the semi-private [Preserve Golf Club](#) (a Jerry Pate design that can be a little pricey) and one of my personal favorites, [Great Southern Golf Club](#) (less than \$40), the area's oldest course, a Donald Ross design located right across the street from the beach in Biloxi.

As for New Orleans, not only does it offer some of the most affordable golf in the country, but, well, it's New Orleans. That means plenty of great food and entertainment, including Mardi Gras, to close out the winter months. When you get there, definitely check out [Audubon Park Golf Course](#), located next to the zoo and Tulane University. It's one of the best executive courses you'll ever play. The Dye-designed [TPC Louisiana](#), host of the Zurich Classic on the PGA Tour, is pretty affordable as TPC courses go. And be sure to check out the relatively new [Bayou Oaks City Park South Course](#), designed by Rees Jones. Replacing what was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina 15 years ago, the course may someday land the Zurich Open itself.

Brooksville, Florida



A sunset view of a hole at World Woods Golf Club. World Woods GC

Average daily high temperature in degrees Fahrenheit: Dec.: 73 degrees. Jan.: 72. Feb.: 74.

While most of Florida is pretty pricey in the winter, there's a pocket near Tampa where the golf is not only reasonable, but it's some of the best golf you'll find in the state. More specifically, this is where you'll find the 36-hole combination of two splendid Tom Fazio layouts at World Woods. Sandy [Pine Barrens](#), reminiscent somewhat of Pine Valley in New Jersey, is perennially ranked among the top 100 in the country, but many prefer the more traditional [Rolling Oaks](#). On both courses, it's just nature, no homes, and the club has outstanding practice facilities and a par-3 course. The prices there go up to \$99/\$119 starting Jan, 1, but in December you can play there for as little as \$59.

And while the two courses at World Woods make for terrific getaway all their own, you can add nearby Lake Jovita, an even more affordable terrific 36-hole layout just minutes away in Dade City. If you've got a group, the semi-private club offers some fairly reasonable stay-and-play packages at its two- or three-bedroom condos or homes, but the green fees on the [South](#) and [North](#) courses are well south of \$100 even during peak season.

Gulf Shores, Ala./Pensacola, Fla., area



A view of a fairway at Craft Farms Resort

Average daily high temperature in degrees Fahrenheit: Dec.: 62 degrees. Jan.: 59. Feb.: 62

Like New Orleans to the west, the area remains quite temperate during the winter months because of the Gulf of Mexico. The biggest risk, though, is rain, because December, January and February average around 5 inches. With that said, again, the potential for good days is certainly there, the area is fairly inexpensive (both lodging and green fees) and there's plenty to do, including a visit to the famous Flora-Bama lounge, which sits smack on the white sandy beach located right on the state line.

As the for the golf, the leader has always been Gulf Shores' Kiva Dunes Resort, a Jerry Pate design just a few hundred yards from the beach. It's priced on the premium side (and does offer stay and play) but well worth setting aside a little money for while you save on accommodations, food and the other courses in the area. Craft Farms, which offers two Arnold Palmer designs, is another great option on the Alabama side. So are nearby [Rock Creek](#) and [Gulf Shores Golf Club](#). You'll also find plenty of courses next door in the Pensacola, Fla., area such as [Perdido Bay Golf Club](#), [Lost Key](#) and [Peninsula Golf and Racquet Club](#).

South Padre Island, Texas



The fifth hole at South Padre Island Golf Club bumps up against the Laguna Madre. Courtesy of South Padre G.C.

Average daily high temperature in degrees Fahrenheit: Dec.: 71 degrees. Jan.: 72. Feb.: 74.

While the golf may not be exceptional overall, there is golf, it's affordable and best of all, this is one of the best winter climates in the Continental United States. This part of Texas is just as far south as Miami, a lot less crowded and certainly less expensive. The beaches are the most beautiful in Texas, and there are all sorts of great seafood and Tex-Mex restaurants in the area.

One of the most fun courses is [South Padre Island Golf Club](#) , which overlooks Laguna Madre. A little more inland, you'll find [Tierra Santa Golf Club](#) in Weslaco. This excellent Jeff Brauer designs features plenty of mounding, water hazards and even a waterfall. And if you're looking for a place to stay you could find a real value at [Rancho Viejo Resort & Country Club](#) , which offers accommodations and golf. It's a little dated, but very affordable.



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Mike Bailey is a senior staff writer based in Houston. Focusing primarily on golf in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean and Latin America with an occasional trip to Europe and beyond, he contributes course reviews, travel stories and features as well as the occasional equipment review. An award-winning writer and past president of Texas Golf Writers Association, he has more than 25 years in the golf industry. Before accepting his current position in 2008, he was on staff at PGA Magazine, The Golfweek Group and AvidGolfer Magazine. Follow Mike on Twitter at [@MikeBaileyGA](#) and Instagram at [@MikeStefanBailey](#).