

MY NOTRE DAME GOLF GETAWAY ... A SLICE OF HEAVEN ON EARTH!

By Cheryl Justak

You don't have to be Irish or even a Notre Dame fan for that matter to enjoy championship golf, full service hotels with friendly staff, as well as great gathering spots for dining and drinks in the heart of Notre Dame and all that South Bend has to offer. My husband and I had the opportunity last fall to get away for a weekend of golf and relaxation. We didn't book any special package, but set up our plans directly with the hotel and golf course. We also didn't want to drive too far, yet we wanted to feel like we could totally relax and have some much needed fun. After an easy short drive, we checked into the **Inn at Saint Mary's**, located on the campus of Saint Mary's College, right off the Indiana Toll Road. Not wanting to eat too late and because it was raining, we decided to walk next door for dinner at the **Bistro 933 Restaurant** located at the **Hilton Garden Inn**. I was pleasantly surprised at how busy the bar and restaurant were for a non-football weekend in South Bend. We enjoyed a wonderful gourmet dinner with wine, exceptional hospitality and service, and afterwards we walked less than 100 yards back to our hotel for a nightcap in the bar. Very convenient!

In the morning, we enjoyed a complimentary full hot breakfast before heading off to play **The Warren Golf Course at Notre Dame** located about 10 minutes driving distance from the hotel. Upon arrival, we were pleasantly greeted by course staff members who made us feel so welcome. The golf course was in exceptional condition even for that time of year. Designed by Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore, arguably the greatest golf architects of the day, we enjoyed playing this classic links design with square tee boxes, undulating well-manicured greens, and thoughtfully trimmed native grasses. Although the service and ambiance felt like that of a private golf club, Warren is a public facility that rivals even the best private courses in the region. Recently rated the #5 Course in Indiana and the #12 Best College Course in America by *GolfWeek*, the course's beauty and upkeep can definitely be appreciated and enjoyed by golfers of every skill level. The 250-acre venue is also a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.

After our round, we enjoyed a beverage in the clubhouse, then went back to our hotel to clean up and get ready for dinner in town. Before dinner we headed off to church for Saturday mass. We had always wanted to visit and attend mass at the famous **Basilica of the Sacred Heart**, so we inquired at the hotel about mass times and directions. It was a wonderful and surreal experience to say the least! Afterwards, we drove into downtown South Bend just minutes away and enjoyed a fabulous dinner at the top-rated **LaSalle Grille** (reservations recommended), with a stroll afterwards to the **South Bend Chocolate Factory & Cafe** for a cappuccino and chocolate.

We passed on golf the next day at the top-rated championship-quality **Blackthorn Golf Club** because of rain, and decided to check out the Notre Dame Book Store, **The Morris Inn** and the **Ivy Court Inn & Suites** that we had heard so much about.

The Morris Inn serves as the gateway to the beautiful campus of the University of Notre Dame, setting the standard for unprecedented hospitality. Minutes from The Warren Golf Course, the famed Golden Dome serves as a backdrop for your day on the links. Afterwards, you can enjoy fine dining in **Sorin's** or relax in **Leahy's Lounge** to the sights and sounds that take you back to one of the greatest Notre Dame football eras. An experience steeped in tradition, history and memories.

The newly renovated **Ivy Court Inn and Suites**, a unique boutique-style hotel, is located across the street from the University of Notre Dame's campus, just down the street from their superb golf course and unbeatably close to the heart of the city of South Bend. You can choose from various room plans, and enjoy intimate gathering spaces complete with an exercise room, and a hot breakfast with made to order eggs and make your own waffles.

Both of these quaint boutique-style hotels offer a unique experience, with wonderful hospitality, located in the heart of Notre Dame. With so many choices for a superb golf getaway, it's a must-do for 2012!