



NATIONAL TREASURES

Our 2020 ranking of the best courses in the U.S.A. presents an inescapable conclusion: America possesses an incredibly diverse landscape perfectly suited for golf

By Ran Morrisett

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America offers an amazing—dare I say, *unmatched*—golf palette. Unlike in other great golf countries with enviable regions (like Australia and its Sandbelt or Scotland with its linksland), the U.S. golf landscape can't be pegged to a single type of geography. Additionally, it has welcomed scores of architects over the years willing to adapt to this topographical tapestry. Add it all up and it is an embarrassment of course riches.

This point was driven home this summer. After three straight months of “Covid togetherness,” my wife urged me to get back on the road. During one excursion across this great land, on back-to-back days in July, I played Trinity Forest, built on reclaimed land just south of urban Dallas, and Sand Hollow in southern Utah, whose back nine famously plays along the rim of a canyon. Talk about diversity!



Ballyneal
HOLYOKE, CO
U.S. No. 34
West No. 8



Bel-Air
LOS ANGELES, CA
U.S. No. 68 / West No. 18



Trinity Forest
DALLAS, TX
Heartland No. 41



Honors Course
OOLTEWAH, TN
U.S. No. 63
Southeast No. 11

At **Trinity Forest** (No. 41 in the Heartland), Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw lent the barren, treeless landscape a plethora of playing characteristics like those at St. Andrews. Balls ricochet along tight zoysia fairways—and hopefully past the numerous central hazards that make the course such a strategic marvel. At Trinity, one- and two-foot contours go a long way in determining a shot's outcome.

Meanwhile, **Sand Hollow** (No. 26 in the West) is in-your-face dramatic. John Fought and Andy Staples seized on the opportunity of routing holes that maximized the property's natural qualities. One can't help but reflect on the millions of years that went into producing such striking landforms. (Miss a shot left on No. 12 and your ball is gone—150 feet below the level of the fairway!)

The unifying factor between those two courses is first-rate architecture, and that's what this issue and our Top 100 Courses in the U.S. list is engineered to celebrate. In past rankings, we often did so by focusing mostly on new builds. Yet, on *this* ranking, **Ohoopce Match Club** (No. 32), **Congaree** (No. 72) and

Mammoth Dunes at Sand Valley (No. 96) are the only legit built-from-scratch courses that have debuted since 2017. Moreover, the number of restored or renovated courses outpaces the new ones by 3 to 1. Specifically, nine of the 17 new entrants to the current list were the beneficiary of significant restoration/renovation work in recent times. (We're

**INSIDE THE RANK:
DESIGNERS WITH THE MOST
COURSES IN THE U.S. TOP 100**

1	DONALD ROSS (10.5)
2	C.B. MACDONALD/SETH RAYNOR (10)
3	A.W. TILLINGHAST (9)
4	BILL COORE/BEN CRENSHAW (7)
5	PETE DYE (6)
6	TOM DOAK (5.5)
7	ALISTER MACKENZIE (5)
T8	TOM FAZIO (4)
T8	DAVID MCLAY KIDD (4)
10	PERRY MAXWELL (3.5)

Previous spread: Channing Benjamin. Clockwise from top left: Evan Schiller; LC Lambrecht; Don Reynolds

counting **Sheep Ranch** and **Pinehurst No. 4**, which debut at No. 80 and No. 92 respectively, as massive renovations.) America, for sure, is getting her house in order by taking care of what she already had.

Significant risers within the rank (based on their position in 2017) were also the beneficiaries of major restorations this century. Of the 16 courses experiencing big jumps up the list (defined as a climb of 10 spots or more), 12 are restorations/renovations, including **Sleepy Hollow** (up a staggering 60 spots), **Bel-Air** (+12) and **Old Town** (+18). If we don't acknowledge how far such courses have come, we will have failed in our mission. (The four non-reno big gainers, by the way, were all built after World War II.)

