

Better Than Most:

6 Golf Courses You Should Be Playing Now

By Dave Finn

When designing a golf course, location and nature provide the raw canvas. How the architect works with the terrain and topography determines whether or not it will be a masterpiece. Here are six courses that have memorably mastered that canvas.

RESORT COURSE - Stonehaven at Glade Springs, West Virginia

What sets this course apart are the dramatic elevation changes (up to eighty feet per hole) and the black crushed limestone in the waste bunkers that give them a reflective gray hue. Stonehaven boasts several signature holes but most memorable are the 2nd, a great downhill

par-3, and the 6th, a long par-3 across a valley with rocky outcrops. The best photo opportunity is at the top of the hill overlooking the 16th tee: A daunting view to the par-5 that lays before you.

Stay at the nearby Glade Springs Inn, or rent their 6-bedroom villa — there are plenty of options. You can also play Woodhaven, the newest course offering that features majestic mountains and

scenic views of the Glade Creek Gorge. Or choose to play the original Cobb Course built in 1972 by renowned architect George Cobb.

Mid-season 18-hole greens fees for the Stonehaven course range from \$89-99 including cart. Stay and play packages start at just \$214 per person and include accommodation, breakfast, and 54 holes of golf.





The dramatic 12th hole at Manele Golf Course



OCEAN COURSE -

Four Seasons Lanai Manele Golf Course, Hawaii

Manele is a Jack Nicklaus design that currently ranks as one of the top 50 greatest public golf courses in the U.S. Visually, it boasts one of the most stunning layouts you'll ever play. The combination of dramatic elevation changes, volcanic rock outcrops, perfectly manicured bunkers and magnificent ocean vistas make every hole on the course stand out. The par-3 12th hole is Manele's signature hole — a peninsula green, perched at the edge of the world, directly in front of a sheer 150-foot drop to the crashing waves of the Pacific Ocean. And the 17th hole is perhaps even more spectacular. This tricky dogleg right, par-4 requires a good drive to carry the rocky cliffs, and then hands you a slippery downhill approach to a mound-protected green that juts out towards the sparkling waters at Kaluakoi Point. The green fees for 18-holes including cart are \$350 for resort customers and \$425 for guests.

This golf course can be found on the grounds of the Four Seasons Lanai, a seaside resort that caters to even the most discriminating traveler. Stay in one of their luxurious guest rooms or suites overlooking Hulopoe Bay where it is not unusual to see a school of spinner dolphins or a pod of humpback whales from your balcony.

LINKS GOLF COURSE -

Chambers Bay, Tacoma Washington State

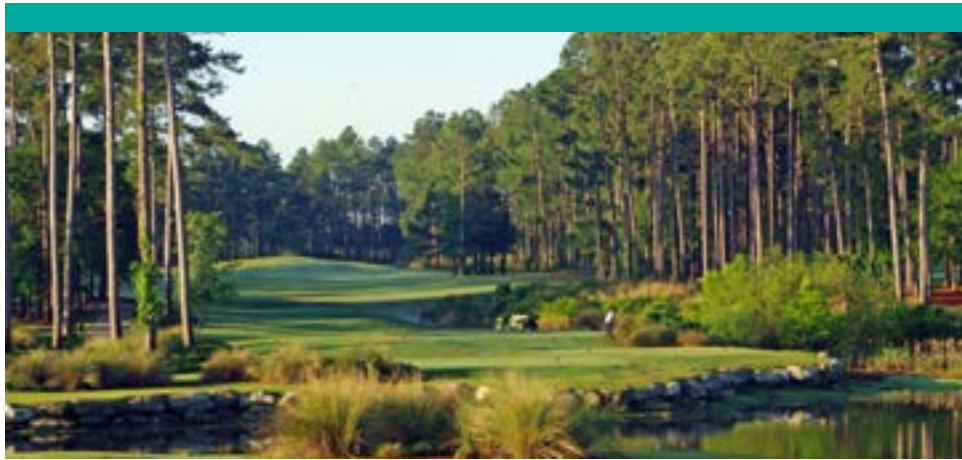
Chambers Bay was the third publicly-owned course ever to host a U.S. Open. Robert Trent Jones Jr. transformed 600 acres of the scarred landscape from an abandoned sand quarry into a Scottish-style links course that is one of the most ecologically-friendly



The view of Puget Sound at Chambers Bay

golf courses in the country. Playing against the beauty of Puget Sound and surrounded by the Grandview Trail, Chambers Bay is a municipal course unlike any other. The fairways are wide, there are plenty of bunkers and the salty winds that continually blow in from the sea require positioning and strategy. A solitary tree aptly named the "Lone Fir" casts its shadow over the 15th hole and serves as a reminder to golfers that they are playing in the Northwest, not across the pond.

Currently ranked as the best course in Washington and the No. 24 "Greatest Public Course" in the U.S. by Golf Digest, Chambers Bay charges a greens fee of \$275 for non-resident guests, and includes a pull cart. Power carts are not allowed, but the course is walkable. Chambers Bay has more than fifty caddies, and it is highly recommend you hire one. Your caddy's local knowledge can be invaluable on a course this tough. The suggested caddy fee is \$50 per single bag plus gratuities.



PARKLAND COURSE -

Tigers Eye at Ocean Ridge Plantation, North Carolina

If you're interested in 'big game,' and other wildlife then you'll want to play one or more of Ocean Ridge Plantation's five championship 18-hole courses including Panther's Run, Lion's Paw, Leopard's Chase and the newest addition, Jaguar's Lair.

