

PRIVATE CLUBS



Best New

From a Texas fort to a Hawaiian sunset, the year's top amenities are big hits with members and guests.

BY KEITH CARTER



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

“Thank goodness for the professionals who follow industry trends. This family-friendly place delivers on all levels and promises great fun for all.” —*Frank Benzakour*

Amenities



For most golf clubs, the distinction of having the first course in the U.S. designed by Tiger Woods, which is ranked as the No. 1 course in Texas, would be enough.

But the developers of Bluejack National knew that to be successful in today's market it takes a wide range of amenities designed to make the club experience exciting and memorable. It requires an investment in facilities and activities that keep existing members happy and make it easy to recruit new ones.

Bluejack National's answer to the chal-

lenge was The Fort, a Disney-esque indoor-outdoor facility that offers members and guests an unprecedented package of amenities and is part of a 755-acre playground for the entire family.

It's no surprise, then, that The Fort was selected as the first-place winner among private clubs in the second annual Golf Inc. Best New Amenities competition. The contest recognizes the year's most outstanding upgrades and additions at golf clubs and resorts.

The winner in the public/resort course

category is the Sunset Golf Cart Tour at Princeville Makai Golf Club, which offers guests and visitors spectacular evening vistas on the island of Kauai via golf cars.

Entries were judged on how well the addition achieved its goals, as well as on aesthetics and financial benefit. Judges for the event included Golf Inc. editors, longtime club management professional Frank Benzakour and international business marketing executive and consultant Justin Jones.

Here are the honorees in the 2019 Best New Amenities competition.

1 FIRST PLACE

THE FORT Bluejack National Montgomery, Texas

While Bluejack National's world-class golf course may attract members to the club, The Fort helps keep families there. It's a private club with a distinct resort-style feel.

Here's a sample of what The Fort includes: resort-style swimming pools, including a lagoon pool; a 150-foot water slide; a water park; a mini-Fenway Park-style Green Monster that hosts Wiffle Ball games; an events field equipped with football goal posts; a basketball court; pickleball courts; fire pits; and a lake for canoeing and fishing. And that's just outside.

Moving inside, members and their families will find bowling lanes, shuffleboard courts, locker rooms, a media room, a game room with classic and current video games, an arts and crafts room and a

burger grill and bar, topped off by an ice cream station.

In addition to his Bluejack National course, which is ranked by the website top100courses.com as the best in the state and No. 88 in the world, Woods designed a 10-hole lighted par-3 layout that's remains open until midnight.

As you might imagine, The Fort attracts what Josh Governale, executive director of marketing and communications, calls "children of all ages." There's non-stop action, starting with sunrise yoga and ending with sunset dinner and late-night drinks. Complete with child care, it's a place where kids want to go but not leave, Governale said.

In its first year, The Fort helped the club bring in 65 new members and increased occupancy, club revenue and member satisfaction. Initiation fees are up 10 percent, thanks in large part to The Fort.

And there's more to come. A tennis center is in the planning stages, and a new main clubhouse, called The Porch, is under construction. It will include a spa and fitness facilities and is scheduled for completion in late 2020.



Inside The Fort (above), the water slide (left) and bowling alley (far left).

