

# FG

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COOL SPOTS

**Don Cheadle**

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upscale retail boutiques and restaurants, with be open for business. Look out, Las Vegas, it seems you're not the only one in the game anymore.

#### Meanwhile ... Back on the West Coast

Just when you thought golf on our side of the world couldn't get any better — after all, the Bandon courses, the Pelican Hills, the Torrey Pines and Trump National, just to name a few, make for a pretty spectacular lineup — along comes something completely unexpected.

In April, Team FG got an e-mail from the USGA's David Fay, saying how much he appreciated this magazine's planning guide to this year's U.S. Open at Pebble Beach. To us, it's high praise: Fay is a guy whose opinions and experience are crucial when it comes to deciding where to stage future championships, including the Open.

Our reply back? "Thanks for the kudos, but more importantly, thanks for adding Chambers Bay to the Open rota."

As most people in the free world now know, Chambers Bay will host the nation's biggest golf competition in 2015 (and this year's U.S. Amateur as well, an apt shakedown cruise for sure). By then it will have eight years of operation under its sandy, scenic belt. No doubt the fescue will rise waist-high in spots, fairways will roll faster than the Open has ever seen (except for, perhaps, those at Shinnecock Hills), and the greens, also fescue, will send the Stimp into fits. We can't wait. It'll be unlike any U.S. Open before it.

Good thing we don't have to wait 'til then to play it ourselves. Like its fellow Open first-timer, Torrey Pines South in 2008, Chambers Bay is a municipal, the brainchild of Pierce County mover and shaker John Ladenburg. It's also, arguably, the best golf course on the entire West Coast.

Them's fightin' words for the legions of Pebble Beach and Bandon fans out there (we're members, too), but there's just something about Chambers that puts it on its own plane of fun and fascination. Whether you're licking your chops for that opening tee shot into a stiff, chilly breeze off Puget Sound — as we did during one spring visit — or find yourself under the sunny, early summer Pacific Northwest skies we encountered during our second



## HOTEL MURANO

No, the cab driver didn't drop you off at an art gallery by mistake. This is, indeed, the Hotel Murano in downtown Tacoma, a few minutes from the first tee at Chambers Bay. It just happens to double as an art gallery, with a glass-blowing studio right on the premises and a sleek, modern, colorful design scheme that extends into every public and private space.

If the lobby were a golf course, it would be Cypress Point, Augusta National or, yes, Chambers Bay itself — with various styles of art adorning the walls and heightening the senses from every angle, it's impossible to keep those creative notions from bubbling to the surface. Designed with one eye on the avant-garde and one on traditional Pacific Northwest imagery (one current exhibit features a fascinating take on fishing lures), it's a welcome space that's soothing and invigorating at the same time, a heightened and happy frame of mind that only intensifies after you check in to a room that's got all the hallmarks of a four-star stay. High thread-count sheets. A flat panel television. Luxurious, fashion-forward furnishings and fixtures. A "Help Me" button on the phone that'll lead to pretty much whatever you need, including first-class room service or reservations at a nearby restaurant or theater. Even iPods have a dock to call home in Murano's rooms, and if you're the type of traveler who likes to bring a pet along, they can handle that, too.

Inviting and comfy as the rooms are, this is really a wanderer's hotel, a gallery of modern art. And while Hotel Murano's parent company, Provenance, operates three other well-regarded properties — two of them on Portland, one in Seattle, one in Nashville — we can't imagine them surpassing this place in any way. Good thing the cabbie knew where to stop.

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