



# Family-Friendly Short Courses Are Gaining Favor

Many golf communities are adding pint-size courses, which appeal to children as well as to parents who lack the time to play 18 holes.

**By Debra Kamin**

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Even in Cabot Cape Breton, a golf community perched across sandy cliffs in remote Nova Scotia, the waves pounding against the dunes can't erase the pandemic pressures of video calls and remote-work deadlines.

They also can't extend the stamina of a child or novice golfer, so last summer, [Cabot Cape Breton](#) opened the Nest: a 10-hole short course that can be completed in just over an hour.

The Nest's opening came as hundreds of other short courses have been designed or unveiled across the globe in golf communities, which have seen record-breaking sales to families with young children.

At Haig Point, a golf community on Daufuskie Island, S.C., where prices are up 14 percent since before the pandemic, families have comprised nearly 25 percent of new buyers and the average age of residents is now 51. Before Covid, it was 63.

As parents increasingly convert a quick turn on the golf course into a family activity squeezed between virtual meetings, golf communities are boosting their amenities with pint-size courses that can shift a round of golf into a true family affair.

“Short courses are all the vogue now,” said Ben Cowan-Dewar, chief executive of Cabot Cape Breton. “We’ve seen them everywhere.”

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Short courses are not new — courses with nine or 10 holes have been gaining steam since the 1950s as fast and fun alternatives to the full 18-hole experience.

But as social mores have shifted over the decades, so has the demand for a different type of golf experience. Women worked their way not just into the boardroom but also onto the back nine; men began to take more active roles in their children’s lives; smartphones, and all their buzzing alerts, began accompanying people everywhere they went.

Then came Covid-19, and its trifecta of remote work, virtual school, and the need for activities in the open air.

As sales of golf homes rose among families with children, “short courses really took flight because they allowed families to recreate together safely, outside and socially distanced,” said John Kirk, a partner at the architecture firm Cooper Robertson. “Younger golfers don’t necessarily have the stamina or patience for a more prolonged golf outing, and have other things going on in their lives, so this works.”

Short courses, where a round of play can cost half as much as on a full-size course, also are part of a bigger cultural shift, said Rob Duckett, vice president of South Street Partners, which has developed several master-planned golf communities in the Southeast including [Kiawah Island Club and Kiawah Island Real Estate](#), [the Cliffs](#) and [Palmetto Bluff](#).

With the arrival of younger residents, there's been a push for more casual, relaxed programming, thinking beyond the traditional parameters of retirees playing golf.

“At our properties, we have added fun programming such as night golf, music on the range, and comfort stations to the golf courses with signature dishes and cocktails that make golf more of a social event that is still enjoyable for experienced golfers while less intimidating for new ones,” Mr. Duckett said in an email. “The addition of nongolf amenities that appeal to a broader age range, such as [pickleball](#) and shooting, is also a shift I've seen. Basically, thinking about programming and activities that appeal to the whole family, rather than just traditionally catering to dads.”

Karen and Brad Cook, avid golfers who live in Maui and are building a 3,400-square-foot, four-bedroom home at Cape Breton, are hoping that the community's new short course will help them pass on their love of golf to their two boys, 11 and 13.