

NEW ZEALAND'S TOP 40 GOLF COURSES

As we head into 2023, it is important and timely to recognise some of New Zealand's great golf courses; ones that each of us should play if we get the opportunity. So, which golf courses have you played? And where should your next golfing road trip planning take you and your friends?

Tara Iti ranks as the best golf course in New Zealand, based on the results. Yes, the golf course is private, but it is truly something special and if you are ever given the opportunity to play there, then you should jump at it! The setting, the layout and how the course plays, is definitely unique and memorable. Right from the time you drive through the gates, through to the holing your final putt on the 18th green; it is absolutely magical!

Te Arai wasn't in the ratings this year as it is so new. However, the rankers that have played it are all raving about it, with some believing it is better than Tara Iti with its views, use of the landscape and some outstanding holes. Plus, the 19th hole is pretty fabulous!

The Queenstown pair of Jacks Point and The Hills were in the second and third spots with only .06 of a point separating them. Contenders #2 Jacks Point down through to #9 Kauri Cliffs, were separated by less than a point, which shows how close the quality of these golf courses is! A new entrant into the Top 10 was the new Millbrook Coronet course. The Millbrook Remarkables course was ranked #10. Cape Kidnappers was five ranking slots higher than its sister course, Kauri Cliffs, and Kinloch pipped its local rival Wairakei by three slots. Paraparaumu Beach Golf Club rose one slot to take #6 on the rankings.

The last New Zealand Top 40 Golf Rankings were compiled in April 2020. Therefore, this is the first ranking conducted with the new revamped Royal Auckland included along with the new courses Millbrook Coronet Course and Tieke Golf Estate (Hamilton). Te Puke which hosted the NZPGA Championships in 2021, also entered the rankings along with Waipu and Ohope Golf Courses.

This year, there were several golf clubs that dropped down the rankings. However, Christchurch Golf Club was the biggest climber, rising 7 positions to the 15th spot. It was noted the conditioning and the work having been done on the golf course assisted in this significant rise.

The rankings were compiled from the results of twenty-one rankers submitting their Top 12 courses in the North and South Island. The ranking panel has nearly 800 years of combined golf experience, with "rankers" from Invercargill 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 were Phil Aicken, Leo Barber, Graeme Barbara, Beauden Barrett, Robyn Boniface, Barry Brown, Hamish Campbell, Andrew Clements, Blair Dibley, Michael Glading, Simon Forshaw, Tony Houpt, Denise Langdon, Dave Mangan, Willie Moore, Grant Moorhead, Alan Rose, Duncan Simpson, John Spraggs, 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 sixth time that Andrew Whiley has coordinated the rankings. Rankings were previously conducted in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 & 2020.

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, Waverley and Roxburgh Golf Clubs, all of which have some great features that make them fantastic places to stop and play a round. Tokarahi and Kawhia Golf Club’s were mentioned as being memorable 9-hole courses and Waverley, Millbrook and Tara Iti 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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2022/23 RANKING

| RANKING | POINTS | COURSE | change from 2020 |
|---------|--------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | 32.36 | Tara Iti | same |
| 2 | 30.10 | Jacks Point | same |
| 3 | 30.04 | The Hills GC | same |
| 4 | 30.01 | Cape Kidnappers | up 1 |
| 5 | 29.97 | Kinloch | down 1 |
| 6 | 29.94 | Paraparaumu Beach Golf Club | up 1 |
| 7 | 29.90 | Millbrook - new 18 Coronet | new |
| 8 | 29.70 | Wairakei | same |
| 9 | 29.55 | Kauri Cliffs | down 3 |
| 10 | 28.97 | Millbrook - original 18 Remarkables | down 1 |
| 11 | 28.61 | Royal Auckland Golf Club | new |
| 12 | 28.33 | Titirangi Golf Club | down 2 |

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|----|-------|----------------------------|---------|
| 13 | 27.97 | Gulf Harbour | up 4 |
| 14 | 27.79 | Royal Wellington Golf Club | up 2 |
| 15 | 27.75 | Christchurch Golf Club | up 7 |
| 16 | 27.69 | Clearwater Golf Resort | up 4 |
| 17 | 27.63 | Tieke | new |
| 18 | 27.57 | Terrace Downs Golf Resort | up 3 |
| 19 | 27.44 | Arrowtown Golf Club | down 6 |
| 20 | 27.38 | Hastings GC | down 5 |
| 21 | 27.28 | Muriwai Golf Club | down 9 |
| 22 | 27.22 | Pegasus Golf Resort | up 2 |
| 23 | 27.17 | New Plymouth Golf Club | down 4 |
| 24 | 26.98 | Harewood Golf Club | up 1 |
| 25 | 26.63 | Mount Maunganui Golf Club | down 11 |
| 26 | 26.59 | Hamilton GC | up 2 |
| 27 | 26.55 | Otago Golf Club | up 4 |
| 28 | 26.45 | Manawatu Golf Club | down 10 |
| 29 | 26.43 | Omaha Beach Golf Club | down 6 |
| 30 | 26.42 | Cromwell Golf Club | up 3 |
| 31 | 26.24 | Te Puke GC | new |
| 32 | 26.04 | Windross Farm GC | down 6 |
| 33 | 25.97 | Queenstown Golf Club | up 1 |
| 34 | 25.88 | Wanaka Golf Club | up 3 |
| 35 | 25.85 | Waipu GC | new |
| 36 | 25.84 | Chisholm Links | down 1 |
| 37 | 25.59 | Invercargill Golf Club | up 1 |
| 38 | 25.44 | Whanganui Golf Club | down 11 |
| 39 | 25.42 | Nelson Golf Club | down 3 |
| 40 | 25.41 | Ohope Golf Club | new |