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## + PIERCE COUNTY



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Chambers Bay, site of  
the 2015 U.S. Open



If you had stood on the present site of Chambers Bay Golf Course a couple of decades ago, you'd have had a difficult time believing that the nation's premier professional golfing tourney, the U.S. Open Championship, would one day take place on this spot. Prior to its 2007 transformation into a world-class golf course, the nearly 1,000-acre disused industrial campus overlooking Puget Sound in the town of University Place—less than 10 miles southwest of Tacoma—had been the site of a paper mill, lumber processor, freight-rail center, and sand-and-gravel quarry.

The fact that, beginning June 15, Chambers Bay is hosting this prestigious tournament is every bit as miraculous—and unlikely—as Tom Watson's unbelievable 17th-hole birdie chip-in en route to winning the 1982 Open at Pebble Beach. The U.S. Open has never before been held in the Pacific Northwest, has only been

hosted by two other public courses, and hasn't taken place on a new course since 1970.

Indeed, Chambers Bay is special. It's a story about imaginative adaptation, can-do community spirit, and environmental stewardship—themes that resonate in Pierce County. The course has been designed to welcome and delight every kind of golfer, from top-ranked professionals to weekend high-handicappers. If you do play a round at Chambers Bay, you'll likely find it exciting, breathtaking, and—to be sure—challenging. But you're actually less likely to lose your ball here than you are at any other course in Washington. "Amateur golfers sometimes feel intimidated by U.S. Open courses," says Matt Allen, the course general manager. "But this is a municipal course, and it's a fun one for everybody to play."

This undulating track with an elevation range of nearly 1,000 feet doesn't look like

many of the fussily manicured courses that typically host golf's Major Championships—which also includes the Masters, the U.S. Open, and the PGA Championship. You'll find just one tree—known as The Lone Fir—on this wind-swept, rolling course, and no water hazards. "The fairways here are quite generous," Allen says. "It's a truly playable course." Train tracks separate the course from the Puget Sound, the clubhouse is set on a promontory a few hundred feet above the 9th hole, public walking paths traverse the entire layout, and intriguing, vaguely Romanesque industrial ruins from the property's past fringe the 18th fairway.

Look closely at the layout, however, and you'll see that Chambers Bay actually embodies golfing as the sport's Scottish inventors intended it. It's a classic links-style course—the word "links" derives from the Old English word *hlinc*, which refers to the rolling coastal dunes and sandy soils that dominate the landscape

# Golf Pierce



around St. Andrews. Given the similarities between Western Washington's and Scotland's climate and topography, it makes perfect sense that legendary golf-course architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. channeled the links of St. Andrews, Muirfield, and Turnberry in designing this masterpiece. Given that Pierce County receives its share of precipitation, Chambers Bay's quick-draining sandy soil is also a great fit.

It's appropriate that Chambers Bay sits atop an old sand quarry. Sand is the dominant hazard here—we're talking vast chasms of it flanking many fairways, especially those at the northern end of the course, on the 4th, 5th, 7th, and 14th holes. Deep pot bunkers present danger on several fairways, too, including the dramatic 18th, which—along with the 1st hole—will be configured as either a par 4 or par 5 each day of the U.S. Open, depending upon conditions, pin placements, and presumably the mercy of USGA officials. If there's one thing

you can predict about how this tournament will play out, it's that the victor will extricate himself from more than a few sand traps.

Chambers Bay shares other important traits with links courses, such as the use of fescue grass, which is both highly sustainable and exciting to play on, as it tends to add plenty of bounce. Although not uncommon on links-style fairways, all-fescue greens are unusual—and famously smooth. This will be the first U.S. Open ever played on fescue greens. The championship's organizers couldn't be more excited about Chambers Bay's distinctive topography and bounce-and-roll-friendly design. "When you get that combination of sand and fescue, it's really a great one-two punch," says USGA executive director Mike Davis.

