

# Four Seasons for Swinging in Lake Ozark

By Ashley Brown

Nestled in the heart of the rolling Ozark Mountains, a mere two-and-a-half hours drive from Kansas City is a true oasis of golf. A place where due to Missouri's balanced climate, the bent-grass greens thrive so that nearly any season is satisfactory for bringing your best game (and your best friend) to one of Midwest's most celebrated golf destinations.

Where can you find this golfer's paradise? The Lodge of Four Seasons, located in Lake Ozark, Missouri.

Consistently recognized as one of the finest golf resorts in the U.S., The Lodge has a surprising combined total of 54 holes of tournament-tested golf on three championship courses designed by Jack Nicklaus, Robert Trent Jones, Sr., and Ken Kavanaugh. Although The Lodge has been around since 1965, there are still many Missourians, as well as avid golfers, who are unaware of this aptly-named, family-owned retreat.

In the early 1960's, The Lodge of Four Seasons creator Harold Koplal - affectionately known as "HK" - had a vision to create an unequalled experience in a remote place that would bring relaxation and enjoyment to people of all ages. The 3,500 acre community of Four Seasons USA in the Midwest's Lake of the Ozarks emerged in 1965. Koplal brought a family tradition of entrepreneurship, hospitality, and entertainment to the Lake which is still the standard today. Koplal passed away in 1985, and his daughter, Susan Koplal-Brown ran the property until turning over the reigns to her eldest son, HK's grandson, Mark Brown.

Brown, a member of the American Hotel and Lodging Resort Committee, has served as president of his family's resort since 2004. To this day, the entire Brown family resides at the Lake area to carry on HK's legacy of warm, Midwestern hospitality.

At the forefront of every service provided by the Brown family is a dedication to offering their guests the best experience possible; and that includes a tradition of championship golf.

“The Lodge has been a golf destination since 1973, and to this day rivals any golfing experience you will find in the Midwest,” states Brown.

The Lodge boasts two tournament-tested public courses, named The Cove and The Ridge. In 2008, Golf Magazine acknowledged both The Cove and The Ridge in the “Top Five Courses” in Missouri. And both courses have regularly been called the “Midwest’s Best Bargain in Golf.” *But, that doesn’t mean either course is short on play.*

The Cove, the first of the two 18-hole courses, was designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr. and is The Lodge’ signature championship course. Beyond the incredible view and appreciably arresting doglegs, a recent \$2 million in renovations, including a brand new clubhouse and grill were completed to ensure a gratifying experience.

The Cove, with 65 bunkers and panoramic views of the scenic hills which complement any day out has a playing yardage of 6557. This par-71 layout features undulating fairways, challenging green sites, and breathtaking views of the Lake.

“We take our golf very seriously,” assures Brown. “Therefore, we are dedicated to constantly finding ways to improve the golf experience of our guests who play golf.”

In order to remain ahead of the curve, The Cove underwent extensive renovations in 2008 and 2009, including re-routing of holes, new greens, re-shaped bunkers and added forward tees. Guests will note brand new carts equipped with state of the art GPS systems, an improved sprinkler system and a brand new clubhouse with a 5,000 sq. foot deck to enjoy watching other golfers and guests when The Cove re-opens in May.

The Ridge, designed by Ken Kavanaugh, is the second of the two public courses. Appropriately named for an undulating landscape of 6,447 yards at 180 feet of elevation and a par-72, The Ridge has

been delighting golfers since 1991. With sprawling fairways and panoramic views, a day at The Ridge offers an enjoyable challenge from multiple sets of tees designed to fit any skill level. The back tees play just less than 6500 yards while the forward tees come in around 4600.

The Lodge's director of golf and class A member of the PGA, Josh Crowell, says that either course provides a challenging but exceptional experience including brand new, GPS equipped golf carts in 2009.

"Golfers really enjoy the rolling hills of The Ridge; but either course will provide a quality outing for both the casual or competitive golfer," Crowell assures. "Plus, it's a great place for special events."

Crowell says that the golf staff has extensive knowledge in tournament management and group administration, and will gladly highlight a round of golf or offer pairing and scoring assistance at all courses for tournaments. In fact, both The Cove and The Ridge are prime spots for local and statewide tournaments hosted by various clubs and organizations.

The Ridge includes a 4,000 square-foot clubhouse, featuring a large pro shop and The Grill. Premium rental equipment and complete food and beverage service are available at all courses.

In addition to the two public courses, there exists, undeniably, one of the finest private courses recently built in Missouri. The Club at Porto Cima is a private, 18-hole course built against lush, previously undisturbed shoreline.

