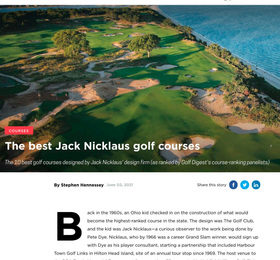


COURSES

The best Jack Nicklaus golf courses

The 20 best golf courses designed by Jack Nicklaus' design firm (as ranked by Golf Digest's course-ranking panelists)

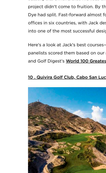
By Stephen Hennessey | June 02, 2021

Share this story

Back in the 1960s, an Ohio kid checked in on the construction of what would become the highest-ranked course in the state. The design was The Golf Club, and the kid was Jack Nicklaus—a curious observer to the work being done by Pete Dye. Nicklaus, who by 1966 was a career Grand Slam winner, would sign up with Dye as his player consultant, starting a partnership that included Harbour Town Golf Links in Hilton Head Island, site of an annual tour stop since 1969. The host venue to the PGA Tour's Memorial Tournament for more than 35 years, Jack's Muirfield Village Golf Club actually sits on land that Nicklaus and Dye prospected back in the late 1960s, although that project didn't come to fruition. By the time Muirfield Village came to be in 1974, Nicklaus and Dye had split. Fast-forward almost four decades, and Nicklaus' design company has eight offices in six countries, with Jack designing more than 300 courses and growing his business into one of the most successful design firms of his generation.

Here's a look at Jack's best courses—ranked in the order our Golf Digest course-ranking panelists scored them based on our most recent America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses ranking and Golf Digest's World 100 Greatest Courses ranking.

10. Quivira Golf Club, Cabo San Lucas, Baja Sur, Mexico



Courtesy of Quivira Golf Club

Ranked seventh on our Best in Mexico ranking from 2020, this Cabo course isn't short on views. As our Ron Kaspriske put it, "The quirky, fun design is like playing golf inside a Salvador Dali painting."

9. Kinloch Golf Club, Taupo, New Zealand

This 2007 Jack Nicklaus design built on the base of a volcanic boss on New Zealand's North Island, three hours from Auckland, debuted on our latest World's 100 Greatest list at No. 94.

8. Cabo Del Sol (Ocean), Los Cabos, Mexico

Photo by Stephen Szurlej

For years the marquee course in Los Cabos was Cabo Del Sol's Ocean course. Nicklaus called 16, 17 and 18 here "the finest finishing stretch in golf" when the Ocean course opened in 1994, with its greens perched on top of rock right on the water. The course, No. 91 on our most recent World 100 rankings, also features back-to-back par 3s (six and seven).

7. Mayacama Golf Club, Santa Rosa, Calif.

Courtesy of Mayacama GC

Dramatic, elevated tees within the Sonoma foothills make for some incredible vistas at Mayacama, currently 114th on our latest Second 100 Greatest. Mayacama has been ranked inside the 100 Greatest since 2005 (highest ranking was No. 66) for all but two years (it was ranked 100th on our 2019-2020 list).

6. Valhalla Golf Club, Louisville

The PGA of America purchased the course in 2000, and it has hosted many of its championships at this former floodplain site that opened in 1986. Valhalla is slated to host the 2024 PGA Championship, which would be its fourth major, having held the 1996, 2000 and 2014 PGAs, as well as the 2008 Ryder Cup.

5. Jack Nicklaus Golf Club Korea, Incheon City, South Korea

Host of the 2015 Presidents Cup, Nicklaus transformed this once-flat layout into rolling terrain that has views of Songdo International Business District.

4. Punta Espada Golf Club, Cap Cana, Dominican Republic

Evan Schiller

Sitting in the 46-square-mile Cap Cana community that is a short drive from the airport—the largest privately held airport in the world—Punta Espada opened in 2006 and has incredible views with eight of its greens perched right on the Caribbean shore.

3. Castle Pines Golf Club, Castle Rock, Colo.

Castle Pines is currently ranked 48th on our latest 100 Greatest, with its highest rank being 28th in 2009. Our panelists give Castle Pines particular credit for being one of Jack's most playable, top-ranked courses. The course hosted the PGA Tour's event, The International, for 21 years, up until 2006, when it was removed from the schedule after not being able to secure a sponsor.

2. Sebonack Golf Club, Southampton, N.Y.

This neighborhood of Long Island already had two of the world's best courses, National Golf Links of America and Shinnecock Hills, but the addition of Sebonack, sitting on 300 acres on the Peconic Bay, with clear views of National and Shinnecock, clinched this stretch of golf as one of the best in the world. Jack Nicklaus and Tom Doak collaborated on their 2006 design, as Ron Whitten put it, they were "on the same team, but not necessarily on the same page." Nonetheless, the end result is a great addition to the eastern edge of Long Island, forever a golf mecca.

1. Muirfield Village Golf Club, Dublin, Ohio

Always being worked on and tweaked by Jack Nicklaus and his team (including a complete restoration ahead of the 2021 Memorial Tournament), Muirfield Village is a dream realized for Jack, who wanted to bring a great club to his hometown of Columbus. The club has been a worthy venue to the Memorial since 1976 and also hosted the 1987 Ryder Cup and 2013 Presidents Cup. Muirfield Village ranks 15th on our latest 100 Greatest, and it has ranked as high as eighth in 1985.