

GOLF

This SoCal slice of paradise is short and oh so sweet

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Sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean abound at Terranea Resort's ultra-fun 9-hole short course.

COURTESY OF TERRANEA RESORT

Welcome to our *"Where I Played"* series, in which a GOLF staffer runs through a recent day at a course you might play in your future. On this occasion, we're teeing it up at The Links at Terranea in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.

[Playing golf on vacation](#) is a joy, but when said vacation [includes the whole family](#), there is one singular problem that tends to surface: *time*.

A round of golf takes lots of it. And the time commitment of playing a round isn't simply limited to the 18-hole jaunt; there's travel time to and from the course, [a warm-up](#) (if you're into that) and don't forget the obligatory post-round libation or snack. Given all

that, it's not uncommon for a single round to balloon into a six-plus hour endeavor, which is fine — [if you're on a buddies trip to Bandon Dunes](#). But unless all the vacay attendees are playing a round together, it can feel a bit selfish (not to mention impractical) to abandon the others in pursuit of such a lengthy pastime.

At Southern California's [Terranea Resort](#), perched on the cliffs of scenic Rancho Palos Verdes, guests are faced with no such conundrum. The on-site course, The Links at Terranea, is a par-3 nine-hole design by Todd Eckenrode, and you could likely rip around it twice in the time it takes to play a single nine at a full-size course. That was one of my favorite things about the property — apart from the stunning vistas, of course — because while I love to play, there are plenty of other things I'm excited to do and explore while I'm visiting a resort. Rather than monopolizing a full day, the golf at Terranea is simply a *part* of the experience. With rates ranging from \$55-\$73 (and \$32-\$40 for juniors!), it's also ultra-accessible for resort guests and local visitors alike.

My round at The Links was a joy. I played early, on a breezy gray morning — perfect walking weather. I opted not to schlep my clubs for my short visit across state lines and was outfitted with one of the course's TaylorMade rental sets. With limited acreage to work with, the course opted not to construct a driving range. Instead, there are Full Swing Golf Studio simulator bays, which are also available to rent for groups or special events. I took a few swings with the short irons and deemed myself ready to go.

It's common to think of a par-3 course as “easy,” but despite The Links' short yardage (all holes range from 104-173 yards, for a total course length of 1,239), I can vouch that it's anything but. The course, which opened in 2009, demands precision. Wayward shots will be punished by deep, rugged greenside bunkers, thick rough and long grass. And once you're on the green, you'll have to navigate both sloping contours and subtle breaks.

But even if you miss every green, you can't help but be awed by your surroundings. Walking the course in the fresh ocean air up and down moderate elevation changes is an invigorating experience. An expansive vista of the Pacific Ocean and Catalina Island is visible on just about every hole, and the lush natural landscape that surrounds the course is a sight to behold. My visit coincided with the tail end of California's “super bloom,” making the cliffside even more vibrant and colorful than usual.





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By the time you reach the course's closing hole, No. 9, a slightly downhill 121-yarder in which you face the ocean off the tee, you don't want the round to end. Our group of three played at an un-rushed pace in less than 90 minutes. If you're craving more golf, another loop awaits for a reduced replay rate of \$35-\$50. Or, you can invite the rest of the family to join you from across the resort property for some putting and chipping battles on the The Links' expansive short-game practice area. Otherwise, Terranea offers boundless activities to fill the day.

As for me, nine holes was just right. I had a poolside lounge waiting.