

Golf Digest

Top 50 Most Fun Private Golf Courses

<http://www.golfdigest.com/golf-courses/2012-09/most-fun-private-golf-courses>



Fishers Island is off the Connecticut coast but is considered part of New York.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN SZURLEJ

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Click on underlined names for more info on public courses.

1. Cypress Point C.

Pebble Beach

Seductive as a reunion with an old flame. Begins as a stroll through a forest, evolves into a tryst among coastal dunes, ends with hopes dashed on the rocks.

2. Fishers Island (N.Y.) C.

This Seth Raynor/Charles Banks masterpiece proves it once and for all: Blue bloods are capable of having fun.

3. National G. Links of America

Southampton, N.Y.

Neighbor Shinnecock Hills gets more ink, but this C.B. Macdonald beauty delivers the Hamptons' most diverting 18--plus an all-world lobster lunch.

4. Sand Hills G.C.

Mullen, Neb.

Golf in an isolation chamber of tumbling sand dunes, gusty winds and star-filled evenings. A step back in time. A step in the right direction.

5. Augusta (Ga.) National G.C. Par-3 Cse.

Perfect before or after the sumptuous main course, with all of the beauty but none of the angst, though it does share those swirling winds.

6. The Dunes C.

New Buffalo, Mich.

Mike Keiser's first venture in course ownership, in sand dunes and forest. A pocket-size Pine Valley with alternate tees for a second loop.

7. San Francisco G.C.

So much fun, this A.W. Tillinghast layout is where Mickelson, Toms, Ogilvy and Garcia played practice rounds before the 2012 U.S. Open.

8. Mountain Lake

Lake Wales, Fla.

A winning combination of familiar hole designs and unusual greens. Though hilly (for Florida), this Seth Raynor original begs to be walked.

9. Augusta (Ga.) National G.C.

From the members' tees of 6,365 yards, it's a thrill to pull off shots seen in the Masters.

10. Shoreacres

Lake Bluff, Ill.

Magic on the lakefront, where ravines crisscrossing Seth Raynor's design contain architectural trap doors and secret passageways.

11. Yeamans Hall C.

Hanahan, S.C.

This charming old-school Seth Raynor course mixes long and short holes in a layout that twists and turns blissfully through the lowcountry.

12. Sankaty Head G.C.

Nantucket, Mass.

A wind-swept links on a mountainous corner of Nantucket. If you play, take a caddie. They're plentiful, and stuck on the island.

13. Essex County C.

Manchester, Mass.

The first great Donald Ross design seems to have been lifted from the Old Country. Rustic and rugged, with one green that looks like the deck of a sinking ship.

14. Garden City (N.Y.) G.C.

This might have been how our forefathers played, on near-level ground dotted with pot bunkers and slashed with remnants of old roadbeds.

15. Valley C. of Montecito (Calif.)

What this golden-era Alister Mackenzie layout lacks in length it more than makes up for in design variety, atmosphere and scenery.

16. Eastward Ho! C.C.

Chatham, Mass.

The equivalent of a neck-twisting roller-coaster ride along a waterfront. If you come upon a flat lie, it's likely a tee box.

17. Palmetto G.C.

Aiken, S.C.

It's Augusta National without the heavy make-up and with more authentic Alister Mackenzie greens.

18. Prairie Dunes C.C.

Hutchinson, Kan.

You can't call yourself an experienced golfer if you've never tangled with a plum thicket, a yucca in a bunker or a hump-backed Perry Maxwell putting surface.

19. Myopia Hunt C.

South Hamilton, Mass.

A funky, quirky lark where greens look like bath mats and bunkers look like bathtubs.

20. Somerset Hills C.C.

Bernardsville, N.J.

One of A.W. Tillinghast's earliest, done with whimsy. Dolomite mounds surrounding one green are topped only by knobs within another green.

21. The Olympic C. (Cliffs)

San Francisco

Perched above the Pacific, only three of the nine one-shot holes are true cliffhangers, but the others can pose mysteries when the ocean winds are up.

22. Kittansett C.

Marion, Mass.

How can an oceanside course that starts on the beach, then heads inland through trees until the end, be so special? Because golf is more than vistas.

23. Indian Creek C.C.

Miami Beach

There's nothing tricky at this super-private island club--just pure golf.

24. Monroe G.C.

Pittsford, N.Y.

A Donald Ross design that hasn't been juiced up for championship competition. Every bunker seems strategically placed; every green has subtle breaks.

25. Maidstone C.

East Hampton, N.Y.

One of the true classics on New York's Long Island, designed by Willie Park Jr. and Jack Park. The 148-yard 14th is a shot out to the Atlantic that you'll never forget.

