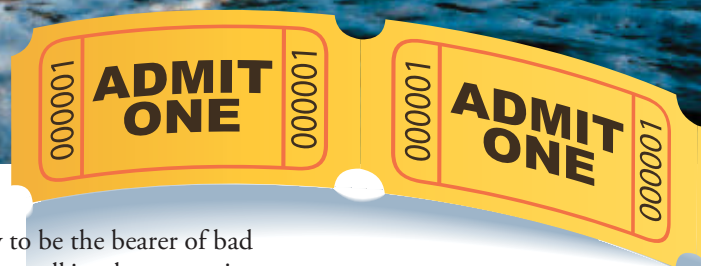
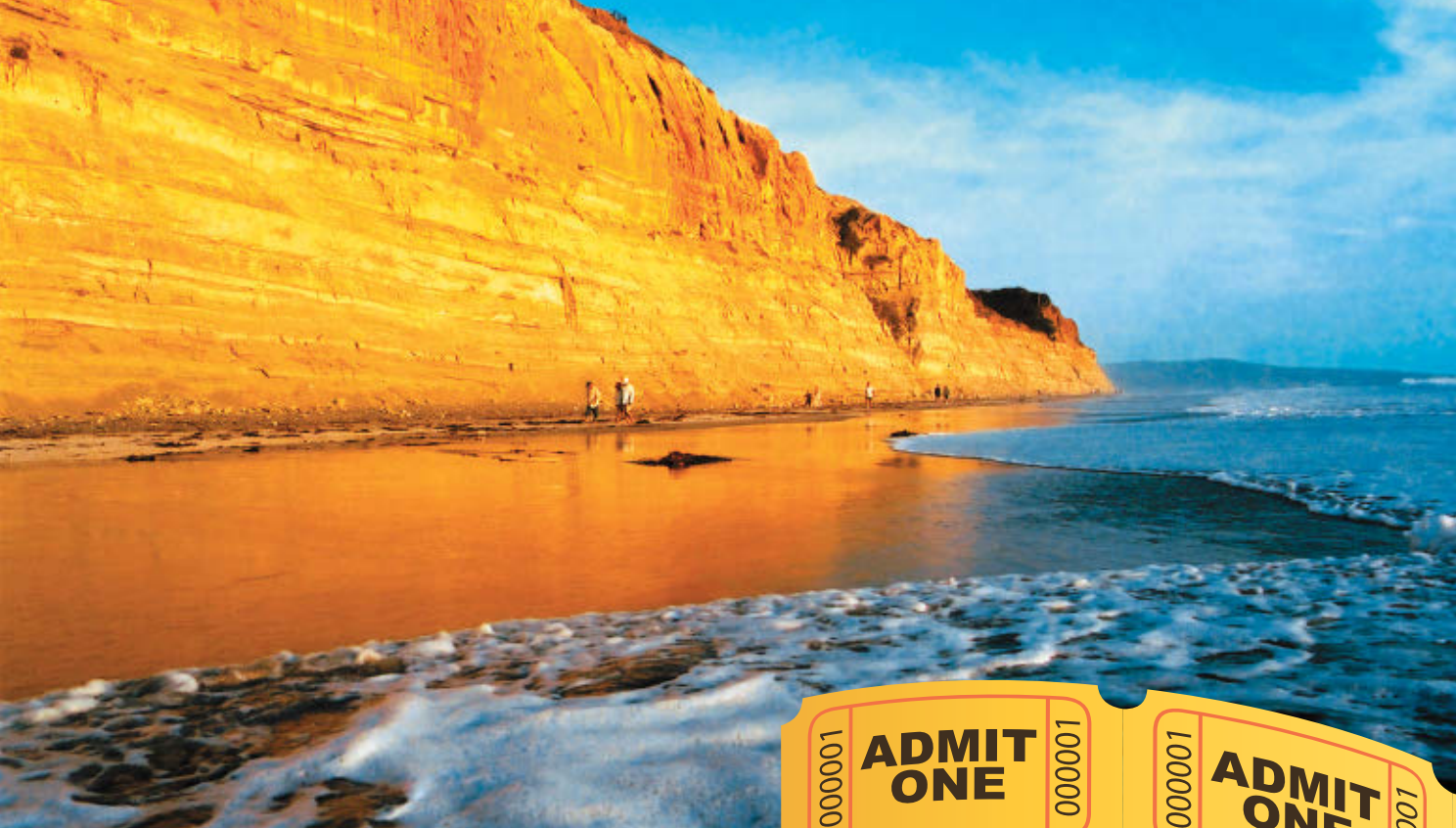




Oh, the Distractions!

The worst thing about going to a city like **San Diego** for a convention is there's so much to do. But is that *really* so bad?

