

GREATEST GOLF COURSES

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder! Golf Digest has guidelines that provide measurements to find which will be the greatest golf courses. I can only begin to comprehend, and the probability is that rating and slope lend a certain amount of difficulty to the course as does the architects design. These are the standards that determine how a course is evaluated. How to arrive at an elite few, best in the world, country or state must be fun for those who make these determinations. The factors that make for the best courses John and Cheryl have played are a bit more simplistic, the choices are entirely subjective. The landscape and setting pretty much determines which courses are good, better or best. The winnowing process includes reasonable green fees, otherwise the course can't even be considered. Having only played 600 of the possible 18,000 different courses to date (give or take) the lines begin to blur. How can the judges of the Miss America Contest actually decide who is the most beautiful girl in the world? Oh Yeah, that's right it's subjective! Some folks might think Bette Davis or Maureen O'Hara might be considered the best actress' ever. I on the other hand would opt for the Anderson girls, Loni and Pam. There you have it, consider the source!

There is no particular pecking order to these courses', they just appear somewhat randomly, as I wander somewhat randomly through my computer bank, which sometimes doubles as a brain on occasion. The first batch are really remote, geographically, the second batch have some additional redeeming value, like a historical site, urban area or a resort nearby.

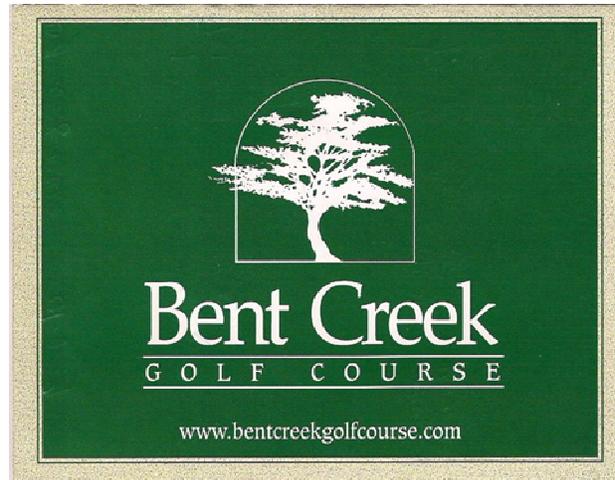
FIRST BATCH

Pendaries – Rociada, NM. (1970) Seems that this here fella owned a good piece of the Sangre De Cristo Mountain Range at one time and was comfortable enough financially to build a course in the penderosas for himself and his friends! The elevation is between 7,500 and 8,000. Good luck finding it, but if you can the reward is special.

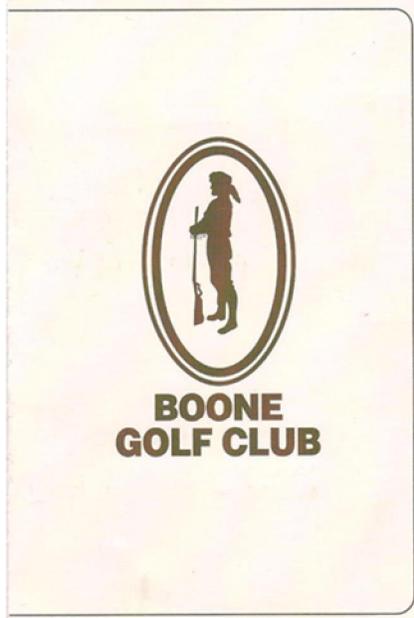


Golden Hills – Lexington, SC. (1988) Just a little east of the state capital of Columbia a great place to stop on the way to Augusta.

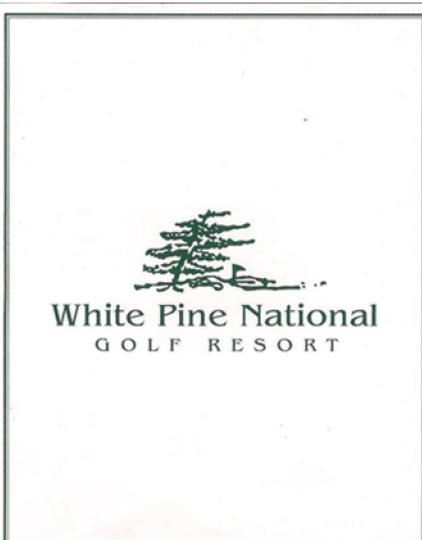
Bent Creek – Gatlinburg, TN. (1973) This is the one where the starter said “the beautiful sparkling mountain stream meandering throughout the entire course makes for a breathtaking contrast between water and The Great Smoky Mountain National Park and the creek comes into play on 17 of the holes. What he actually meant was, it comes into play 17 times on each hole.



Boone – Boone, NC. (1959) The town is named after some local historical figure from the region. Appalachian University is nearby and if you are ever in the Blue Ridge Mountains try driving the Parkway. The Boone G.C. brochure mentions that the course is popular with seasoned players, this may be interpreted as “tough”, but the scenery and setting is spectacular.

