

NEW ZEALAND'S TOP 40 GOLF COURSES FOR 2024

New Zealand is known as one of the world's great golf destinations and it is time to recognise the best courses in New Zealand along with some of our great golf clubs. New Zealand Golf Rankings has completed its 2024 surveys and analysis and now, with daylight savings and summer golf weather upon us, we want to share our results. We also want to encourage local golfers to travel around the country and play some of our many wonderful golf courses. So, which golf courses have you played? And where will your next golfing road trip take you and your friends?

For the fourth time in eight years, Tara Iti ranks as the best golf course in New Zealand in our 2024 rankings. Yes, the golf course is extremely private, but it is truly something special. If you are ever have the opportunity to play there, then you should jump at it! The setting, the layout and how the course plays is unique and memorable, from the time you drive through the gates, through to holing your final putt on the 18th green. It is absolutely, magical!

New to the rankings are the Te Arai golf courses located 90-minutes north of Auckland. Te Arai South nearly knocked Tara Iti from its top spot. The two courses, Te Arai South which ranked in second place and Te Arai North which came in third, really make the region a “must play” golf destination for golfers from around the world. The flow of the two courses, with the scenery, accommodation, and dining make it one of the best places in the world to stay and play golf. On the rankings side, the seven factors that rankers considered: Risk/Reward, Playability, Layout, Design, Scenic Values, Conditioning and Ambience all rated highly. It is generally acknowledged that designers Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw (Te Arai South) and Tom Doak (Te Arai North and Tara Iti) build golf courses that perfectly suit their landscapes.

The Queenstown pair of Jacks Point and The Hills were in the fourth and sixth spots with only .03 of a point separating them, while Wairakei managed to squeeze into fifth position. Meanwhile, its neighbour Kinloch moved to the #8 spot. Cape Kidnappers came in at #7 and Kauri Cliffs moved to the 9th position. This year the rankings were extremely close with the #4 Jacks Point through to #9 Kauri Cliffs, being separated by only 0.28 of a point. This shows just how close the quality of these “destination” golf courses are and what wonderful courses we have!

The Paraparaumu Beach Golf Course snuck in at the #10 position and is regarded as the number one traditional NZ Golf Club. The Millbrook Coronet course came in at #11 and pipped its sister course, the Millbrook Remarkables course, by a small margin, narrowly followed by Titirangi, Royal Wellington and Christchurch Golf Clubs.

The New Zealand Top 40 Golf Rankings were last compiled in December 2022. Therefore, this is the first ranking conducted with the new Te Arai Golf Courses and dropping the Gulf Harbour Golf Club after it was closed. Russley and Mangawhai golf clubs returned into the Top 40 rankings and the Waverley Golf Club made its inaugural appearance into the rankings.

This year, there were several golf clubs that dropped down the rankings and three dropped out of the Top 40. However, Queenstown Golf Club was the biggest climber, rising seven positions to the 26th spot. It was noted that the removal of the trees and improved conditioning of the course assisted in this significant rise.

The rankings were compiled from the results of 23 rankers submitting their Top 12 courses in the North and South Island. The ranking panel has over 800 years of combined golf experience, with “rankers” from the deep South through to North Auckland, with a diverse mix consisting of professional players, experienced amateur players, golf industry professionals and some club players with extensive playing experience here in New Zealand and internationally. This year, those who submitted included: Phil Aicken, Benn Ashford, Barry Brown, Hamish Campbell, Blair Dibley, Phil Ellison, Michael Glading, Simon Forshaw, Tolan Henderson, Tony Houpt, Denise Langdon, Jon McCord, Jamie McIsaac, Nigel Merrett, Patrick Moore, Willie Moore, Grant Moorhead, Kieran Muir, Hamish Robertson, Alan Rose, Duncan Simpson, Doug White and Fraser Wilkin.

The ranking system is based on seven criteria that cover the key factors that are essential in good golf course design, which are important to the golfers that play these golf courses. The criteria are Risk/Reward, Playability, Layout, Design, Scenic Values, Conditioning and Ambience. A maximum of five points was awarded per category thus, the maximum any course could receive was a total of 35 points. The points awarded were totalled up and then divided by the numbers of rankers so the average was calculated thus giving the overall result. This is the seventh time that Andrew Whiley has coordinated the rankings. Rankings were previously conducted in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022.