BY RON FURLONG, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Why do the powers that be behind the Golf Industry Show continue to choose locations such as Orlando, Anaheim and San Diego for their annual event? And now Las Vegas is back in the mix, too.

Come on already! Why can't they choose cities with interesting February weather? I've long been pushing destinations like Omaha, Neb., St. Paul, Minn., and Cleveland for the annual extravaganza — cities that are at their best in February.

Can't you imagine the invigorating air of St. Paul in mid-February? Closing my eyes, I can almost feel the fresh, arctic air coursing through my lungs and a snot icicle forming at the bottom of my nostril as I trudge toward the convention center from my hotel while fighting the cold wind and snow flurries that blind my path. That's what I'm talking about!

Let's take San Diego, for instance, since many of us are reluctantly heading there next month for the show. What can one really do there, outside of the conference?

First of all, the weather will be nasty — 72 degrees and sunny every day. Who likes

that? Boring! Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but you may as well just leave your ice skates and cross-country skis at home. You can't even pack that new winter coat you wanted to show off to your pals.

And then, of course, there's the little matter of attractions. What in the heck are you going to do in San Diego? Does the city have the world's largest ball of twine like that in Cawker City, Kan.? No. Does it have a really cool statue of a lumberjack and his ox like the one in Bemidji, Minn.? Not likely. Can you ice fish in San Diego? I don't think so.

In fact, just for fun, let's try and list some of the things one can do in San Diego as a diversion to the conference. This shouldn't take long:

▲ **Beaches.** I suppose one could head to a beach, if one really wanted to do such a thing. There are Coronado, Imperial, Silver Strand, Mission, Pacific, **La Jolla**, Del Mar, Torrey Pines, Carlsbad and Swamis.

Almost all of these beaches, and a few more not listed, are large sandy landscapes with lifeguard service and some even offer surfing. I guess that would be kind of cool, (clearing throat), if you're into that.

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▲ **Golfing.** There can't be too many places to golf in San Diego. Well, I mean, except for **Torrey Pines**, of course. And San Diego Country Club and, well, about 100 more courses. Plan ahead and use your connections to get on any one of dozens of great golf courses. But, really, who wants to golf?

► **Downtown shopping.** There's the **Gaslamp Quarter**, a 16.5-block renovated historic neighborhood in the heart of downtown, with great shopping and a vibrant nightlife. There's also the Horton Plaza, a beautiful five-level outdoor shopping mall with bright colors and amazing Southwestern architecture. But who wants to shop?



◀ **Family attractions.** When you think of cities to travel to for fun with the family, does anyone ever think of San Diego? What is there? Oh sure, there's Sea World, the San Diego Zoo (maybe the best zoo in the world), Legoland, the **Birch Aquarium**, Balboa Park (the world's largest urban cultural park) and Belmont Park for some great rides. Or you could all go kayaking or scuba diving or whale watching or take a harbor cruise. But can one put these things ahead of, say, Pittsburgh in February? Or a late winter's day in Chattanooga, Tenn?



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▲ **Museums.** And what's a cultural fellow to do in San Diego? I suppose you could wander into the Maritime Museum (for under \$10, by the way) and see five historic vessels. Or find yourself in the San Diego Natural History Museum, the city's premier museum, which was fully renovated in 2001. Or visit the renowned San Diego Air and Space Museum or the San Diego Railroad Museum, which even offers rail tours of California and into Mexico. I suppose a chap could do that, if a chap was so inclined.

Food. Who wants good food? Uh, well, I do. San Diego is chock full of great eating, from casual to fine dining. For seafood, I've heard nothing but great things about Turlock's, where your crab is guaranteed to have been crawling across the ocean floor less than 24 hours before you take a bite out of him. It's on University Center Lane. Or enjoy great modern American cuisine while perched atop a skyscraper at Bertrand at Mister A's Restaurant, located on Fifth Avenue. Great Italian food can be found at Baci Ristorante on Morena Boulevard. Of course, there are more casual choices as well, like the Hard Rock Café (on Fourth Street) or one of many great outdoor choices in the beautiful Horton Plaza. A good Web site for restaurant listings and reviews is www.sandiegorestaurants.com — if you really feel like you need to eat.



▲ **Theaters and music.** There's more than you can shake a stick at. If it's a play you're after, you can't do better than the Old Globe or the **Balboa** theaters. As far as music, take your pick. The House of Blues is legendary. The city is literally filled with music of every kind.

Well, that's that. I hope I cleared that up for you. San Diego is no place to hold a conference. Got it? Join me in backing the push for Des Moines for the next open show slot.

OK, I've got to run. My wife is calling. She wants to know if we're doing Sea World on Friday or Saturday and which day we can fit in the San Diego Zoo. I'd better take the call. ■

Furlong, a Golfdom contributor, is golf course superintendent of Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Wash.

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