26. Merion G.C. (West)

Ardmore, Pa.

A members' version of the U.S. Open East Course. Less than 6,000 yards, the West has similar tiny greens and the same jumbled topography.

27. Monterey Peninsula C.C. (Shore)

Pebble Beach

A round at Mike Strantz's last design is like being enveloped by an enormous oil painting.

28. C.C. of Fairfield (Conn.)

An almost treeless links layout next to the Southport Harbor, this Seth Raynor design features some C.B. Macdonald template holes.

29. Pine Valley (N.J.) G.C. (Short)

For those who find the real thing overwhelming, this 10-hole version of Pine Valley's Greatest Hits, with holes like the second and 10th faithfully duplicated.

30. Ekwanok C.C.

Manchester, Vt.

There's not a lot of trouble off the tee at this walkable course set gracefully in the Green Mountains by Walter J. Travis. Beware of those treacherously fast greens.

31. St. Louis C.C.

So many huge, unique landforms, it's like playing golf through a dinosaur graveyard.

32. Newport (R.I.) C.C.

This elegantly simple links course plays way tougher when the wind is up. Even in unfriendly weather, the ambience is first-rate.

33. Crystal Downs C.C.

Frankfort, Mich.

Alister Mackenzie design more authentic to his style than Augusta National, with rumpled fairways and classic greens.

34. Hollywood G.C.

Deal, N.J.

How can a hundred bunkers make you smile? Because of their crazy shapes and clever placements, scattered like laundry, perched in mounds. There's even a volcano bunker.

35. Friar's Head G.C.

Baiting Hollow, N.Y.

Bunkers that toy with depth perception. Dunes that mask greens. Trees that shelter wind. The biggest illusion? That much of the course was once a potato field.

36. Riviera C.C.

Pacific Palisades, Calif.

Perhaps the best collection of uniquely strategic holes in America, from the par-3 sixth with the mid-green bunker to the drivable par-4 10th.

37. Ballyneal G.C.

Holyoke, Colo.

Akin to Sand Hills with one key distinction: fescue greens that play super-fast down some scary slopes but molasses-slow up them.

38. White Bear Yacht C.

White Bear Lake, Minn.

With each fairway looking like a miniature mountain range, it's a tree-framed Ballybunion that inspires shotmaking in the air and along the ground.

39. Old Elm C.

Highland Park, Ill.

The H.S. Colt design, built by Donald Ross, features wide fairways and superb greens. Par is 73, but with four par 5s of less than 500 yards, it might really be 69.

40. Piping Rock C.

Locust Valley, N.Y.

C.B. Macdonald designed it, Seth Raynor built it. The club has a rich history and some memorable holes, starting with its Redan No. 3.

41. Blue Mound G. & C.C.

Wauwatosa, Wis.

All the usual Seth Raynor delights--the Redan, the Short, the Road Hole--but in a low-profile format. Everything's on a human scale.

42. The Everglades C.

Palm Beach

No swamps or gators, just a reclaimed Raynor layout on a compact urban site between the Intracoastal Waterway and the sea.

43. Bel-Air C.C.

Los Angeles

To complete a round amid these hills near Hollywood, you'll encounter a tunnel, an elevator and a swinging bridge. And probably a movie star or two.

44. C.C. of Scranton

Clarks Summit, Pa.

Known for its undulating greens, this club has 18 nicely varied Walter Travis holes, plus a "new" nine by Michael Hurdzan from the '80s.

45. Whitinsville (Mass.) G.C.

Nine reasons to join the Donald Ross Society. As delightful a collection of Ross holes as can be found on any course.

46. The Creek

Locust Valley, N.Y.

Another C.B. Macdonald winner. Its first few holes are quiet, but things start to get interesting as it moves, links-like, along Long Island Sound.

47. Omaha C.C.

For those who think the Cornhusker State is nothing more than flat farmland or football fields, this is an eye-opener. Hilly and tree-lined, it's the consummate country-club course.

48. Sakonnet G.C.

Little Compton, R.I.

Donald Ross' summer club sports a seaside links course with some of the best greens this side of Pinehurst. Plays at 6,011 yards, par 70.

49. Whispering Pines G.C.

Trinity, Texas

The ultimate feel-good experience. Golf at this wonderful piney-woods 18 helps support the nonprofit Spirit Golf Association, dedicated to promoting amateur golf and children's health.

50. Hyannisport C.

Hyannis Port, Mass.

Camelot on Cape Cod, where the Kennedy clan played half a century ago, on a breezy bayside beauty that dates from 1897.

Course descriptions by John Barton, Peter Finch, Matt Ginella, and Ron Whitten.

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