Once again, as in previous rankings, there are some “hidden gems” that were mentioned by some rankers, but which didn’t quite make the final Top 40. This included such courses as Waihi, Rangatira, Ohope, Roxburgh Golf Clubs, all of which have some great features that make them fantastic places to stop and play a round. Tokarahi and Mahia Golf Clubs were mentioned as being memorable 9-hole courses and Waverley, Millbrook and Te Arai were all noted for their great 19th hole hospitality. Waipu and the Manawatu Golf Clubs were highlighted by respondents for their exceptional catering and food on offer!

So, the challenge for those of you who love golf, is to set a goal to try to play as many of the Top 40 courses that you haven’t yet played on this year’s list. Find the time to seek out and play those hidden gems; make a point of getting out there in our beautiful country and see if you agree with the ranking scores. Again, as it’s been mentioned before, it’s not just about playing the famous or ‘big name’ courses, but it’s about being able to enjoy our unique and amazing courses that have something to offer everyone.

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Andrew Whiley is the past President of the NZPGA, NZPGA Board member from 2008 – 2024 and was the former professional at Chisholm Links in Dunedin (2003 – 2015). He was elected to the Dunedin City Council in 2013 and is currently in his fourth term on council.

Andrew joined the NZPGA in 1984. He was the assistant professional at the Miramar Golf Club before going on to being the Golf Professional at Te Awamatu. He then lived in Northern California for a period where he tried to play professionally before being a caddy at Pebble Beach. A three-year stint in Canada saw him working as assistant professional in Calgary and at Banff Springs before returning to NZ and taking up the role of golf professional at Whanganui Golf Club for a three-year period before returning to Canada for 7-years in various roles in the golf industry.

Andrew first coordinated the NZ Golf Rankings in 2012 after various rankings of New Zealand golf course were being undertaken with rankers who had very little knowledge of NZ golf courses especially in the regions. The rankings have a strict ranking process that is modelled on the international ranking system that the Golf Digest magazine syndications use worldwide.

2024 RANKINGS

Ranking	Points	Golf Course	Change
1	31.94	Tara Iti	<i>same</i>
2	31.84	Te Arai South	<i>new</i>
3	31.05	Te Arai North	<i>new</i>
4	30.47	Jacks Point	<i>down 2</i>
5	30.42	Wairakei Golf Course	<i>up 3</i>
6	30.31	The Hills	<i>down 3</i>
7	30.30	Cape Kidnappers	<i>down 3</i>
8	30.28	Kinloch Golf Club	<i>down 3</i>
9	30.19	Kauri Cliffs	<i>same</i>
10	29.93	Paraparaumu Beach Golf Club	<i>down 4</i>
11	29.90	Millbrook Golf Club - Coronet	<i>down 4</i>
12	28.62	Millbrook Golf Club - Remarkables	<i>down 2</i>
13	28.60	Titirangi Golf Club	<i>down 1</i>
14	28.35	Royal Wellington Golf Club	<i>same</i>
15	28.27	Christchurch Golf Club	<i>same</i>
16	27.96	Clearwater Golf Resort	<i>same</i>
17	27.80	Royal Auckland and Grange Golf Club	<i>down 6</i>
18	27.76	Muriwai Golf Club	<i>up 3</i>
19	27.59	Terrace Downs Golf Resort	<i>down 1</i>
20	27.55	Tieke Golf Estate	<i>down 3</i>

21	27.38	Arrowtown Golf Club	<i>down 2</i>
22	27.32	Hastings Golf Club	<i>down 2</i>
23	27.27	Mount Maunganui Golf Club	<i>up 2</i>
24	27.16	Otago Golf Club	<i>up 3</i>
25	27.15	Hamilton Golf Club	<i>up 1</i>
26	27.12	Queenstown Golf Club	<i>up 7</i>
27	27.08	Pegasus Golf Club	<i>down 5</i>
28	27.04	Manawatu Golf Club	<i>same</i>
29	27	Cromwell Golf Club	<i>up 1</i>
30	26.98	Harewood Golf Club	<i>down 6</i>
31	26.93	Invercargill Golf Club	<i>up 6</i>
32	26.85	New Plymouth Golf Club	<i>down 9</i>
33	26.83	Russley Golf Club	<i>new</i>
34	26.81	Chisholm Links Golf Club	<i>up 2</i>
35	26.71	Waipu Golf Club	<i>same</i>
36	26.68	Omaha Beach Golf Club	<i>down 7</i>
37	26.63	Whanganui Golf Club	<i>up 1</i>
38	26.60	Mangawhai Golf Club	<i>new</i>
39	26.55	Waverley Golf Club	<i>new</i>
40	26.51	Wanaka Golf Club	<i>down 6</i>