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# CASCADE GOLFER

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**TOP  
10**  
*Best*  
**PUBLIC  
COURSES**

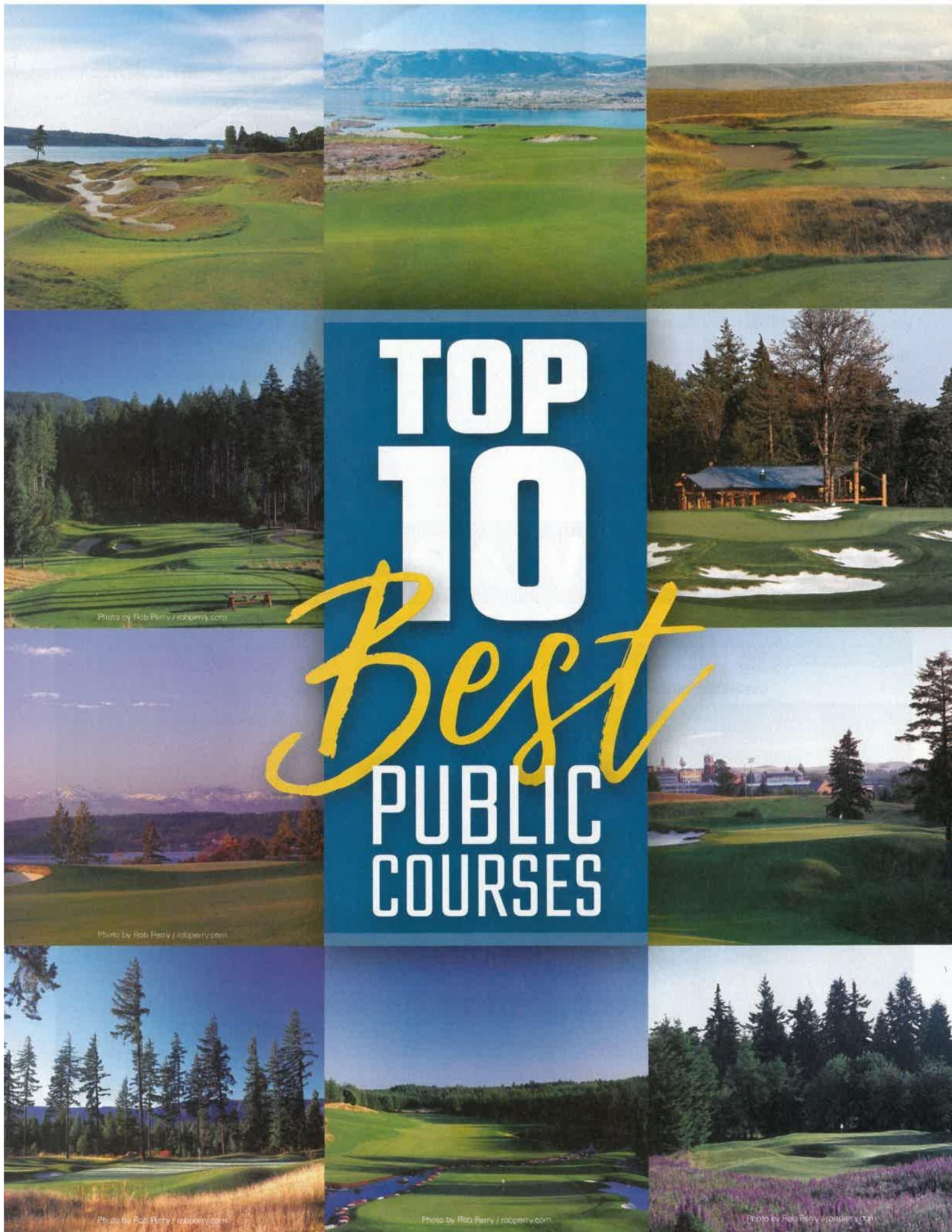
The Resort at Port Ludlow

Overall • By Price • By Region • For Women

**Puetz**  
GOLF

**END OF SEASON  
BLOWOUT!**

PG. 20 - 27



# With its new greens in place, **Chambers Bay** tops the list of Washington's best public courses in 2019

By Brian Beaky CG Editor

**T**wo years ago — in the last edition of our Washington public golf course rankings, released in all odd-numbered years since 2013 — newcomer Gamble Sands became the first course other than Chambers Bay to claim the No. 1 spot, routing the previously undefeated champ. Gamble Sands' voting tally so outdistanced Chambers Bay's, in fact, that it was fair to wonder if any existing course would ever retake the throne, or if we might just see Gamble Sands at the top until some new construction came along.

