

The Best Golf Course in Each State

(Courtesy of Zanny Steffen, The Discoverer)

Of the 56 million golfers around the world, [an estimated 5-10%](#) are golf tourists, planning trips to seek out the best of the game. Luckily, the U.S. is home to dozens of world-class courses and unbeatable golf experiences open to the public. To inform your golf travels, or pique your curiosity for a cross-country golf road trip, here's a list of the best public golf courses in each state.

Capitol Hill Judge Course, Alabama

[This Robert Trent Jones design](#) is one of three at Capitol Hill and it's by far the most scenic. Starting from the first tee you get Alabama River views, tricky water-lined holes, and excellent conditions. Undulating fairways challenge even the most proficient of golfers, and hole six's island green can either make or break your round. The dynamic experience the Judge Course provides, plus its affordable green fees, make this the best public golf course in Alabama.

Anchorage Golf Course, Alaska

Golf in Alaska is probably just as you're picturing — challenging holes with mountain views and the potential for moose sightings. Five different sets of tees means that [Anchorage Golf Course](#) is suitable for golfers of all ability levels, and an interesting layout makes it a great play the first or fiftieth time. The best part about this course, however, is certainly the scenery, which gives you that characteristic Alaskan sense of expansiveness you're not likely to forget.

Wickenburg Ranch, Arizona

[Wickenburg Ranch](#) lies not far northwest of Phoenix and often tops lists of the best golf courses in not just the state, but the entire country. In 2021, "Big Wick," as it's called ("Lil' Wick" is the accompanying par-three course that's great for beginners and kids) was named the golf course with the best conditions in the U.S. [by Golf Advisor](#). The fun of this course is its layout, which winds through canyons and gulches dotted with brush. Big Wick represents desert golf at its best, but beware the water holes, too!

Tannenbaum Golf Course, Arkansas

[Arkansas's best public golf course](#) is situated on a peninsula surrounded by Greers Ferry Lake and framed by the Ozark Mountains. Elevation changes, thick forest, and varied terrain makes for an interesting and demanding golf experience. Perhaps the most exciting hole on the course is number 12, where over 100 feet of elevation change takes you down to a green guarded by water and several feet of exposed rock.

Rustic Canyon, California

The [beauty of Rustic Canyon](#) is that it was built in harmony with the natural landscape, with dramatic river gorges and a mix of cactus, tall native grasses, and dry brush. It isn't the fairway golfers have to worry about conquering here, but the fast greens and thick fescue. The game of risk versus reward continues throughout all 18 holes, making this the best golf course in California purely for the way it challenges each golfer's course management strategy.

Divide Ranch and Club, Colorado

While this course features some funky holes and sometimes scraggly conditions, what makes it the [best public course in Colorado](#) is its unbeatable views. Although they're visible from the first tee, it isn't until you come around the dogleg second that the San Juans reveal themselves in all their glory, making it hard to focus on the game at hand. Plus, at over 7,000 feet you can count on extra distance in the thinner air.

Keney Park Golf Course, Connecticut

It's tough to find an affordable golf experience as exciting as the one provided by [Keney Park](#) in Hartford. Here you get that quintessential New England charm in the form of hardwood forests (which come alive in autumn) and wildlife sightings while enjoying the challenge of top-notch conditions and large, contoured greens that are the recipe for three-putts.

Baywood Greens, Delaware

[Baywood Greens](#) also goes by "Augusta of the North," and is a treat to play even for the most experienced golfers. The front nine is known as the Woodside, with a traditional design lined by trees and surrounded by protected natural areas where wildflowers bloom and wildlife abounds. On the back, dubbed Waterside, you'll find ponds at every turn, along with tunnels, bridges, and even an island fairway on hole 14.

Southern Dunes, Florida

When in Florida, there's no better golf course to book a tee time at than [Southern Dunes](#). Architect Steve Smyers took a flat and boring stretch of land and transformed it into a well-thought-out golf course, which now provides a rich experience full of swales, pot bunkers, ridges, and defined greens. Golfers lacking in confidence will want to play a conservative game here, but risk-takers will often be rewarded.

Kinderlou Forest, Georgia

While Georgia is home to numerous golf courses and golf communities, what [sets Kinderlou Forest apart](#) is its varied terrain that allows for a style of golf you won't find elsewhere in the state. The course's signature hole is number four, where a deep ravine proves treacherous for golfers of all levels. Rolling hills and great conditions has made this a go-to spot for PGA tournaments in the past. It should top your golf bucket list, too!

Mauna Kea Golf Course, Hawaii

If Hawaii is known by travelers for two things, they are high prices and paradisiacal views — and you get both with the [Mauna Kea Golf Course](#). If you've ever wanted to play golf while sipping a blended cocktail and getting distracted by waves crashing on volcanic rock, head to this course on the Big Island. Rolling fairways, tough bunkers, and ocean-lined cliffs make for the ultimate Hawaiian golf game.

