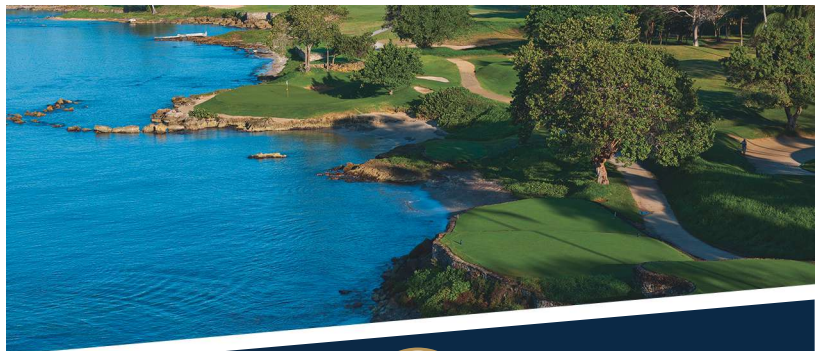


PGA PROFESSIONALS' GUIDE TO TRAVEL

2019 EDITION

**PGA Members Share
Their Favorite Destinations
How to Host Successful Trips
Coaching and Traveling**



PGA™



Mixing Business & Pleasure

Corporate retreats and company outings are a natural fit for golf destinations – for avid players and non-golfers alike

BY DON JOZWIAK

Golf is a natural mix with business. Entertaining clients on-course is a time-honored method for getting to know business partners, proposing and sealing deals, and celebrating successful partnerships. All of this happens regularly at private clubs and daily fee facilities, and the positive effects can be magnified when travel is introduced to the equation.

“As a PGA Professional, the way I look at it is that we’re partners with our members and customers in their businesses,” says Phil Owenby, the PGA Director of Golf for the Dormie Network’s six golf clubs. “We can be the marketing, entertainment and branding arm for entertaining clients. To help someone host a corporate golf travel event is an opportunity to provide a level of hospitality and service that lets them show how they run their business.”

Like leisure golf travel, corporate golf travel comes in many forms and can vary greatly in group size – from a foursome taking a day trip as a get-to-know-you icebreaker to having hundreds of attendees at a multi-day conference-style getaway with golf as one of the activities. Obviously, those are two very different groups. But the ultimate goal of all corporate golf travel is the same: To further relationships and create a special experience.



to successfully hosting corporate groups, Hoyt says, is finding out what the host would like to offer the group in terms of an experience.

“You’re showing your members that you can handle their regular golf games, but also step up and help them put their business in the best light.”

—Scott Wilson, PGA

“Do you want to get on the river for a float trip, or maybe do a half-day of fishing after playing golf?” Hoyt says. “You want to cater to their needs, and make sure you let them know everything the resort has to offer.”

Owenby agrees. In his experience as a PGA General Manager at Virginia’s Kinloch Golf Club, and in his current position with Dormie Network, he’s helped plan and host corporate golf groups for years. He says success comes with preparation.

“On the corporate entertainment side, you have to look at the entire event well ahead of time – the planning makes all the difference,” Owenby says. “What’s the group size? What

Destinations like Wyoming’s Snake River Sporting Club (left) and Victoria National in Indiana (below) have activities and accommodations that can create memorable experiences for corporate groups.

“You realize this group only has a couple of days with you, so you try to make their experience awesome from the start to the moment they leave the property,” says Greg Hoyt, the PGA Head Professional at Snake River Sporting Club in Jackson, Wyoming. “That’s why you want to highlight what makes the host property special, and choose someplace that has a lot of hospitality options.”

Hoyt is seeing increased interest in group travel to Snake River Club, a previously private facility that now welcomes outside groups. In the winter, it’s a Nordic-style facility with nearly 10 miles of ski trails and a heli-ski operation. In the summer, there’s fishing, hunting, skeet shooting and, of course, golf – a dramatic Tom Weiskopf layout. The atmosphere is a unique combination of private club and tranquil resort in the massive Bridger-Teton National Forest.

An eye-catching host site like Snake River is a good start for any corporate golf trip. The key



kind of flavor does the event have, casual or elegant? Are you going to have more planned activities, or would you rather give people time to make casual connections? Once you have that feel, you can work with the entire hospitality team to create all aspects of the event, including golf activities."



"The practice area can be transformed into a staging area for some things that are really fun," he says. "You can make it really casual, with music, food and lights at night. The golf staff can use launch monitors to have closest to the pin contests, or give mini-lessons or clubfittings. You can get really creative and put out some great activities."

As PGA Director of Golf at Florida's Streamsong Resort, PGA Professional Scott Wilson and his staff also make full use of areas beyond the golf course – or, in Streamsong's case, the three award-winning courses on site – to provide unique experiences to corporate groups.