It would seem, however, that we wrote off the former champion far too soon.

Like Nicklaus at the '86 Masters or Ali against Foreman in Zaire, this wily veteran wasn't quite finished yet.

Chambers Bay stormed back into first place this year with 1,107 total votes — a record haul for any course — to slip past Gamble Sands and reclaim its spot atop the rankings. Interestingly, despite a significant increase in total votes — nearly doubling 2017's tally — Gamble's first-place mentions only increased slightly, from 40 to 49, while Chambers Bay jumped from 17 first-place votes in 2017 to 43 this year. Did Chambers' voters get complacent in 2017, only to come roaring back strong this summer? Did Chambers Bay's new greens inspire more first-place votes? Or, is it possible that Gamble Sands' remote location puts an artificial ceiling on its voting potential, as many potential voters simply can't make the four-hour drive?

There's definitely evidence for the latter — Chambers Bay's 80-point margin over Gamble Sands can be entirely accounted for by the 32 voters who included the former in their rankings, but not the latter. Indeed, counting only the ballots that featured both courses, Gamble Sands placed ahead of Chambers Bay by a significant margin. Short of relocating to Western Washington, there may not be much more Gamble Sands can do to break through that ceiling.

Those top-two tracks placed well ahead of third-place Wine Valley (809) and fourth-place Gold Mountain's Olympic Course (761), which swapped places for the fourth-consecutive year. Salish Cliffs maintained its spot just behind those four with 675 points, while The Home Course broke into the top-six for the first time ever, tallying 536 points to knock perennial "Big Six" member Palouse Ridge (513) down a peg. Suncadia's Prospector course (350), Trophy Lake (337) and White Horse (289) rounded out this year's top-10.

Voters included industry experts and golf insiders — golf writers, course raters, photographers, even a local celebrity or two — but the bulk of the ballots came in via e-mail, Facebook and CascadeGolfer.com from regular,

daily-fee golfers like yourselves. Our magazine was created by daily-fee golfers, for daily-fee golfers — so, when it comes to ranking our state's best tracks, you're the ones we really want to hear from. Some of you like the courses with big views, others like the ones that represent the best values, while still others voted simply for the best tracks in their local area. Heck, if you're anything like us, what you consider "best" likely has a lot to do with how you score when you're there.

The only limits we placed on nominations were that a course had to be public (so long, Semiahmoo, we'll miss you) and also had to be in the state of Washington (Circling Raven may feel like one of ours, but Idaho isn't giving it away without a fight).

As a result of such a broad criteria, this year's ranking includes the broadest list we've ever seen — exactly 100 courses in all, including all of the state's biggest destination tracks, plenty of local, family-owned gems, and a handful so obscure that we had to Google them to make sure they were actually Washington public courses. In the ensuing pages, we break down the list by price point and region, compare ballots by men vs. women, pit so-called "experts" vs. readers, and also take a look at which courses made the biggest jumps in this year's poll (we see you, Port Ludlow and Apple Tree).

We're sure you'll find places in these rankings where you agree with our voters, and others where you wonder if they're playing the same courses you are. What no one can argue with, however, is the sheer depth of quality public golf courses in Washington state. Nineteen courses received at least one first-place vote in 2019, while the "second 10" — including Port Ludlow, Desert Canyon, Apple Tree, Washington National, Bear Mountain Ranch, Indian Canyon, Rope Rider at Suncadia, Druids Glen, Loomis Trail and Spokane's Creek at Qualchan — would stack up favorably against the top-10 from almost every other state. Heck, Newcastle's Coal Creek — with maybe the best views in all of Western Washington — can't even crack the top-20!

And, best of all, only a handful of our state's best courses top out at over \$100, with the vast majority playable for just \$60 or less.

It's our hope that you'll take inspiration from this list to try out golf courses you hadn't previously considered, or to combine the region and price-point rankings on the following pages to craft long weekends and 36-hole marathon days that fit your time and budget. As your votes have once again indicated, there's no shortage of incredible public golf courses in Washington state waiting to welcome eager golfers — here's where your fellow readers suggest you begin.