Whether hosting a tournament or day-to-day play, this is one course that greatly encourages players to use their imaginations. Punctuated by copious bunkers and laid out

with fairways that meander among curving—sometimes soaring—grassy dunes, Chambers Bay has sometimes been compared to a giant pinball machine. You may find the best drive or green approach requires banking your shot off the side of a sand dune, and players proficient at fading and drawing benefit greatly here—sharp doglegs figure prominently, for example, on the 7th, 13th, and 14th holes. Additionally, some holes have eye-popping elevation gains, such as the 9th, a roughly 220-yard par 3 that requires a long iron from a tee situated more than 100 feet above a bunker-fortified green.

With a "setting and an aesthetic that's second to none," according to Allen, Chambers Bay promises to be a dazzling venue for this year's U.S. Open, and a favorite destination of everyday golfers for generations to come.


*more golf* 

# County



By Andrew Collins

MICHAEL HANSON

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## Attending the U.S. Open

**When:** Practice rounds June 15–17  
Championship rounds June 18–21

Tickets to the Open sell out each year, but some can typically be found online at the official website and from other vendors. Children under 12 receive free admission with a paying adult, and active military may attend the practice rounds for free. Chambers Bay is relatively spread out, but many paths between holes have been widened to allow for the more than 40,000 spectators expected to attend each day. Furthermore, the “grandstand vantage points will be numerous,” says general manager Matt Allen.

On-site parking will be restricted, but free satellite lots have been designated in the area, with shuttle buses providing access to the course. You can download the U.S. Open app on your phone or follow along at [usopen.com](http://usopen.com) for live scoring updates, bonus video, and other tips and special features throughout the week.



Chambers Bay Golf Course hole 16 (previous page) and hole 10 (above)

## How to Play Chambers Bay

Chambers Bay, which is managed by Kemper Sports—the same company behind Oregon’s famed Bandon Dunes—is slated to reopen for public play by the end of June. Working closely with the USGA, the course managers have made a number of significant improvements in anticipation of the U.S. Open. Average Joes won’t be able to play the course exactly as it’s configured during the Open—special tee boxes, for example, have been designed just for the championship and will not be available for routine play. But you can enjoy the course’s many new features,

which include a number of reseeded or rebuilt greens, expanded bunkers, and realigned fairways. Additionally, Chambers Bay is in tip-top condition, and an expansive practice range was added a few years ago.

Depending on the tee you play from, the course can run from a relatively cozy 5,100 to a whopping 7,585 yards—it’s typically a par 71 course, although it’s been set at par 70 for the U.S. Open. For a thorough hole-by-hole aerial tour of the course, check out the Chambers Bay online scorecard at [chambersbaygolf.com/golf-hole-by-hole.html](http://chambersbaygolf.com/golf-hole-by-hole.html).

An unusual aspect of Chambers Bay is that the course does not allow motorized carts. Players must walk the course, and caddies, though not mandatory, are highly recommended. “With the expert help of a caddy, a golfer of any ability can find the proper distance from which to play,” says Allen.

Check the booking calendar at [chambersbaygolf.com](http://chambersbaygolf.com) to reserve your round, but plan as far in advance as possible. Especially on summer and fall weekends, this increasingly famous course fills up well ahead of time.

## Local Star Power

**RYAN MOORE:** Ranked 32nd on the PGA Tour in March, the Tacoma native has competed in four of the past five U.S. Opens and looks like a good bet for a return in 2015.

**FRED COUPLES:** The World Golf Hall of Famer was introduced to the game by his father, a Seattle Parks and Recreation employee.

**ANDREW YUN:** The 23-year-old returned to his hometown in 2014 to win the Tacoma Open.

Although the U.S. Open field wasn’t finalized at press time, several current PGA stars hail from Pierce County and surrounds. Here’s who to keep an eye on:

**THE BROTHERS PUTNAM:** Tacoma natives Andrew and Michael Putnam both hope to tee it close to home in June. If so, Michael likely would be caddied by another brother, Joel.