Streamsong has a putting course called the Gauntlet and a seven-hole par-3 course called the Roundabout that can be used for fun, casual com-



EVAN SCHILLER



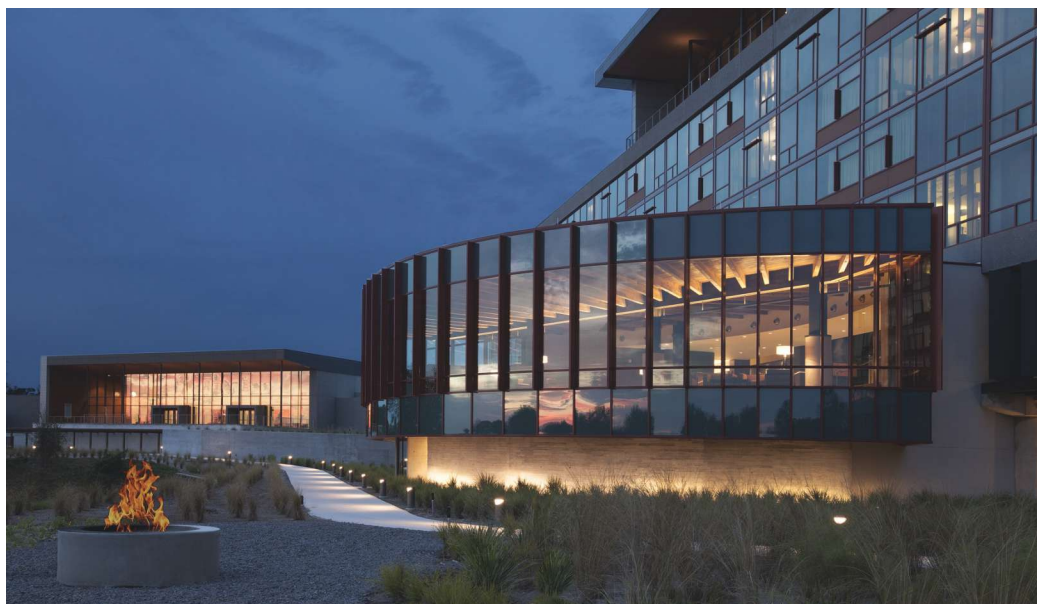
petitions that can include food & beverage to create a complete hospitality experience.

"It's always fun when you can come up with little challenges that bring people of all abilities into the mix," Wilson says. "On the Gauntlet, we can set up a putting course so someone who's never held a club can play right alongside a

Dormie Club near Pinehurst, North Carolina, caters to corporate groups who enjoy golf and the chance to relax.

The Dormie Network's six clubs – Ballyhack Golf Club in Virginia, Dormie Club in North Carolina, Nebraska's ArborLinks, Briggs Ranch in Texas, Victoria National in Indiana and New Jersey's Hidden Creek – encourages national members to use its facilities to host corporate retreats as a way for businesspeople to connect with each other in a more personal, less stressful atmosphere.

For some groups, that may mean including non-golfers or relatively inexperienced players in activities. In those situations, Owenby suggests utilizing the practice area to create an inviting vibe for golfers of all skill levels.



scratch golfer. That's a way to get everybody together for an hour or two before or after a meeting or seminar."

Wilson works with Streamsong's conference services staff on planning corporate events, handling the golf side of the requests – from lining up caddies and preparing scorecards to ordering gifts and greeting golfers as they arrive. He says itineraries for corporate trips are a bit different from leisure golf travel.

"Corporate travel is usually a little more organized, especially if you're working with a large enough group for a meeting planner to get involved," Wilson says. "You want to have good communications with the group leader so the client doesn't have to do any thinking once they get there – they can just focus on entertaining their clients, or giving their presentation.

"I also like to keep the itinerary a little open

– leave an afternoon free to give people time to relax. If you burn everybody out with a non-stop schedule, you could overwhelm people. Give them the option of a casual activity, with the chance to just hang out or go fishing for a few hours of relaxation."

Prior to coming to Streamsong, Wilson was the PGA Head Professional at a private club that had several businesspeople in its membership. He helped plan and host corporate golf trips for members to Bandon Dunes in Oregon, Hawaii's Turtle Bay and other destinations. He says cultivating corporate travel is good for business – for golfers and for PGA Professionals.

"We'd run trips that were more than 30 people, and we'd help members go to pro-ams for tour events, and we'd put together little short outings, too," Wilson says. "To me, that was a key strategy for member retention. You're showing your members that you can handle their regular golf games, but also step up and help them put their business in the best light."

Owenby concurs that corporate retreats and business-related golf travel gives PGA Professionals a chance to assist their best customers and build even strong relationships.

"Keep in mind that a lot of golfers at your facility are entrepreneurs, professional people or executives – most everyone has a connection that could benefit from hosting an event," Owenby says. "You can generate a lot of business just by communicating that you're able to help them plan and execute these events – share stories about events that you've hosted or travel you've put together, and you'll find yourself getting asked for help.

"If we can team with our customers to help them grow their business, that's retention – why would they ever think to leave?" ■

Resorts like Florida's Streamsong (above) and Hawaii's Turtle Bay (below) combine facilities for business meetings with unique recreation opportunities.