## How'd We Do It?

**T**o rank Washington's top-10 public courses, we canvassed the state this spring collecting top-10 lists from readers, media members and industry experts — even enlisting help from our friends at the Spokane Golf Show and ChipShots.net newsletter to ensure a fair number of votes from east of the mountains. Rankings were submitted via email, CascadeGolfer.com and our social media pages, and each individual course ranking was given a score — 10 points for a first-place vote, scaling down evenly to one point for a 10th-place vote. Then, we simply added up the totals, and listed the courses in order:

Course (First-Place Votes)	Total
1. Chambers Bay (43).....	1107
2. Gamble Sands (49).....	1027
3. Wine Valley (20).....	809
4. Gold Mountain (Olympic) (11).....	761
5. Salish Cliffs (6).....	675
6. The Home Course (4).....	536
7. Palouse Ridge (6).....	513
8. Prospector at Suncadia (2).....	350
9. Trophy Lake.....	337
10. White Horse.....	289

**Others Receiving Votes:** Port Ludlow 260, Desert Canyon 240, Apple Tree 226, Washington National 214, Bear Mountain Ranch 211, Indian Canyon 148, Rope Rider at Suncadia 134, Druids Glen 127, Loomis Trail 123, Creek at Qualchan 119, Newcastle (Coal Creek) 117, Canyon Lakes 82, Hangman Valley 75, Links at Moses Pointe 71, West Seattle 48, McCormick Woods 47, Cedars at Dungeness 36, Gold Mountain (Cascade) 36, Shuksan 33, MeadowWood 28, Avalon 27, Alderbrook 26, Homestead Farms 26, Eaglemont 24, Highlander 24, Chewelah 22, Foster 21, Lake Spanaway 21, Jackson Park 20, Lake Chelan 20, Snohomish 20, The Classic 19, Kalispel 19, North Bellingham 19, SunCountry 19, Downriver 17, Horn Rapids 16, Leavenworth 15, Mount Si 15, Liberty Lake 14, Sudden Valley 14, Allenmore 13, Skamania Lodge 13, Battle Creek 12, Columbia Point 11, Riverbend 11, The Nile 10, Vic Meyers 10, Bellevue 9, Eagles Pride 9, Enumclaw 9, Hawks Prairie (Woodlands) 9, Mint Valley 9, Newcastle (China Creek) 9, Twin Lakes 9, Meadow Park 8, Rolling Hills 8, Sun Willows 8, Tahoma Valley 8, Auburn 7, Three Lakes 7, Cedarcrest 6, Kahler Glen 6, Lake Wilderness 6, Lynnwood 6, Redmond Ridge 6, Swinomish 6, West Richland 6, Elk Ridge 5, Tri-Mountain 5, Suntuades 4, Desert Aire 3, Harbour Pointe 3, Hawks Prairie (Links) 3, Snoqualmie Falls 3, Three Rivers 3, Alta Lake 2, Capitol City 2, Echo Falls 2, Lake Padden 2, North Shore 2, Oakbrook 2, Village Greens 2, Fairways 1, Walter Hall 1.

## Experts Only

**C**urious to know how those who cover golf for a living rank the state's top courses? A quick glance below indicates that they see things much the same as you. Here's how the votes from our industry expert panelists add up:

### Media Voting

1. Gamble Sands (11)	192
2. Chambers Bay (6)	185
3. Wine Valley (4)	160
4. Gold Mountain (Olympic) (1)	130
5. Palouse Ridge	104
6. Salish Cliffs (1)	98
7. White Horse	57
8. The Home Course	38
9. Prospector at Suncadia	36
10. Trophy Lake	35

**Others Receiving Votes:** Washington National 22, Rope Rider 18, Indian Canyon 17, Desert Canyon 16, Newcastle (Coal Creek) 12, Apple Tree 11, Bear Mt. Ranch 11, Port Ludlow 10, Druids Glen 7, Gold Mt. (Cascade) 7, Hawks Prairie (Woodlands) 6, Lake Spanaway 6, Eaglemont 5, Loomis Trail 5, North Bellingham 5, Avalon 4, Canyon Lakes 4, Creek at Qualchan 3, Kalispel 3, Eagles Pride 2, Lake Padden 1, Links at Moses Pointe 1, Oakbrook 1.

