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Resorts

FAMILY AFFAIR

A young couple strolls across a sandy cove at the **Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica**. In the nearby lobby, a foursome heads out for their tee time at the Arnold Palmer–designed golf course, while outside, a group of retirees boards a shuttle bus to Palo Verde national park. Toddlers and teens coexist peacefully at the pool downstairs as a mother rests in the comfort of a chaise longue, biding time before her green papaya lip peel at the oceanfront spa.

Tucked between two beaches on a narrow isthmus in northwestern Costa Rica, the new Four Seasons is the rare resort that appeals to all generations. The 153-room hotel's spectacular setting and facilities—including four pools, three restaurants, a 16,000-square-foot spa, and the country's best golf course (see *Golf Courses*, page 210)—offer ample options for every visitor.

The Four Seasons' main lodge and guest-room buildings—none of which is taller than the adjacent trees—blend into their tropical dry-forest surroundings with soft colors and sloping roofs (modeled after an armadillo's shell). Food at the resort's three restaurants is not so faithful to local traditions, but the extensive menu is a welcome sight in this remote location and, as with the resort overall, offers something for every member of the family.

—BRUCE WALLIN

Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica,
+50.66.96.0000, www.fourseasons.com
(\$395–\$4,500)

RUSTIC RELAXATION

In the southern portion of Napa Valley, where Caterpillars are more common than five-star caterers, there exists an extraordinary philosopher by the name of Keith Rogal. Although his father was in the luxury travel business on the East Coast, his



Carneros Inn

own interests lay elsewhere, in architecture and history, twin passions that inspired him to study 18th-century English farmhouses. This singular appreciation for rural buildings—their functional design and relationship to their surroundings—would, through a series of professional twists and turns, uniquely prepare him to create the **Carneros Inn**, Napa Valley's first new resort in more than two decades.

Situated on 27 acres in the middle of Carneros' lush, rolling agricultural landscape, the inn offers guests a true farm ambience far removed from the idealized, often self-conscious "country" inns found elsewhere in the Sonoma and Napa regions. The gated compound, where it is not enclosed by fencing, is set off from the main road by rolling fields and vineyards that come up literally to the porches of the guest cottages, which can best be described as Steinbeck modern. Inside the planked and corrugated tin structures—each of which has a themed garden of its own—one discovers clean contemporary lines, thoughtful applications of natural materials, and amusingly postmodern touches, such as Le Corbusier and Philippe Starck furnishings. State-of-the-art water recycling and geothermal heating and cooling systems speak to the practical side of Rogal's inspiration, as do the spa treatments, which utilize local materials (a grape seed body scrub, for example). At the Hilltop restaurant, Executive Chef Philip Wang transforms local ingredients into culinary artworks. "We have worked to ensure that our guests' experiences are anchored in the place," says Rogal. Even the black-and-white photographs that adorn the inn's rooms and halls are true to this philosophy: They



Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica

Golf Courses

THE PERFECT CRIME

Tom Doak is another young American architect who subscribes to the new-wave naturalism school. At **Cape Kidnappers**, he was given a magnificent stretch of limestone cliffs high above Hawke's Bay on the southeast



Cape Kidnappers

coast of New Zealand's North Island. He responded by building one of the world's most scenic golf courses.

But Cape Kidnappers' vistas threaten to detract from what Doak has carved from the rugged terrain: an exceptional golf course. The designer laid his fairways across the ruffled ground and perched his greens atop sites that fall away dramatically into grassy abysses—or worse. Some of the deepest bunkers this side of Scotland add to the challenge.

The amen corner of four, five, and six at Cape Kidnappers offers fairways that sweep up to cliff's-edge greens and a par 3 that traverses a

gaping crevasse. On the back nine, the 15th, New Zealand's longest hole at 653 yards, ends with a green that sits on the edge of a 500-foot drop to the beach. The elevated tee of the next hole, another par 5, provides one of golf's most gorgeous views. —J.Y.B.

*Cape Kidnappers, +64.6875.1900,
www.capekidnappers.com*

MONKEY ON THE BACK

El Mono, the 305-yard 16th hole at the **Four Seasons Golf Club Costa Rica**, is the last of three par-fours bisecting a forested chute alongside Virador Bay. Ocean holes on the course's front nine, with their elevated tee boxes and steep drop-offs toward the Pacific, will undoubtedly generate more acclaim, but this narrow back-nine stretch is the essential sequence of this only-in-Costa Rica course.

Designed by Arnold Palmer, and opened in February 2004 as part of the new Four Seasons (see Resorts, page 198), the Golf Club Costa Rica is the country's first great course. The layout hugs the coastal hills, cliffs, and valleys on the tip of the Papagayo Peninsula, offering views of the Pacific from 14 of its 18 holes.

The ocean views from El Mono and its immediate predecessors are partial at best. But the holes, sheltered by trees from the thundering Papagayo winds, present constant confirmation of your Central American whereabouts: The footprints you see in the

sand trap belong to the howler monkeys living above the 16th green; the warning cries from the trees are the parrots announcing your intrusion on their space. It is the presage of the iguana, however, that you must heed: Stretched across the cart path in a sunning position, he is your subtle reminder not to chase that errant tee shot—other, less innocuous, reptiles may be lurking in the brush.

—BRUCE WALLIN

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Four Seasons Golf Club Costa Rica

ROLLING ROCK

Biwabik, Minn., is not a dateline that springs to the forefront of most golfers' minds. Yet the **Quarry at Giants Ridge**, a Jeff Brauer creation



Quarry at Giants Ridge



THE VIEW FROM LA PUNTA PAPAGAYO. PARCEL 9. MAY 12. 5:40PM

La Punta Papagayo, on Costa Rica's famed Gold Coast.

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the most spectacular stretch of coastline in all of Costa Rica.

Makes one want to think rather seriously about making a bit of it your own, wouldn't you say?



LA PUNTA PAPAGAYO
COSTA RICA

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