Circling Raven, Idaho

Each hole of this North Idaho course is named in Salish, the native tongue of the Schitsu-umsh people (or Coeur d'Alene Tribe) who settled in this part of the state centuries ago. [The challenging course](#) is

built into wetlands, forests, and meadows and has been consistently named one of the best public courses to play in the entire country. Circling Raven sprawls across 620 acres and was designed to preserve the natural beauty of the reservation.

Cog Hill Course #4 (Dubsdread), Illinois

If you're gunning for the course record, you should know that Tiger Woods set it in 2009 with a 62. Even if taking on Woods' low round is a near-impossible goal, Dubsdread is still worth a play. Here, narrow fairways demand accurate drives and tour-level greens are protected with bunkers. [Cog Hill Course #4's](#) nickname comes from the fact that a "dub," or inexperienced golfer, has much to dread from the course, so think of it as a test of all facets of your game.

Birck Boilermaker Kampen Course at Purdue University, Indiana

You'd be hard-pressed to find a [better manicured course](#) just about anywhere — bent-grass greens are of professional quality here. Beyond the greens, you get the Indiana take on a links-style golf experience with holes marked by natural grasslands and wetlands. Just keep in mind that each set of tees provides a significantly greater challenge on what is already a tricky course, so swallow your pride when choosing which to play from.

Spirit Hollow, Iowa

[At Spirit Hollow](#), the gold tees are the tips, giving skilled players over 7,500 yards to tackle and the chance to play all kinds of shots throughout the round. While the conditions are impeccable, the course remains playable and won't turn off golfers who are easily stymied by a challenge.

Buffalo Dunes, Kansas

The [best course in Kansas](#) is all about value for your money — green fees for Buffalo Dunes are only \$25 on weekdays, and just \$5 more on weekends or holidays. While sparse tree coverage means that your game is vulnerable to Kansas winds, that's all part of the fun at Buffalo Dunes.

Kearney Hill Golf Links, Kentucky

Kearney Hill Golf Links in Lexington offers the [best golf experience in Kentucky](#). What makes this course links-style is its pit-like bunkers and grassy slopes, with little protection from trees that brings wind into play. The course is challenging but fair, and provides a satisfying golf experience for all.

English Turn, Louisiana

[This par-72 course](#) was designed by Jack Nicklaus, and has been home to numerous PGA tour events. Throughout its time on the tour, the course's 18th hole was ranked the most difficult on the pro circuit. Golfers will enjoy how each hole brings a different element to the course, whether that's waste bunkers, humps and mounds, or lakes.

Kebo Valley Golf Club, Maine

Savor a round at the country's eighth-oldest golf course (the oldest in Maine), where a rich golf history has produced an [iconic course](#). The links-style Kebo Valley reveals new challenges from each tee, not to mention the additional obstacles that the ever-changing weather imposes. Small, sloping greens and

thick forest are balanced out by many straight fairways and few water holes or tough bunkers. Plus, you can anticipate plenty of natural beauty thanks to nearby Acadia National Park.

Bulle Rock, Maryland

Pete Dye has truly created another masterpiece in the form of Maryland's [Bulle Rock](#). Recent adjustments have been made to ensure that this course is even more accessible to golfers of every caliber and budget. Open fairways are guarded by bunkers and rough so thick you'll want to bring plenty of extra balls.

Crumpin Fox Club, Massachusetts

Bernardston, in the hills of western Massachusetts, is home to [Crumpin Fox Club](#), a high-level, satisfying, and surprising course that true golf fanatics will come to worship. The challenge begins from the first tee, where a blind tee shot around a dogleg to a narrow fairway has humbled the best of golfers. Varied terrain throughout the next seventeen holes provides tricky lies, thick rough comes into play more often than not, and an impressive layout demands excellent course management skills.

Arcadia Bluffs, Bluffs Course, Michigan

Fans of links-style courses will be blown away by this scenic one on the shores of Lake Michigan. [This course](#) presents a short game challenge, as large, sloping greens prove difficult to master. While the course may be unforgiving, the views of Lake Michigan surely make up for the frustration of a tough round.

The Wilderness at Fortune Bay Minnesota

[The Wilderness at Fortune Bay](#) stretches along Lake Vermillion and offers some of the most impressive views in the entire midwest. Elevated tee boxes give golfers a look out onto exposed rock faces, thick forests, and the first hole's signature osprey nest. At Wilderness Bay you'll find plenty of water, rolling fairways, and lots of chances to see wildlife, making for the best Minnesota golf experience.