## Ladies' Choice

**A**s votes came in, we noticed that certain courses (Port Ludlow, Mount Si and Foster) showed up more frequently on women's ballots than on those submitted by men. So, we thought, what would the state's top-10 look like if only women were allowed to vote?

### Women-Only

1. Port Ludlow (7)	70
2. Gold Mountain (Olympic) (1)	61
3. Gamble Sands (5)	51
4. White Horse	45
5. Wine Valley (1)	44
6. Trophy Lake	36
7. Chambers Bay	31
8. Prospector	31
9. Salish Cliffs	28
10. Loomis Trail	27

**Others Receiving Votes:** Home Course 18, Creek at Qualchan 12, Canyon Lakes 10, Foster 10, MeadowWood 10, Mount Si 10, Vic Meyers 10, West Seattle 10, Cedars at Dungeness 9, Indian Canyon 9, Lake Chelan 9, Leavenworth 9, SunCountry 9, Alderbrook 8, Chewelah 8, Bear Mt. Ranch 7, Bellevue 7, Three Lakes 7, Avalon 6, Gold Mt. (Cascade) 6, Kahler Glen 6, Riverbend 6, Apple Tree 5, Druids Glen 5, Highlander 5, Snohomish 5, Hangman Valley 3, Palouse Ridge 3, Alta Lake 2, Rope Rider 2, Sudden Valley 2, Horn Rapids 1.



## 1 Chambers Bay University Place

If you come at the king, you'd best not miss.

Gamble Sands took its best shot in 2017 but, far from administering the knockout blow, seems only to have motivated Chambers Bay to come back even stronger in 2019.

We were among the first in line to visit Chambers Bay this spring and play its new greens, and we can say confidently that any fears that they would distract from the course aesthetic, or wouldn't play as firm and fast as Chambers' old fescue greens, so far prove unfounded. Yes, they're a little brighter in color than the fescue, and there was some evidence on a couple of greens of areas where the grass is growing in a little stronger than in others. But, they play almost identically to the old greens, while being more consistent in roll, and easier to maintain.

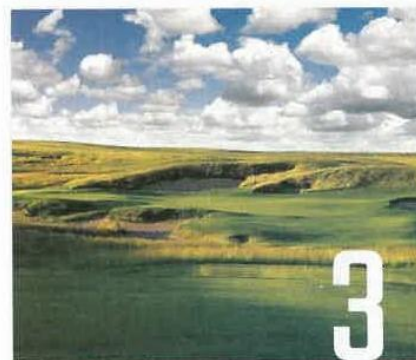
The greens were considered one of the major hurdles Chambers Bay needed to overcome to attract another USGA championship. If our readers' votes count, I think we can consider that test officially passed.

## 2 Gamble Sands Brewster

Put Gamble Sands in — oh, let's say, Marysville — and we're reasonably confident that it would finish No. 1 on this list. Gamble Sands consistently places ahead of Chambers Bay in ballots that include both courses; it simply doesn't show up on the same volume of ballots that Chambers does. While it's certainly possible that there are golfers who have played Gamble Sands and don't think it's a top-10 track, it's more likely that most of those who don't include it simply haven't made the four-hour drive to Brewster to see it for themselves.

But, that location is a large part of what makes Gamble spectacular — the sheer acreage that allows the course to sprawl across a Columbia River ridge, with broad fairways and massive greens, the mountain and river views that extend for miles in nearly all directions, the Central Washington sun loosening up your muscles and adding 20 yards to every drive, and the feeling that there's nothing in the world that matters except the next shot in front of you.

Driving to Brewster isn't the price we have to pay to play Gamble Sands — it's the reason we want to go in the first place.



## 3 Wine Valley Walla Walla

The same dynamic at play between Chambers Bay and Gamble Sands shows up each year in the battle for third place in our rankings, between Wine Valley and Gold Mountain's Olympic Course. In all four rankings we've conducted since 2013, Wine Valley has earned more first-place votes than Gold Mountain — 33 in all, to just 16 for the Olympic — yet, the two have flip-flopped the No. 3 and No. 4 ranking each year. The fact is, golfers who have played Wine Valley love it — but, a significantly larger number have played the Olympic, and thus the latter course appears on more ballots.

