

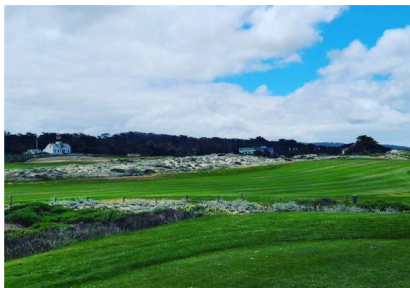
The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, Brad Herzog

BREATHTAKING BACK NINE

June 15, 2026



The Pebble Beach Golf Links. World-class, legendary, the site of countless historic tournament moments. Golf Digest has written too many words to count about the course that sits near the top of every global ranking. But a couple of years ago, the magazine profiled another course sitting five miles north, its price tag about one-tenth that of Pebble (which, as the magazine put it, is open to the public “but so are commercial spaceflights.”) This time, the esteemed golf publication devoted its space to the Pacific Grove Golf Links - the so-called “poor man’s Pebble Beach.”



It was opened in 1932 as a nine-hole course designed by two-time U.S. amateur champion Chandler Egan. Those front nine bring you alongside grand trees and grazing herds of deer. But it is the back nine, laid out by Pebble designer Jack Neville three decades later, that makes it a jewel of a links. The Neville Nine is relatively short - par 35, covering just 2800 yards - but, with its position at the top of the Peninsula, it is long on aesthetic wonder. Neville designed his course to harken back to the old links courses in Scotland and Ireland, building it around the natural contours of the windswept dunes surrounding 171-year-old Point Pinos Lighthouse. So it is an artistic marvel circling an historic icon. That’s a rare combination.

The views are as continuous as they are wondrous. Here’s how Golf Digest described it: “Eight of the nine holes feature ocean views, and a number of them edge so close to the coastline that you can feel the mist from crashing waves. The dunes—provided you’re not in them—are a captivating frame. Rock islands spring from the ocean like oil pumps in the Great Plains. The meeting of green and blue and white and granite would make Jackson Pollock proud... You’re forgiven for thinking what lies before you was built on a Hollywood sound stage.”



I've sent plenty of golf balls into those captivating dunes, but maybe that's because half of my attention was on those crashing waves. I'm sure the same is true for the locals who love the links and the tourists who come to feel the same way. But here's something most of them likely don't know: Every hole has a name. On the front nine - the Egan Nine - you can play Little Tombstone and Egan's Alley, Blind Birdie and Long Tom. On the back nine, you can drive and pitch and putt on the Innkeeper and Beacon View, Lighthouse and Last Chance. But even among the breathtaking back nine, there are holes that stand out.



Hole #12, a par 5 known as Rocky Shores, lives up to its name, with an inspiring view of the frothy Pacific Ocean running down the entire left side of the fairway. The 13th, Whaler's Watch, is a par 4 that perches you on an elevated tee offering a 360-degree view of the water. And the 17th, called Crespi Pond, is a relatively easy par 3 sitting hard against Ocean View Boulevard. Your task: simply knock it over the freshwater pond - named for Juan Crespi, a Catholic Priest who accompanied explorer Gaspar Portola on his expedition to Point Pinos.

Speaking of which, more than a few golfers end their afternoon at the 19th hole - the Point Pinos Grill, which is adorned not with the trophies that you find at Pebble, but rather with local newspaper clippings about subjects like its junior program. And that's why the course, so rich in natural beauty, should wear its "poor man's Pebble Beach" moniker proudly. Because it fits the vibe. The course, owned by the city, is essentially a gift to PG - less a money-maker than a community-builder. It is meant to be played, not revered. In fact, in many ways it represents Pacific Grove - beautiful, practical, natural... and often magical.

*The Great
Tidepool*

