

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

Short Golf Courses Are Having a Moment—Here Are 10 of the Best in the U.S. and Mexico

Here's where to play a quick round.

By **Patricia Doherty** | Published on July 18, 2026



An aerial view of golfers at The Links at Terranea.

I've been playing golf for 25 years or so, taking up the game with my husband's encouragement, and it's given me an opportunity to see some of the most beautiful places in the world. But in recent years, I've been enjoying playing just nine holes instead of a full 18—with co-workers after a day of teaching middle school, with a friend for a casual morning round, or at a resort as part of a day's entertainment. It seems that I'm not the only one who has discovered the joys of playing a two-hour round of golf. [United States Golf Association](#) data shows golfers played a record number of nine-hole rounds in 2025.

No longer just a pastime for country clubbers and weekend duffers, golf is growing in popularity, with around three million annual [newcomers](#) to the game every year since 2020. Entertainment golf venues like Topgolf and hotels with Topgolf Swing Suites have created interest among younger players, many of whom are taking their new hobby onto the course. Though again, they don't always need to play a full round, as short courses make golf accessible from the standpoint of time and budget, with less stress and more fun for beginners, seniors, and families. And that goes double for vacation-goers.

Resorts with short courses offer golfers a chance to get in a round and still have time to spend on other activities. The courses range from nine holes to one with 18 par-three holes (ironically, the one named "The Short Course"), making play faster. Here are some luxurious places to stay where golfers can enjoy a round and still have time to enjoy the resort's other amenities.

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The Ranch at Laguna Beach, Laguna Beach, California



Golfers on a putting green at The Ranch at Laguna Beach.

Winding through the trees, hills, creeks, and rugged walls of Aliso Canyon, this nine-hole course offers both par-three and par-four holes. I love the serene canyon setting for its relaxing atmosphere, with stunning views and wildlife spotting. Golf carts and push carts are available for rent, and there's a patio with a bar and restaurant overlooking the course. The [resort](#) includes a spa, farm tours, restaurants, fire pits, and activities that include surfing lessons, e-bike tours, boating, and stargazing.