Why does Wine Valley consistently receive more first-place votes than any course outside the top-two? Perhaps because it features a little bit of everything — the open, links style of Gamble Sands, the expansive Eastern Washington views of Palouse Ridge, the intriguing green complexes of Chambers Bay, and the exquisite conditioning of Salish Cliffs. Sure, it's a drive — but, if you could play one course that combined the best of all those others, wouldn't you say it's worth it? Voters who have played it certainly do, and we couldn't agree more.

In addition to our top-10 courses statewide, here's a roundup of our favorites in each region, to help with planning your next golf getaway. We've mixed premium tracks with local favorites, too, so you can play for days without busting your budget:

#### Peninsula

1. Gold Mountain - Olympic (Bremerton)
2. Salish Cliffs (Shelton)
3. Trophy Lake (Port Orchard)
4. White Horse (Kingston)
5. Port Ludlow (Port Ludlow)
6. McCormick Woods (Port Orchard)
7. Cedars at Dungeness (Sequim)
8. Gold Mountain - Cascade (Bremerton)
9. Alderbrook (Union)
10. Discovery Bay (Port Townsend)

#### Seattle/Tacoma/Eastside

1. Chambers Bay (University Place)
2. The Home Course (DuPont)
3. Washington National (Auburn)
4. Druids Glen (Covington)
5. Newcastle - Coal Creek (Newcastle)
6. The Classic (Spanaway)
7. West Seattle (Seattle)
8. Lake Spanaway (Spanaway)
9. Mount Si (North Bend)
10. Eagles Pride (Tacoma)

#### North

1. Loomis Trail (Blaine)
2. Avalon (Burlington)
3. Eaglemont (Mount Vernon)
4. Shuksan (Bellingham)
5. Homestead Farms (Bellingham)
6. Snohomish (Snohomish)
7. North Bellingham (Bellingham)
8. Whidbey (Oak Harbor)
9. Harbour Pointe (Mukilteo)
10. Swinomish (Anacortes)

#### Central/Eastern Washington

1. Gamble Sands (Brewster)
2. Wine Valley (Walla Walla)
3. Palouse Ridge (Pullman)
4. Prospector at Suncadia (Roslyn)
5. Desert Canyon (Orondo)
6. Apple Tree (Yakima)
7. Bear Mountain Ranch (Chelan)
8. Rope Rider at Suncadia (Roslyn)
9. Indian Canyon (Spokane)
10. Creek at Qualchan (Spokane)



Photo by Rob Perry / robperry.com

## 4 Gold Mountain (Olympic)

Bremerton

Every couple of years, a new course comes along to challenge for a spot in the top-10. Newcastle, Trophy Lake, White Horse, Salish Cliffs, The Home Course, Palouse Ridge, both courses at Suncadia — all were built since Gold Mountain's Olympic Course first opened its doors in 1996. And, all still sit below the Olympic in our state's rankings.

What the late John Harbottle did at Gold Mountain was create a course that embodies everything we love about Washington golf — tree-lined fairways, mountain

views, beautiful landscaping, dramatic elevation changes, and some of the best risk-reward plays you can find.

What truly sets the Olympic apart, though, is a greens fee that peaks at \$70, and drops as low as \$20 on a weekday or weekend evening. When we want to show off for an out-of-town guest, we take them to the Olympic. Once we have them marveling at the beauty, intrigue and sheer joy of the course, we let them know how much we paid to play it. Inevitably, they continue to bring it up to us years later — just as we'll still be writing the Olympic's name on this list for years to come.

## 5 Salish Cliffs

Shelton

No course has finished as consistently in the rankings, year after year, as Salish Cliffs — always behind Chambers Bay, Wine Valley and Gold Mountain's Olympic (and, since it opened, Gamble Sands), and always ahead of everyone else.

It's a course that scores well with every demographic — men, women, industry experts and the general public all rank it in their respective top-10s, a credit to the diverse range of ways the course can be played and enjoyed. Long hitters go back to the tips and challenge themselves with forced carries and greens that favor approaches from specific angles if you're seeking birdies. Shorter hitters, meanwhile, love the eagle opportunities at No. 1, No. 2 and No. 18, the elevated tee shots on three of the course's four par-threes, and the opportunity to score well if one can simply stay out of trouble.