Architect Tim Cate has taken maximum advantage of the land's natural setting and given each hole a unique personality. The greens are generous, fast-paced and undulating. The par-3 island green on the 11th hole is surrounded by natural coquina boulder bulkheads and can be more than a little intimidating. All the fairways are tree-lined, but the back nine features over sixty feet of elevation change, five holes with water, a par-3 island green and finishes with a picturesque waterfall just left of the 18th tee. With five sets of tees ranging from 4,502 to 7,014 yards, Tiger's Eye is more than playable for all skill levels.

18-hole rates with cart range from \$65 to \$87, depending on the course and time of year.

Important item of note, the nearby town of Calabash is the self-proclaimed, "Seafood Capital of the World" – and rightly so! Just one more reason to return to the Brunswick Islands.

DESERT COURSE -

The Golf Club at Redlands Mesa, Grand Junction Colorado

The scenery found at Redlands Mesa is pure “wild-west” — so much so that you can almost imagine yourself riding a stallion through the rugged countryside. Just named No. 1 in Colorado by GolfWeek, this layout is reminiscent of Michael Stantz’s controversial Tobacco Road in North Carolina. Depending on which tees you prefer, architect Jim Engh has designed a course that plays from 4,890 to just over 7,000 yards featuring banked fairways, 41 uniquely shaped bunkers and nine holes that play downhill from elevated tees.

The 4th and 5th holes are the most memorable. The 4th hole is a short par-4 where you don’t want to be right unless you want to watch your ball soar over the cliff. A unique downhill par-5 serving up a great view of the mountain-ringed city, the 5th hole is the toughest on the course with a right-angle dogleg and an uphill approach shot to a two-tiered green.



The 18th hole at The Golf Club at Redlands Mesa

The 18-hole green fees range from \$60-70 and include a GPS-equipped cart. There is no hotel on the property, but the course offers three special Stay & Play Packages in nearby Grand Junction.

MOUNTAIN COURSE -

The Highland Course at Primland, Virginia

You’ll find Primland Resort in a remote area of southwestern Virginia where peace, beauty and solitude abound. Its 14,000 acres of unspoiled wilderness in the Blue Ridge Mountains appeals to golfers, hikers, hunters, fisherman and ATV-ers alike. The conditioning of this course is second to none, and every hole here could be a signature hole. Renowned British course architect Donald Steel

allowed the natural terrain to dictate the layout and the result is breathtaking.

“There is a remoteness about Primland, a sense of escape that is special,” says Steel. “Golf courses have been built in every landscape imaginable but only rarely on mountain peaks. Primland sits on top of the world, enjoying scenic views that stretch the vocabulary.”

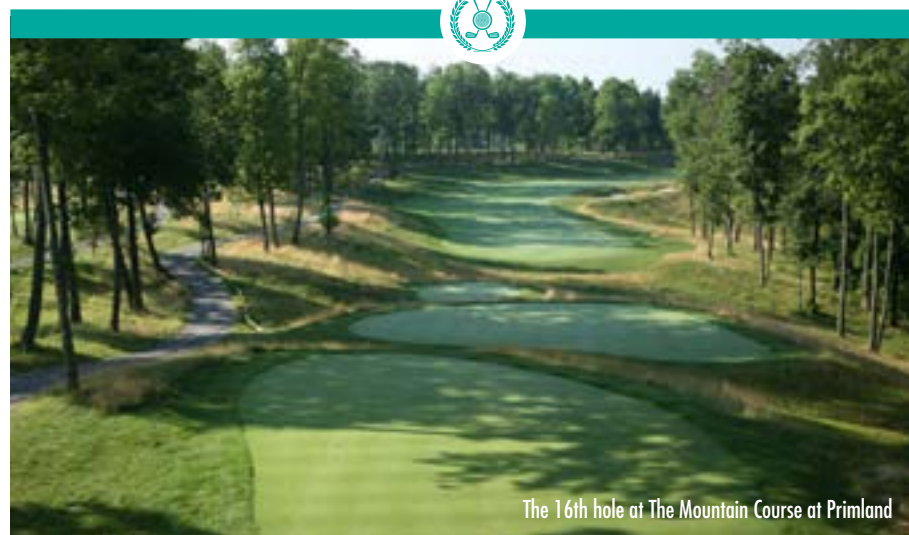
The course starts off par-5, par-3, par-5, par-3 and then traverses through a forested plateau, around cliff-sides and

across cavernous valleys, serving up view after view and more than a little challenge.

Green fee rates are \$225 including cart and practice facilities. The accommodations at Primland are also outstanding including twelve secluded cabins and a magnificent 72,000-square-foot rustic-lodge. Stay and Play Packages start at \$625 for two.

Mr. Steel sums it up best: “It is difficult to compare a link-style design to a parkland or mountain course versus an ocean course. The architect still has to design a layout that is indigenous to the terrain.”

Just as a great work of art speaks differently to every person upon viewing, each of these courses have their own strokes of mastery. Find the one that speaks to you and head out swinging.



The 16th hole at The Mountain Course at Primland

Dave Finn is a freelance golf travel writer/photographer and a three-time national award recipient from the Golf Journalists and the Travel Media Associations of Canada. Follow his golf travel adventures at GolfTravelandLeisure.com.

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