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TAKE A SWING AT AFFORDABLE GOLF

Golf on California's Central Coast Shines as Santa Maria Valley Offers Stunning Mix of Courses at Affordable Rates

SANTA MARIA, CA—To enjoy the refreshing mix of attributes that defines the Santa Maria Valley golf experience, all you have to do is step up to the picturesque first tee at **Rancho Maria Golf Club**. Here at this 18-hole championship course amid the rolling foothills along scenic Highway 1 in northern Santa Barbara County, rates top out at \$32—a steal compared to most courses of similar scope and charm.

Yet in the Santa Maria Valley, Rancho Maria is not alone in its combination of stunning scenery, affordable rates and relatively uncrowded fairways. For example, at **Marshallia Ranch Golf Course** at nearby Vandenberg Air Force Base, rates hold at just \$37 on both weekdays and weekends. Considered the third most challenging military course in the world, Marshallia hits golfers with blustery ocean winds and fog, giant eucalyptus trees and large patches of ice plant. The course is open to the public.

Meanwhile, **Blacklake Golf Resort** in Nipomo—a 27-hole championship course that highlights the rugged beauty of the Central Coast—offers rates starting at just \$50 on weekdays, while weekend and holiday rates begin at \$65. Located between Santa Maria and Pismo Beach, Blacklake's three nine-hole sections offer challenges for all skill levels. Here, dark woodlands, coastal hills and sparkling ponds dot the landscape.

La Purisima Golf Course in Lompoc, acclaimed by *Golf Magazine* as one of the nation's top 100 public courses, is another relative bargain, with fees starting at \$55 for 18 holes Monday through Thursday while weekend rates are \$70. Developed by Kenneth H. Hunter, Jr. in 1986, this scenic course meanders across 300 acres of ancient sand dunes and oak woodlands, and is one of the highest ranked courses on California's Central Coast.

Other excellent nearby courses include **Avila Beach Golf Resort** (18 holes, par 71) at Avila Beach,, and **River Course at the Alisal** (18 holes, par 72) in Solvang.

Visit www.californiagolfvacation.com for more information and special golf packages offered by local hotels. A free brochure showcasing local golf courses and hotel packages is also available by calling the Santa Maria Valley Visitor & Convention Bureau at (800) 331-3779, or visit www.santamaria.com.

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Santa Maria Valley Area Golf Courses

Rancho Maria Golf Club

www.ranchomariagolf.com, 805-937-2019, 1950 Casmalia Road, Santa Maria, CA 93455

18-hole championship public course; golf shop; driving range; PGA professionals; practice bunker/pitching green; coffee shop.

Rates: 18-regular weekdays, \$30; weekends, \$32.

Marshallia Ranch Golf Course

www.californiagolfvacation.com, 805-734-4764, Building 1335 Vandenberg Air Force Base, VAFB, CA 93437

18-hole championship course; restaurant; driving range; pro shop

Rates: 18-regular weekdays, \$37; weekends, \$37; \$24 after 1 p.m.; and \$14 after 5 p.m.

Blacklake Golf Resort

www.blacklake.com, 805-343-1214, 1490 Golf Course Lane, Nipomo, CA 93444

27-hole championship course; restaurant; golf instruction; driving range; banquet facilities; pro shop

Rates: 18 regular weekdays, \$50; weekends, \$65.

La Purisima Golf Course

www.lapurisimagolf.com, 805-735-8395, 3455 State Highway 246, Lompoc, CA 93436

18-hole championship course; restaurant; driving range; golf instruction; banquet facilities

Rates: 18-regular weekdays, \$55; weekends, \$70.

Sunset Ridge Golf Center

www.californiagolfvacation.com, 1424 Fairway Drive, Santa Maria, CA 93455

9-hole, par 28

Rates: weekdays, \$8; weekends, \$10.

Avila Beach Golf Resort

www.avilabeachresort.com, 6464 Ana Bay Drive, Avila Beach, CA

18-hole, par 71

Rates: weekdays, \$50; weekends, \$65.

River Course at the Alisal

www.rivercourse.com, 150 Alisal Road, Solvang

18-hole, par 72

Rates: weekdays, \$50; weekends, \$60.

For more information on golf destinations in the Santa Maria Valley, please visit www.santamaria.com or call the Santa Maria Valley Visitor & Convention Bureau at 800-331-3779.