Always one of the best-maintained tracks in the state, it's another course that makes us jealous of those folks on the other side of the Sound ... and, not the last one we'll see on this list, either.



Photo by Brian Car



Photo by Rob Perry / robperry.com

## 6 The Home Course

DuPont

In 2017, the gap in our rankings between the sixth- and seventh-ranked courses (110 points) was bigger than the gap from third to sixth (96 points). It seemed that we had a "Big Six" of courses that voters clearly preferred over any others — which is what makes The Home Course's jump from seventh in 2017 to sixth in 2019 one of this year's biggest surprises.

While the ranking — just a one-spot improvement — may not seem all that big of a deal, consider the fact that in 2013, The Home Course was ranked one spot behind Washington National; in 2015, it was just

behind Rope Rider — this year, those two courses couldn't even get within 300 points of The Home Course's total, representing a nearly 14-fold increase in points from 2013 to 2019 that dwarfs any other course in the state.

Credit the surge to an increase in traffic from CG readers, the ongoing efforts of an outstanding staff who maintain one of the state's most enjoyable courses, or a greens fee that tops out at just \$66. Whatever the cause, the "Big Six" is clearly a thing of the past — welcome to the era of the "Big Seven."

## 7 Palouse Ridge

### Pullman

Chalk another one up to the East-West dynamic. Just as with Chambers vs. Gamble, and Gold Mountain vs. Wine Valley, Palouse Ridge found itself battling in the rankings this year with a course that is much more accessible for a majority of *CG* readers. Indeed, Palouse Ridge scored an average of 5.7 points on the ballots on which it appeared, to just under 5.3 points per ballot for The Home Course. But, the latter course was included by 11 more readers than Palouse Ridge — a small number, to be sure, but more than enough to account for the 23-point difference in the final rankings.

We made our first trip to Palouse Ridge in 2015, and came back blown away by the incredible views, and inspired design (another John Harbottle creation, his second of three tracks on this list). Whether you play it as a whirlwind day trip (like we did), on a fall football weekend, or as part of an Eastern Washington golf getaway, just play it. If you do, we're confident it will be on your ballot in 2021.



Photo by Rob Perry / robperry.com

## 8 Prospector at Suncadia

### Roslyn

Boeing Classic weekend will have perfect weather, the Mariners will go on a long losing streak, and a Suncadia course will be ranked No. 8 in the state of Washington.

Not much is guaranteed in life, but those are three things you can go ahead and bet the house on each August. The older of the two public tracks at Roslyn's Suncadia Resort, Prospector has finished eighth in our rankings three times since 2013, the only outlier being 2015, when its younger sibling, Rope Rider, earned the eighth-place honor.

Truthfully, either course is a worthy addition to the list. Prospector has the most scenic holes, including a par-4 10th that is one of the most photographed holes in Washington state, plus generally tighter fairways and more water than Rope Rider. The latter, though, has some of our favorite risk-reward holes, one of the best finishing stretches in the state, and a clubhouse that doubles as one of the state's top wineries. The fact is, you can't go wrong at Suncadia — barely an hour's drive from the Eastside, but a world unto itself.



Photo by Rob Perry / robperry.com

## 9 Trophy Lake Golf & Casting

### Port Orchard

In 2017, Trophy Lake was one of the big newsmakers of our Washington golf rankings, breaking into the top-10 for the first time. This year, Trophy has taken yet another step forward, climbing one more spot to ninth and finishing just 13 points — or, about three ballots — shy of Prospector for No. 8.

It certainly hasn't escaped our notice that the two courses making notable jumps in this year's ranking — Trophy Lake and The Home Course — happen to be the two courses that joined the Cascade Golfer Cup rotation since 2017. While correlation seems more likely than causation, we're glad that readers see the same thing in these courses that we do — fun, exciting designs that are a great fit for players of all abilities.

Of all of the Oki Golf courses, we've always felt that Trophy represented one of the best overall values — on par, quality-wise, with Washington National and Newcastle, but \$20 cheaper than the former and \$70-\$140 cheaper than the latter. Hit it after 5 p.m., and it's one of the best bargains in the state — just \$40-\$46 for the public, and \$25-\$35 for Oki Card holders.