**ANDRES GONZALES:** The Olympia native played junior golf with Michael Putnam. Today, he calls every putt he makes his biggest thrill in golf.

**KYLE STANLEY:** If the Gig Harbor fave makes the cut, expect to see him in his lucky color: blue.

**JOEL DAHMEN:** The Clarkston native was among the first to register for qualifiers. Because he’s superstitious he never marks his ball with a quarter.

**JEFF GOVE:** At age 14 the Seattleite—who registered early for the 2015 qualifiers—caddied for his Uncle Mike when the elder Gove won the Washington Open in 1985.



TOP: CHRIS ANDERSON; FROM LEFT: COURTESY RYAN MOORE, BRIDGESTONE GOLF, AMERICAN JUNIOR GOLF ASSOCIATION, ANDREW PUTNAM, MICHAEL PUTNAM, ANDRES GONZALES



# 6under 60

## Thrilling Courses Within a Short Drive

### **American Lake Veterans Golf Course, JBLM**

7 miles from Chambers Bay

This course, operated by some 220 volunteers, is the only one in the U.S. devoted to the rehabilitation of military veterans. Adjacent to the American Lake VA Hospital, it gives first priority to inpatients, but all active and retired military (and guests) are welcome. Jack Nicklaus donated his time and talent to design American Lake's back nine, and Friends of American Lake Veterans Golf Course is raising funds to open the "Nicklaus Nine" in August. 9600 Veterans Dr SW, Joint Base Lewis-McChord; [veterangolf.org](http://veterangolf.org)

### **The Home Course, DuPont**

12 miles from Chambers Bay

Just down the Puget Sound shoreline from Chambers Bay, this gorgeous layout—operated in partnership between the Washington State and Pacific Northwest Golf Associations—hosted the U.S. Women's Amateur in 2014 and is anchored by rippling Old Fort Lake. The course's PGA Learning Center offers a great opportunity to hone your skills. 2300 Golf House Rd, DuPont; [thehomecourse.com](http://thehomecourse.com)

### **Golf Club at Hawks Prairie, Lacey**

18 miles from Chambers Bay

The courses at this club near Olympia offer two distinct, classic golfing styles. The Scottish-inspired links course offers a breezy, open layout with many fairways enjoying commanding views of Mount Rainier, while the hilly Woodlands track winds through a verdant old-growth forest. The huge greens, some of them multitiered, reward players with superlative short games. 8383 Vicwood Ln, Lacey; [okigolf.com/courses/hawksprairie](http://okigolf.com/courses/hawksprairie)

### **Washington National, Auburn**

27 miles from Chambers Bay

The University of Washington men's and women's golf teams play at this superb John Fought-designed course midway between Tacoma and Sea-Tac Airport. The course increases in challenge as it progresses, with wide fairways luring golfers in. Never mind that greedy sand traps and treacherous water hazards may give even low-handicappers fits, the meticulously manicured course is a stunner. 14330 SE Husky Way, Auburn; [washingtongolf.com](http://washingtongolf.com)

### **Gold Mountain, Belfair**

31 miles from Chambers Bay

With a rolling parklike setting on the Kitsap Peninsula, Gold Mountain Golf Club comprises two highly touted, reasonably priced 18-hole courses. The narrow, evergreen-lined fairways of both demand accuracy from the tee, and the Olympic Course's considerable elevation changes and tight greens make it the more challenging of the two.

7263 W Belfair Valley Rd, Belfair; [goldmountaingolf.com](http://goldmountaingolf.com)

### **Salish Cliffs, Shelton**

39 miles from Chambers Bay

Operated by the Squaxin Island Tribe, this verdant track in the shadows of the Olympic Mountains is the world's first golf course to be certified "salmon safe," but stringent environmental practices are just one reason for Salish Cliffs' popularity. The four-year-old course affords astounding panoramas of the Kamilche Valley with fairways that weave through a dense evergreen forest and lush wetlands. 91 W State Rte 108, Shelton; [salish-cliffs.com](http://salish-cliffs.com)

