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LAUNCH YOUR BALL LIKE A ROCKET—AND WATCH A MISSILE, TOO—AT MARSHALLIA RANCH GOLF COURSE

Affordable Golf Awaits at Vandenberg Air Force Base on California's Central Coast

Santa Maria, California—Titan missiles aren't the only things launched at Vandenberg Air Force Base on California's Central Coast, where golf balls soar above one of the nation's most acclaimed military golf courses—and where golfers even schedule their tee times to coincide with rocket launches. The course is open to the public.

"Just last week, we had a lot of people come out to watch the launch of an Italian satellite," said Paul Feckovic, the director of golf at Marshallia Ranch Golf Course. "It was quite a sight."

Vandenberg Air Force Base is headquarters for the 30th Space Wing, which manages U.S. Department of Defense space and missile testing.

The 18-hole Marshallia Ranch Golf Course unfolds amid stunning coastal hills and costs just \$38 maximum to play on weekends and weekdays. It is one of several world-class golf courses located in Santa Barbara County's Santa Maria Valley and neighboring regions in the heart of the Central Coast wine country.

"We're one of the best-kept secrets and one of the most affordable full-size courses in California," said Feckovic, who added that the ratio of military to civilian players is about equal.

Marshallia Ranch Golf Course features 6,845 yards of golf from the longest tees for a par of 72. The course was designed by Bob Putman and opened in 1958. Out of 70 courses operated by the U.S. Air Force, Marshallia Ranch Golf Course is the only one to twice earn a five-star award of excellence from the agency. It earned the award in 2005 and 2006. Results are pending for 2007.

The course is also a popular missile-viewing destination. According to Feckovic, even non-golfers come out to witness the launches from the clubhouse patio. While the course resides on U.S. Air Force property, it is outside the confines of the official base—enabling visitors to enjoy launch proximity without having to obtain a clearance pass, as is required for on-base viewing. The Vandenberg Air Force Base launch schedule can be obtained by calling the base's "launch update and rumor control hotline" at (805) 606-1857.

Rockets, however, aren't the only sightseeing attraction at Marshallia Ranch Golf Course. The 13th hole tee box offers ocean views, and the course boasts a wide range of rugged coastal scenery. The course is also populated by an array of local wildlife such as deer, badgers, raccoons, wild boars and, of course, birdies. If you're lucky, you might even spot an eagle.

"We're here for the troops, to make sure they have a facility that's comparable to those on the outside," Feckovic said. "At the same time, we're also here as a showcase for all golfers. We ultimately aim to represent the best of military golf, which is about the discipline and enjoyment of the game."

For special local golf and lodging packages, visit www.CaliforniaGolfVacation.com. For rates, events and information about Marshallia Ranch Golf Course, visit <http://www.30svs.com/svbg.html> or call (805) 734-1333.