Opened in 2000, Porto Cima is the only Jack Nicklaus Signature Course in Missouri to have been recognized by Golf Digest as one of the best new private courses in the United States. Brown's father, Peter, a developer and avid golfer, worked closely with Nicklaus to design the ultimate course and club for those who take the game seriously.

“Our entire family enjoys golf and there is really a certain pride in being the Gold standard at The Lake and throughout Missouri,” says Brown. “Porto Cima is most definitely a crowning achievement to our repertoire.”

Although private by design, guests of The Lodge have access to the course, as well as private dinners and group services in the exclusive restaurant and impressive clubhouse with advanced booking through the resort.

“The Lodge definitely excels in the area of golf during several months throughout the year, but, there is so much more to the experience as a whole,” Brown says with a smile.

A great place for golfers and non-golfers alike, The Lodge is the annual host to guests and groups who take advantage of 65,000 sq. ft. of meeting and convention space, including an Exhibit Hall with 20,000 sq. ft. of open space. Staff members eagerly assist both individuals and groups in the careful planning of everything from weddings to conventions and beyond.

Aside from the obvious, there are a number of other activities one can enjoy both in and out of doors when visiting The Lodge of Four Seasons. Built along one of the world’s largest manmade lakes, covering 1,150 miles of shoreline, and boasting the lake’s largest full-service marina, The Lodge is equipped with pontoon boats, wave runners, parasailing and fishing guides available during the Spring, Summer and early Fall.

In 2008, The Lodge expanded its 303 guest rooms with 54 two and three well-appointed bedroom condominium units. The brand new Avila complex, adjacent to The Lodge, is the newest luxury condominium development by the Brown family. Located at the resort property’s former 9-hole short game course, Avila is the first phase of an extensive plan for development and growth for the Lodge of Four Seasons.

Avila offers affordable luxury condos are fully furnished and available in three different varieties: a sleeping room with double queen beds or a king-size bed, a two-bedroom unit, or a king suite

with the bedroom attached to the living space. The condos are privately owned and owners have the option of placing them on a rental program through The Lodge.

The amenities and benefits beyond ownership and a luxury rental option, include fully equipped kitchens, granite countertops, flat panel screen TV's and large oversize walk-in showers and large jetted tubs in the bathrooms. Owners and guests also receive room service and access to all Lodge amenities.

Not surprisingly, affordable luxury can be found at every turn when visiting The Lodge of Four Seasons. There are two other full-service restaurants located inside The Lodge. Breezes serves both breakfast and lunch with indoor and outdoor seating. For a quick bite, Soleil's Sidewalk Café offers smaller "noshes-on-the-go" such as pastries, sandwiches and cappuccino.

Interestingly, one of the best kept secrets of Lake Ozark is the affordable fine-dining that has been a tradition at The Lodge since its doors opened in the late 1960's. HK's Steakhouse, named for Harold Koplak, serves the finest in surf, turf and fine wines. Not long ago, HK's was given accolades by Wine Spectator and continues to offer a wide variety of freshly prepared cuisine made with quality ingredients to suit every taste as a tribute to the culinary reputation that has always been a part of the hospitality of both HK's and The Lodge. Beyond ambiance, the restaurant has panoramic, floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the serenely beautiful Japanese Garden (complete with a delightful and inspiring pond full of brightly-colored Koi fish.)

After a day of golfing, boating, swimming or one of the many other activities available, there is ample opportunity for relaxation. Opened in 2000, Spa Shiki, a nationally recognized, award winning Spa, was conceptualized in the spirit of Harold Koplak's love of water, and respect for the Asian culture of health and healing. With 15,000 sq. feet of pampering indulgence located on property and just seconds from any guest room.

The Cloverleaf pool, one of four pools located on Lodge property not only showcases a flowing waterfall over a hidden grotto large enough for eight adults; but an outdoor Parrot Bar famous for

serving what many people say are the best Pina Coladas this side of Jamaica. A lobby bar with seasonal entertainment offers a cozy spot to meet up with friends and have a beer after hitting the links or heading to HK's for a superb dinner of hearty prime rib.

In Lake Ozark, the summer months are lush and green; providing a perfect setting for optimum golfing alongside busy waterways full of boating enthusiasts. Autumn, with its more moderate temperatures is a popular and picturesque time of orange and red hillsides aligning the courses. In the late Fall and Winter months, a cozy fire burns from a rustic fireplace in the center of the main lobby, inviting guests to come in from the chill.

In any season, The Lodge is the perfect place for getting back to your best game and chipping away at stress and getting back into the swing of life.

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