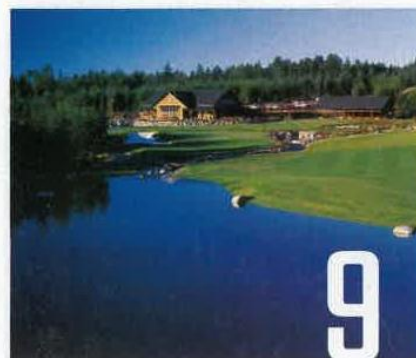


Photo by Rob Perry / robperry.com

## By Price

TOP  
10  
Best

**W**ant to get the most bang for your buck? Here are our favorite courses at each price point, ranked by value:

### \$45 and Under

1. Hangman Valley .....\$41
2. Gold Mountain (Cascade).....\$45
3. Snohomish.....\$40
4. West Seattle.....\$38
5. Eagles Pride.....\$35
6. MeadowWood.....\$41
7. Lake Spanaway.....\$42
8. Chewelah.....\$38
9. Swinomish.....\$38
10. Desert Aire.....\$39

### \$65 and Under

1. White Horse.....\$65
2. Apple Tree.....\$65
3. Port Ludlow.....\$55
4. Indian Canyon.....\$49
5. Creek at Qualchan.....\$49
6. Links at Moses Pointe.....\$60
7. Lake Chelan.....\$54
8. Avalon.....\$62
9. Cedars at Dungeness.....\$52
10. Mount Si.....\$52

### Under \$100

1. Gold Mountain (Olympic).....\$70
2. The Home Course.....\$66
3. Loomis Trail.....\$70
4. Druids Glen.....\$70
5. Trophy Lake.....\$92
6. Canyon Lakes.....\$70
7. McCormick Woods.....\$69
8. Highlander.....\$75
9. Eaglemont.....\$73.60
10. Skamania Lodge.....\$85

### Over \$100

1. Wine Valley.....\$145
2. Gamble Sands.....\$170
3. Chambers Bay.....\$199\*
4. Salish Cliffs.....\$115
5. Palouse Ridge.....\$105
6. Desert Canyon.....\$100
7. Rope Rider at Suncadia.....\$119
8. Bear Mountain Ranch.....\$100
9. Prospector at Suncadia.....\$139
10. Washington National.....\$109

**NOTE:** Rate refers to maximum peak-season rate only (walking rate, if available)  
\* - Washington resident rate

# TOP 10 Best

## Movers & Shakers

Which courses have seen the biggest change in their fortunes over the last two years? Here's a look at this year's top-20 courses, and where they ranked in 2017:

2017 Rankings	2017	Change
1. Chambers Bay	2	+1
2. Gamble Sands	1	-1
3. Wine Valley	4	+1
4. Gold Mountain (Olympic)	3	-1
5. Salish Cliffs	5	--
6. The Home Course	7	+1
7. Palouse Ridge	6	-1
8. Prospector at Suncadia	8	--
9. Trophy Lake	10	+1
10. White Horse	9	-1
11. Port Ludlow	30	+19
12. Desert Canyon	11	-1
13. Apple Tree	15	+2
14. Washington National	12	-2
15. Bear Mountain Ranch	13	-2
16. Indian Canyon	16	--
17. Rope Rider at Suncadia	14	-3
18. Druids Glen	19	+1
19. Loomis Trail	20	+1
20. The Creek at Qualchan	32	+12



Photo by Rob Perry/robperry.com

## 10 White Horse Kingston

Only seven courses have appeared in every top-10 list we've published since 2013 – the aforementioned "Big Six" and White Horse. The latter's run is perhaps the most impressive, given that White Horse has only once placed higher than ninth – with so many good courses (Port Ludlow, Desert Canyon, Apple Tree, Rope Rider, Bear Mountain Ranch, Washington National, etc.) snapping at its heels year after year, it's not easy to consistently hang on to that top-10 spot.

How does White Horse do it? By appealing to a broad range of voters. White Horse ranked fourth among female voters – one element that makes it a natural fit for the annual LPGA Legends Tour Suquamish Clearwater Cup – and seventh among experts, a credit to a Cynthia Dye McGarey design that requires golfers to think their way through each hole, and a John Harbottle redesign that softened the course's toughest edges.

One other major factor influencing White Horse's ranking – especially compared to those courses just below it? A peak rate of \$65 that is the lowest of any course in the top-10.