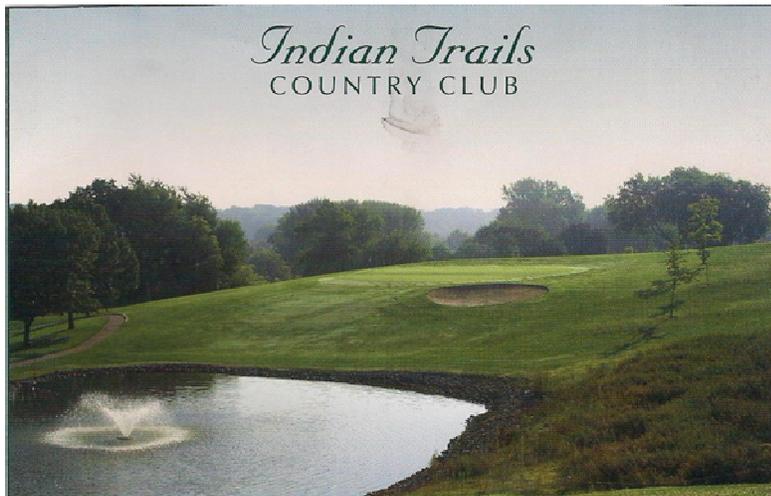
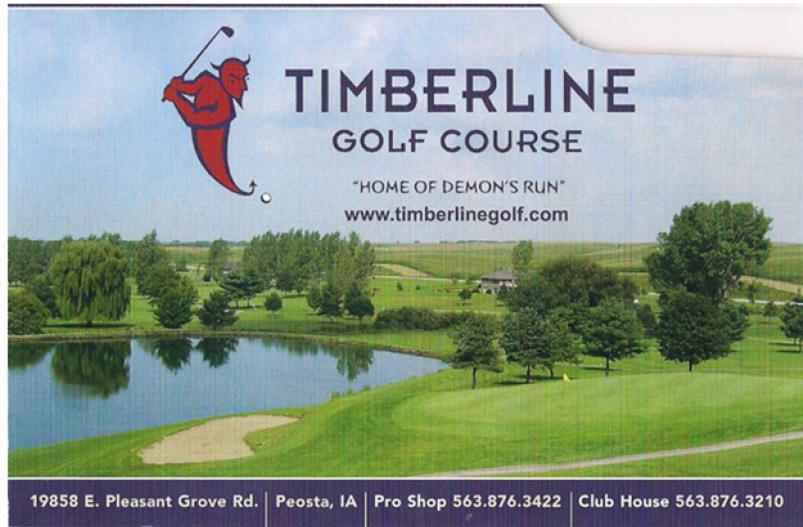


Skyland Lakes – Fancy Gap, VA. (1988) When you can have the best round of your life in a setting like this, nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, there is no way she doesn’t make the team.



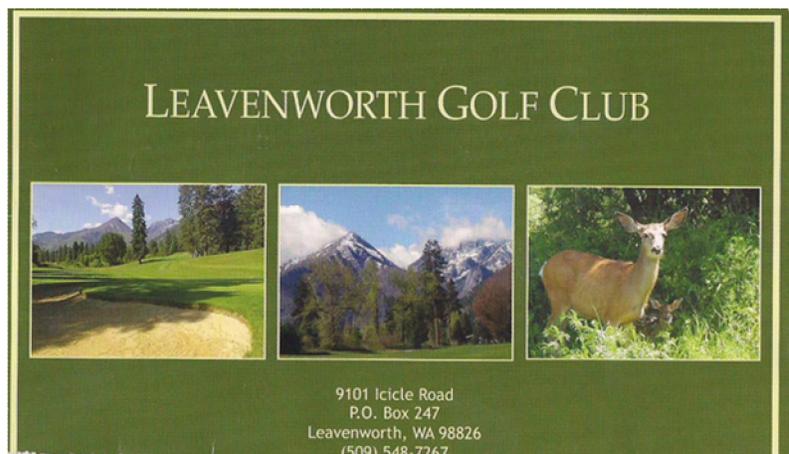
White Pine National – Hubbard Lake, MI. (1993) The story I got was a couple of retired golf pros bought this land, nothing but a forest full of valleys and ravines from some local who thinks he got the better of the deal. There is no real population base to support this course, but it is to die for. They have done everything possible to maintain the natural beauty of the area, every green is placed in its natural setting.

Timberline – Peosta, IA. (1979) If you think Iowa is flatter than your first girlfriend, forget about it. Iowa has more rivers like the Missouri, Mississippi, Iowa, Des Moines, Cedar and streams like the Maquoketa, Wapsipinicon, Volga, Turkey, Yellow, Skunk, Raccoon, Sioux, OH you get the point, lots of water to carve the landscape. And don't forget the oak forests that have guarded their valleys since the beginning of time. This course utilizes every aspect of its extremely scenic setting.