Monitoring restoration and renovation work is much more involved than judging new builds. A vote for Ohoopce Match Club is self-evident—the course is only two years old and was mature when it opened—every rater on our panel got to play the same course. Contrast that rating experience with the one for, say, a place such as **Kittansett Club** (No. 58) along Buzzards Bay in Massachusetts. It has been working with Gil Hanse for over 20 years (!) to polish its William Flynn design to perfection. Just last winter, Hanse pushed several of Kittansett's famous center-fairway mounds farther from the tee boxes to replicate the original playing intent from the 1920s. Typical of a club that values discretion, Kittansett doesn't trumpet such work. Nonetheless, staying current is part of our panel's responsibility; otherwise we would be voting inadvertently on an outdated version of a course.

Unlike resorts, private clubs are less likely to hire public-relations firms to stir up interest. Who knew that **Hollywood** (No. 83), near the Jersey Shore, had made a concerted effort to restore its Walter Travis playing features via the services of Renaissance Golf Design and Brian Schneider? How about the fact that Ron Prichard has been at **Mountain Ridge** (No. 90) in New Jersey for years, teasing out Donald Ross' original plans? The rise of both courses in our rankings shows that our panelists evidently did.

Of course, some restoration projects are more well-known than others. Take **Oak Hill** (No. 40) in Pittsford, N.Y. The course, one

Best in Region

West

*INDICATES ENTRY IS ALSO A TOP 100 COURSE IN THE U.S.

- 1 **Cypress Point***
- 2 **Pebble Beach***
- 3 **Los Angeles (North)***
- 4 **Riviera***
- 5 **Pacific Dunes***
- 6 **San Francisco***
- 7 **California Club of San Francisco***
- 8 **Ballyneal***
- 9 **Bandon Trails***
- 10 **Bandon Dunes***
- 11 **Rock Creek Cattle Company***
- 12 **Olympic (Lake)***
- 13 **Valley Club of Montecito***
- 14 **Pasatiempo***
- 15 **Gamble Sands***
- 16 **Old Macdonald***
- 17 **Monterey Peninsula (Shore)***
- 18 **Bel-Air***
- 19 **Gozzer Ranch***
- 20 **Sheep Ranch***
- 21 **Shadow Creek***
- 22 **Monterey Peninsula (Dunes)***
- 23 **Nanea***
- 24 **Cherry Hills***
- 25 **Spyglass Hill**
PEBBLE BEACH, CA
- 26 **Sand Hollow** HURRICANE, UT
- 27 **Colorado** PARKER, CO
- 28 **Wilderness Club** EUREKA, MT
- 29 **Chambers Bay**
UNIVERSITY PLACE, WA
- 30 **Meadow Club** FAIRFAX, CA
- 31 **Kapalua (Plantation)**
LAHAINA, HI
- 32 **Forest Highlands (Canyon)**
FLAGSTAFF, AZ
- 33 **Desert Forest** CAREFREE, AZ
- 34 **Clear Creek** CARSON CITY, NV
- 35 **Stone Eagle** PALM DESERT, CA
- 36 **Rustic Canyon** MOORPARK, CA
- 37 **Wilshire** LOS ANGELES, CA
- 38 **Madison Club** LA QUINTA, CA
- 39 **Castle Pines** CASTLE ROCK, CO
- 40 **Estancia** SCOTTSDALE, AZ
- 41 **We-Ko-Pa (Saguaro)**
FORT MCDOWELL, AZ
- 42 **Eugene** EUGENE, OR
- 43 **Waverley** PORTLAND, OR
- 44 **Torrey Pines (South)**
LA JOLLA, CA
- 45 **Martis Camp Club**
TRUCKEE, CA
- 46 **Victory Ranch** KAMAS, UT
- 47 **Scottsdale National (The Other Course)**
SCOTTSDALE, AZ
- 48 **Broadmoor (West)**
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO
- 49 **Black Mesa** ESPAÑOLA, NM
- 50 **Crosswater** BEND, OR