Mossy Oak, Mississippi

[Mississippi's Mossy Oak](#) is the result of a partnership between architect Gil Hanse and outdoors brand Mossy Oak, a leader in conservation. This partnership means that Mossy Oak was built intuitively using the natural landscape, protecting the ecosystem while providing a unique challenge in the form of enormous bunkers and thick oak forests in the Black Prairie setting.

Ozarks National, Missouri

[Big Cedar Lodge's Ozarks National](#) is the brainchild of Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw and showcases the best that the Ozarks has to offer. A satisfying combination of silky smooth fairways, lush forest, and waterfalls provide appealing scenery while elevated greens make for thrilling approach shots. The course's design and location make it particularly prone to high winds, adding an external element that livens up your game.

Whitefish Lake South Course, Montana

Head to Montana to play this well-maintained [municipal course](#). At Whitefish Lake's South Course you get a multifaceted golf experience that may just demand you hit every club in your bag, along with those classic mountain and lake views that Montana is known for.

Prairie Club Dunes Course, Nebraska

You'd never expect such an impressive course from Nebraska's Sand Dunes, but [Prairie Club's Dunes Course](#) exceeds expectations. Designed by Tom Lehman and Chris Brands, the Dunes course spans 8,073 yards from the longest tees and features dramatic elevation changes, rolling sand dunes, and grass hills. There are few artificial distractions on this course, leaving just you, your clubs, and the purest game of golf you'll ever attempt.

Edgewood Tahoe, Nevada

Here, golf meets the shores of the otherworldly Lake Tahoe. At an altitude of 6,200 feet (which will give you much-welcome extra distance), you'll golf in what feels like a [fairytale setting](#). New challenges and rewards arise on each hole, but don't get too distracted by the sparkling waters or the Sierra Nevadas that dominate the horizon; the layout is characterized by deep bunkers and tricky pin placements, so bring your focus.

The Shattuck, New Hampshire

[The Shattuck](#) provides New England charm in spades and at a budget-friendly price. What sets this course apart isn't only its alluring New Hampshire views and pro-level conditions, but also the fact that it is laid-back and family-friendly, making it a destination for golfers of all ages. From the first tee the course demands accuracy of its players, as Stony Brook taunts you from the fairway. You get a great view of Mount Monadnock here and on most of the other holes on the course.

Crystal Springs Resort Ballyowen Course, New Jersey

[New Jersey's best golf course](#) offers a links-style layout along a beautiful plateau. Golfers have little water to contend with, but instead humped fairways, deadly fairway bunkers, and slick greens await to present a technical challenge. This is the closest you can get to Scottish golf on the East Coast!

Red Hawk Golf Club, New Mexico

At [Red Hawk Golf Club](#) you get the ultimate Southwest golfing experience on a course that is challenging and fun for all golfers. Here you get both links-style holes and prairie-style holes dotted with dunes. While you play, check out the imposing mountains, cacti, and dry brush that the state is known for.

Bethpage Red, New York

Avid golfers have heard of Bethpage Black, but its sister course [Bethpage Red](#) provides an underrated and superior golf experience. Of the five championship-level courses, Bethpage Red is the second most challenging (after Black, of course), with lengthy par fours and windswept conditions on its plains covered in fescue. The views here are great, too, with hole number four giving you a look over the Black Course and the Bethpage valley, where many famous golfers have played.

Tobacco Road, North Carolina

[Tobacco Road](#) is named for the land's first life as a tobacco farm. When it was developed into a golf course, architect Mike Strantz implemented classic design strategies, like winding fairways paired with waste bunkers and features reminiscent of British Isle courses. While there isn't much water in play on this course, high grasses and snaking bunkers provide plenty of challenge and satisfying views to boot, making it a true golf-lover's course.

Bully Pulpit, North Dakota

Don't miss your chance to golf in the imposing Dakota Badlands. [Bully Pulpit](#) is a course that rivals the best of them, and provides a unique experience as you hit from butte to butte or meander along the Little Missouri River. While the course is undergoing improvements that may reshape its layout, in general you can expect epic views and fun golf.

Manakiki Golf Course, Ohio

[This Donald Ross design](#) incorporates classic elements of golf on an elegant and historic property. You can expect a straightforward game here, with the doglegs and water hazards that are typical of the game without any ridiculous challenges or exaggerated man-made features. The conditions are impeccable, the views pleasant, and the whole feeling of the place is one of enduring dignity.

Shangri-La Resort, Oklahoma

The best golf experience in Oklahoma comes in the form of [Shangri-La's 27-hole wonder](#), where excellent golf awaits. Mix and match the three nines for the most fun — there are the two greens of the Mickey Mantle hole on the Legend Nine, the scenic third hole par four on the Champions Nine, and the swales and intimidating features of the Heritage nine. Each brings beautiful scenery and a unique style of play.