Indian Trails – Beemer, NB. (1965) This is forested hill country overlooking the beautiful Elkhorn River Valley just west of the Missouri River. The entire course seems to be built around and on one huge hill. Be advised to head for the club house if the hair on your arms and head stands on end, an indication lightening is in the vicinity. Of course having hair, if you have any, helps! Really, they do use sirens!

Leavenworth – Leavenworth, WA. (1927) A pristine Bavarian village on the way to somewhere, but not a short cut to anywhere! The eastern slope of the northern Cascades just up the hill from Wenatchee! The course will require you to enjoy majestic mountain views, the Wenatchee and Icicle Rivers and an abundance of wildlife. Really!





Salmon Run – Brookings, OR. (1999)
 This baby is tucked into the base of verdant forest of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area, part of the southern Cascade Mountain Range, just off Highway 101 on the Pacific Ocean. If you have the time while passing through Gold Beach ride the mail boat up the Rogue River, a true test of your pucker power.

Sierra Meadows – Ahwahnee, CA. (2004) They named a national park after this Disney cartoon character Yosemite Sam. In any event if that is your ultimate destination, be sure to play a round here before visiting the park. Oh by the way it is one of the most picturesque locations in central California. Oak, pine and cedar forests above the central valley, but below the snow line!



SECOND BATCH

Inn of the Mountain Gods – Mescalero, NM. (1975) This is a spectacular must visit resort-casino destination on the Apache Reservation at elevation. Some courses have island greens, try a fairway island first and then go for the peninsula green. Once again it may be the only opportunity, at your home away from home, to visit real live Indians other than those from Calcutta.

Continental – Flagstaff, AZ. (1960) Terrific old downtown for the University of Northern Arizona students and tourists! There are a number of private courses, but only this one is available for us duffers and you will thoroughly enjoy the location.

Tour 18 – Humble, TX. (1992) 18 signature holes designed to replicate the most renowned holes of world famous courses.

Magnolia – Mobile, AL. (1970) One of the Robert Trent Jones golf trail courses, the most perfectly

manicured golf course we have ever played. No mountains here, but plenty of southern pines.

Stone Mountain – Stone Mountain, GA. (1969) If Mount Rushmore is to your liking then you will really be impressed with the likeness of Lee, Jackson and Davis carved in the side of this massive rock. Oh Yeah, you'll love the courses too!

Inlet – Inlet, NY. (1929) The Adirondack Mountains are home to this diamond in the rough. The loop through the Park and its myriad lakes was real as opposed to surreal. Two other upstate courses are En-Joi in Endicott which is an annual host to the senior tour and Leather Stocking in Cooperstown home of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Lakeview – Morgantown, WV. (1985) A very cruel mountain course to an average golfer such as myself, but the setting was as magnificent as the rest of West Virginia. Mountainmen! You Betcha!

Iriquois Park – Louisville, KY. (1949) As challenging a municipal course as you'll find anywhere, but they don't all provide the forest in a city setting. You'll need more than a day to visit all the requisite tourist sites, there are just too many places to see.

Minnewaska – Glenwood, MN. (1920) Hometown to my golfing buddy and just down the road from Alexandria home to the world's largest Viking. Another forested setting in the land of a thousand lakes.

The Highlands - Post Falls, ID. (1990) How can a course be considered links style when it is in a Rocky Mountain forest? Escapes me! The better half had no troubles here unlike the other half.

UNATTAINABLE BATCH

Membership! You have probably seen an advertisement for that 100+ foot yacht, but there is no price tag to be found anywhere. Perhaps you missed the "principals only" notation at the bottom, thinking that only high school principals need apply wasn't quite right either. If you have to ask how much it costs, you probably couldn't afford it anyway. There are private golf courses that are equity membership, a blank check will provide membership at another course, nomination by a member or members or perhaps a committee will get you on board at another course, but the interesting clubs are those that were endowed in a galaxy far-far away. You know how Harvard and Yale have been around so long, well their alumni associations have been in existence centuries before our country came into being. The donations, lo these many centuries have accrued to the point where the national debt could probably be written off with a check from their trust fund. Perhaps that's an exaggeration! The point being, buying in, yearly dues, memberships, minimum spending requirements at the bar are not an issue at old money clubs. You're familiar with the old semi-biblical quotation "It would be easier for a poor man to drive a golf cart through the eye of a needle than to get a tee time in the Hamptons?" Here's a bucket list for your fantasy! And if you get your old compass out you can draw a circle of about ten miles around them all, excepting Fishers Island.



Atlantic– Bridgehampton (1992)

3 Ponds Farm – Watermill (1995)

The Bridge – Bridgehampton (2002)

Maidstone – Easthampton (1891)

Gardners Bay – Shelter Island (1896)

Westhampton – Westhampton (1890)

East Hampton – East Hampton (2000)

National Golf Links – Southampton (1908)

Shinnecock – Southampton (1891)

Southampton – Southampton (1925)

Sebonack – Southampton (2006)

Shelter Island – Shelter Island (1901)

Fishers Island – Fishers Island (1925)