

BEST GOLF COURSE

Peninsula Golf Course

Long Beach, Washington

Runner-up: Gearhart Golf Links

Honorable Mention: Astoria Golf and Country Club



Story and photo by
LYNETTE RAE MCADAMS

One of the oldest courses in the Columbia-Pacific region, Peninsula Golf Course first opened its fairways in 1947 and has been delighting local golfers on the same beautiful 55-acres ever since. Located just one mile north of downtown Long Beach, Washington, this nine-hole course winds through a mature forest of spruce and pine, and is the place where lucky players share a wealth of green with passing deer, rabbits and the occasional bald eagle.

Paying tribute to the many shipwrecks that have earned this area the unfortunate nickname

"Graveyard of the Pacific," each hole is named for a ship that faltered on the nearby shoreline, and from the opening "Morning Star" (lost in 1849), all the way through to the number nine finisher "Triumph" (1961), there's something on this course for just about everyone.

"It's very user friendly," says owner/manager and Head Professional Jim Eaton. "It's not overly long or overly hard, but it's still really enjoyable for either novices or pros."

In full partnership with his wife Sondra, Eaton has been managing the course for the last 10 years, and together, the couple has made a transformative change to the facility — adding 3,000 feet of much-needed drain-

age, new tees, enlarged greens and more bunkers — in every way, enhancing its playability.

But the actual course isn't the only thing that's changed.

In 2011, the Eatons christened a handsome, well-designed new clubhouse, replete with a full-service pro shop and a restaurant — The Cove — which quickly surfaced as a popular lunch spot, and has recently added weekend dinners to its repertoire. Offering daytime fare that includes fresh soups, specialty sandwiches, and burgers (not to mention beautiful entrée salads), and a nighttime menu boasting old-fashioned favorites like slow-roasted prime rib and jumbo prawn linguine, The Cove has helped entice a new crowd to the course, adding to the overall positive wave of change.

Ask any fan though, and they'll tell you that the reason they keep coming back to Peninsula Golf is really quite simple: Whether you're sticking around for a full nine holes, or just dropping in for some free putting practice and a cold micro brew, the Eatons' motto of being "the friendliest course on the coast" holds consistently true. Every. Single. Time.

Peninsula Golf Course is dog-friendly, open year-round, and offers golf club and cart rentals (push and power), as well as lessons and help planning special events. For more information or to reserve a tee time, call 360-642-2828, or visit www.peninsulagolf-course.com

Insider tip: Only one vote separated this year's runner-up and honorable mention, and Astoria Golf and Country Club was last year's winner.

BEST HIKING TRAIL

Discovery Trail

Long Beach Peninsula, Washington

Runner-up: Fort to Sea Trail

Honorable Mention: Saddle Mountain

Story and photo by
LYNETTE RAE MCADAMS

Stretching 8.2 miles from northern Long Beach all the way to the Port of Ilwaco, the Discovery Trail on Washington's Long Beach Peninsula is not only a local favorite but is fast becoming a showcase "urban" pathway for the entire Pacific Northwest.

Completed in 2009, this idyllic length of perfectly smooth blacktop transports walkers, runners and bicyclists over and through the scenic grassy dunes that line the Pacific, offering glimpses of both wildlife and public art, as well as a few spectacular sneak peeks at the ocean.

With graceful turns and twists, the trail rises and falls naturally with the terrain and can be enjoyed in small sections or taken as a whole for an exciting challenge. Picking up the course is easy, with 10 access points along the route, all of which include parking (though only a handful offer public restrooms).

The northern portion of the trail — from Long Beach to Beard's Hollow — is mostly flat, a comfortable stroll that lets you

feel like you're part of the scene around you, and not merely passing through it. Traveling by bicycle, this sensation is amplified, as though the body transforms into the very wind that shaped this rolling landscape its sea of grass.

Though much of the trail runs parallel to the beach, its location behind the westernmost dune keeps the ocean mostly out of sight. But beachgoers shouldn't be dismayed: Nearly every turn brings an opportunity to take an improved "spur" path over that final crest, dropping you instantly onto miles of open shoreline.

Just south of Seaview, sandy dunes give way to marshlands as you approach Beard's Hollow; the trail makes a dramatic change. Crossing the highway and abandoning paved blacktop for a packed gravel trail, this section

is more hike than walk, gaining 300 feet in elevation as it climbs over the shoulder of Cape Disappointment. Twisting up and down through lush woodlands and groves of spruce and hemlock, the path sports a few surprising views before dropping into the sleepy fishing village of Ilwaco, whose working port makes up the trail's southern terminus.

Named for the Corps of Discovery, who arrived here in 1805, the walkway traces the footsteps of Lewis and Clark, and, along the way, commemorates their journey with public art installations, including several bronze sculptures as well as a few natural history exhibits.

Whether you walk one small section or decide to go the distance, planning a Discovery Trail experience is always a good idea: You can relive a moment in history, and in some of the world's most beautiful seaside scenery, even make some new discoveries of your own.

Most of the Discovery Trail is handicap accessible; for more information and downloadable maps, visit www.funbeach.com



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