Bandon Dunes Golf Resort – Pacific Dunes, Oregon

[Bandon Dunes](#) is home to arguably the most striking golf courses in the country, and Pacific Dunes is the best of the six. It's different from its sibling courses in that it seems to live more in harmony with the landscape around it, emerging naturally from the rugged dunes along the coast. Think of it like a St. Andrews experience, where you face the rolling fairways, speedy greens, and bluffs, and are forced to play your best game by the conditions both natural and imposed.

The Links at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Golf and history combine in one of the most significant areas of the nation at The Links at Gettysburg. Water on nearly every hole proves tricky and elevated tee shots lead you down blind doglegs while fast greens make for competition levelers. To play well at the [Links at Gettysburg](#) is a real accomplishment.

Triggs Memorial, Rhode Island

Providence is home to one of the best municipal courses in the country: [Triggs Memorial](#). The Donald Ross design is made up of complex par threes and long par fours that are balanced out by attainable par fives. You can expect only small changes in elevation, but lots of tricky bunkers. For a suburban course, this one is really, really fun.

Pawleys Plantation, South Carolina

Island greens, moss-draped oaks, and large waste bunkers are waiting for avid golfers in Pawleys Plantation on this [Jack Niklaus course](#). Here you'll find the best golf of the Prime Times Founders Collection, a group of courses in the area that represent the premier golf experiences of Myrtle Beach. Just watch out for alligators sunning in the bunkers or lurking in the ponds.

The Golf Club at Red Rock, South Dakota

At South Dakota's [top public course](#), expect dramatic terrain, tall native grasses, shade from Ponderosa Pines, and views of the Black Hills. While challenges come in the form of undulating fairways and tall grasses, the greens here are approachable and offer opportunities to save par in different ways.

The Course at Sewanee, Tennessee

A creative design that's the result of a 2013 update makes this the [best course in Tennessee](#). Each hole confronts you with a distinct challenge, and played from the different sets of tees the course is endlessly dynamic. Bunker placement is key here, compelling you to weigh risks and rewards as you play a scenic 18.

Black Jack's Crossing, Texas

Black Jack's Crossing, located on the [Lajitas Golf Resort](#), provides the rugged terrain of Big Bend National Park alongside top-notch conditions for a unique and purely Texan golf experience. Ravines in between fairway and green provide a desert take on island greens, and narrow fairways snake through hills and rock faces.

Sand Hollow Championship Course, Utah

The characteristic Utah desert and red rocks are a unique setting for a [golf game at Sand Hollow](#). Bring a camera or fully charged phone for pictures — just try to keep your head in the game in between shots! Fairways come in waves here and are lined with indigenous sand bunkers and dramatic red cliff faces.

Green Mountain National, Vermont

[At Green Mountain National](#), terrain carved by glaciers and views hemmed in by mountains give you the feeling that you're playing in a secluded forest far from modern life. You can truly relax and soak up all the benefits of nature time on these beautiful 18 holes. While you enjoy the peace and quiet, be prepared to make tough decisions about club choice due to the strategic layout.

Primland Highland, Virginia

You'll certainly get your fill of mountain golf at [Primland's Highland Course](#). Make your way over ridges and through verdant valleys as you attempt to master this beautiful course in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Before you even get to the slick greens and difficult tee shots, you'll drive up switchbacks through dense forest to reach the course — the ride there is part of the fun!

Indian Canyon, Washington

No trip to Spokane (or the whole of Washington state, for that matter) is complete without a [round at Indian Canyon](#). This course was built in 1930 and has topped lists of best public courses ever since. You'll look out on the city as you take on narrow fairways, deceptively open greens, and plenty of hills.

The Greenbrier's Old White Course, West Virginia

There's a grandeur to the whole Greenbrier property that manifests in different ways on the [Old White Course](#). If you've made your way through Europe's top courses, some of the holes here will look familiar. Hole eight pays homage to the Redan hole at North Berwick, and the 15th was modeled after St. Andrews' Eden hole. This prestigious TPC offers lush fairways and championship-level conditions that beg you to set yourself up for success with strong tee shots to have the best chance of reaching greens in regulation.

Lawsonia The Links, Wisconsin

[This iconic links course](#) is frequently named one of the best courses in the country, with recent updates that make for greater rolls down the fairways and greens that are fast and true. The challenge and fun of this course is anything but subtle — bunkers await you from fairways and green sides, velvety fairways beckon, and humps and bumps provide tricky lies.

Teton Pines Resort, Wyoming

While this is one of the priciest golf courses on the list with \$295 green fees, it's well worth shelling out for the Teton Pines experience. Five sets of tee boxes make [Teton Pines](#) accessible to golfers of all ability levels, jagged mountain peaks inspire awe, and classic Palmer-designed qualities make this an absolute joy to play.