



## Inside California's Golf Paradise for Wealthy Titans

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By Katy McLaughlin  
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For roughly a century, moguls, movie stars and heirs have swung golf clubs and soaked in the sea breezes on Pebble Beach, Calif.'s scenic 17-Mile Drive. These days, the large homes that line the Pacific coast and golf courses are still owned by the wealthy, including a significant cohort who are escaping hot weather down south.

Neighbors include Warren Stephens, the chief executive of Stephens Inc., a Little Rock, Ark.-based financial services firm, who paid \$31.25 million for a home with golf course and waterfront views on the drive in 2014. Charles Crocker, a descendant and the namesake of one of the "Big Four" railroad tycoons who once owned the land upon which Pebble Beach stands, owns a home built in 1913, according to public records. Jim Hoak bought a house on the drive in 1993 for \$11.5 million, according to public records. In 1997, the media executive sold Heritage Media to what is now News Corp, which publishes The Wall Street Journal, in a deal valued at \$1.35 billion.

"It's my favorite place in the whole world," said Mr. Hoak, 74, who lives primarily in Dallas. "Wherever I am, I dream about Pebble Beach." Mr. Crocker didn't respond to requests for comment. Mr. Stephens confirmed his ownership but declined to answer further questions.

With its mild year-round weather, Pebble Beach is known for its top golf events. It will host the U.S. Open next year for the sixth time and has a regular roster of top tournaments, including the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. The Concours d'Elegance car show attracts collectors from around the world, and the Food & Wine festival is a draw in the spring.

The original 17-Mile Drive was laid out in 1881 by the Pacific Improvement Co., a holding company controlled by railroad barons, including Charles Crocker. In 1919, PIC employee Samuel Morse crafted a deal to develop the area himself. He envisioned it as a "Newport of the West"—a residential playground for the wealthy, said Charles Osborne, his grandson and the 71-year-old chairman of a San Francisco investment bank.

Mr. Morse, who died in 1969, cultivated relationships with the artistic, the rich and the famous. Salvador Dali stayed at the Pebble Beach Lodge and elsewhere in the community throughout the 1940s and hosted a ball there in 1941, said Neal Hotelling, historian for Pebble Beach Co. In 1947, golf enthusiast, actor and singer Bing Crosby moved a golf tournament he founded called "the Clambake" to Pebble Beach, and the following year built himself a house on 17-Mile Drive.

In the late 1950s, Mr. Crosby sold his house and moved to Hillsborough, Calif., said his son Nathaniel Crosby, a real-estate developer and former professional golfer. After Mr. Crosby died in 1977, the younger Mr. Crosby began hosting the Clambake in his stead.

"It was a lot of attention for a young guy," said Mr. Crosby, who has continued to visit the area. His father's home was torn down in the early 1990s, he said. The Clambake became the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.

In 1999, a consortium that included actor and director Clint Eastwood and pro golfer Arnold Palmer purchased Pebble Beach Co., owner of Pebble Beach Golf Links and other golf courses,

**The Homes of Pebble Beach and 17-Mile Drive**

A tour of three homes in the wealthy California community.



This home right off 17-Mile Drive is on the market for \$22.85 million. TYLER CHARTIER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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Yanni and Nancy Kavayiotidis in their home. Just above 17-Mile Drive, it is asking \$22.85 million. PHOTO: TYLER CHARTIER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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the Lodge at Pebble Beach and 17-Mile Drive itself, said Mr. Hotelling. Continuing a long tradition, tourists pay to tour 17-Mile Drive—the fee today is \$10.25.

Paul Hoffman, a 67-year-old retired software sales executive, grew up in New York, dreaming of someday visiting Pebble Beach. In 2010, he and his wife, Marianne, bought a full-time home for \$4.5 million, he said. They specifically looked for a house not directly on the drive because the “steady stream of tourists” causes traffic, Mr. Hoffman said. They spent another roughly \$4.5 million renovating the property.

Ms. Hoffman died last year, leaving Mr. Hoffman “with a daily reminder of her. I live in her creation,” he said.

The history of a Midcentury Modern-style home on 17-Mile Drive reflects the growing popularity of the area with wealthy Texans. Previously owned by the late Tibor Rudas, a Las



This 17-Mile Drive home is currently on the market for \$9.6 million. PHOTO: ALANNA HALE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



The home was owned by Texas rancher Jim Whittenburg and his wife Katsy, both of whom recently died. PHOTO: ALANNA HALE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



A view of the green and water from the home of Paul Hoffman, a retired software sales executive. PHOTO: ALANNA HALE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Vegas impresario known for producing the Three Tenors concerts, according to public records, the home was purchased in 2010 for \$6.5 million by Texas rancher Jim Whittenburg and his wife Katsy, who renovated it.

The couple regularly hosted parties in the summer for neighbors, many of whom also hailed from Texas, said daughter Leslie el-Effendi. Mr. Whittenburg died in late 2016 and Ms. Whittenburg soon after; the house is on the market for \$9.6 million with Peter Butler, an agent at the Carmel Realty Co.

“Buyers of the big 17-Mile Drive estates today include many prominent Texans,” said Mr. Butler, who has been selling in the area for 22 years. According to public records, they include trial lawyer Cary Patterson, best known for representing the state of Texas against tobacco companies in the late 1990s. Another home is registered in public records to Roxanne Roberts, wife of Gene Phillips, a Dallas-based real-estate investor. Mr. Phillips confirmed ownership; Mr. Patterson didn’t respond to requests for comment.



The living room in the Hoffman home. PHOTO: ALANNA HALE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Some residents complain that the drive can get clogged with tourists. And with so many neighbors dropping in for just a few weeks out of the year, some streets are rather unoccupied, said Yanni Kavayiotidis, the founder of a



Mr. Hoffman bought the home with his late wife Marianne in 2010. PHOTO: ALANNA HALE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

chain of physical-therapy clinics and a commercial real-estate investor. Bill Perocchi, chief executive of Pebble Beach Co. , said that residential portions of 17-Mile Drive are usually “very quiet” and that there is a mix of year-round and second-home residents.

Mr. Kavayiotidis bought a \$2 million house just above 17-Mile Drive in 1998 from David Roderick, the former chairman of U.S. Steel, according to public records. Mr. Kavayiotidis said he and his wife, Nancy, tore down the ranch house and spent five years building a Mediterranean/Tuscan-style villa he now has listed with Marta Karpel of Alain Pinel Realtors in Carmel for \$22.85 million.

Mr. Kavayiotidis plans to move closer to his grandchildren and buy a smaller vacation house in Pebble Beach.

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