

Destination: Island Golf



Photo by Art McCafferty

This century-old club is still basically untouched.

by Art McCafferty

"No man or woman is an island. To exist just for yourself is meaningless. You can achieve the most satisfaction when you feel related to some greater purpose in life, something greater than yourself."

-- Denis Waitley

Ah... island golf; it just does not get any better. Okay, mountain golf is pretty good and yes, there is something to be said about prairie golf. When playing island golf in Michigan you need to think not only about green and cart fees but you also need to set aside a couple of bucks for ferry fees.

And now, the Top 10 Island courses. . .

The Rock-Drummond Island

The Rock has long been one of the celebrated courses in the Midwest. It is a spectacular course in a setting that is far from the madding crowd. Harry Bowers, course architect who mentored with Robert Trent Jones, feels it is the greatest course he has designed. There is a reason for calling it The Rock. "People do not realize what an undertaking that was. All of that blasting, the tremendous amounts of dirt we had to bring in and then seeding it all in one year, was such an awesome task that I am still amazed at what we did. Those Drummond Island people were great workers." <http://www.drummondisland.com>

Drummond Island GC

Dummond Island GC was built in 1963 and was designed by Jerold R. Gabel. This is a sleepy little course for island locals and was the only game in town before Tom Monaghan built The Rock for his Domino Pizza and Detroit Tiger families. The island is accessed by a short ferry ride from Detour.

Beaver Island Golf Course

Matt Melville designed the course in 1963 and called it a "Wee bit of Scotland on the Emerald Isle." Beaver Island golf is another step back in time for busy golfers. Of the millions of Michigan golf rounds each year, only about 5,000 of them are at Beaver Island. For openers, it is a little tough to get to. You have to take the Beaver Island Ferry at Charlevoix. The cost is \$37 round trip and the departures to the Island are usually twice a day. Our ferry took off at 8:30 and arrived two hours later. Our return was at 5:30 with our arrival at Charlevoix at 7:40. You can stay overnight, with rates from \$65-115. Your round is quite affordable and at times has a very laid back billing procedure. When I was there about five years ago, they had a coffee can that you dropped your money into. We later found the owner, John Works, on the course and he was good enough to drive us back into town. <http://www.beaverislandgolf.com/>

Wawashkamo Golf Club

Wawashkamo Golf Club, listed by Golf Magazine as one of the top 10 nine-hole courses in the world, is also the first nine-hole course designated as a Historic Golf Landmark by *Golf Digest*. U.S. Open Champion and Scotsman, Alex Smith built the course in 1898. Wawashkamo was named after an utterance of Chippewa Chief Eagle Eye, who observed that the golfers on the course "wawash-kamo" walk a crooked path. Well, that part hasn't changed and really not much else at the course has changed either.

Top 10 Michigan Island Golf Courses

The Rock GC at Drummond Island

Drummond Island GC - Drummond Island

Beaver Island GC - Beaver Island

The Jewel and Woods at the Grand Hotel - Mackinac Island

Wawashkamo GC - Mackinac Island

Grosse Ile Golf & County Club

Middle Channel Golf & Country - Harsens Island

Belle Isle GC - Detroit

West Shore Golf and Country Club - Grosse Isle

Iyopawa Island GC at Coldwater

The course is still cut by horse-drawn mowers, much of the watering system comes from the clouds that pass by the island, and the course still allows golfers the opportunity to use sand tees. The rough is rough, and wayward shots will have you reaching into your bag for a new ball. The postage-sized greens demand accurate approaches, not any different from decades past. To get a more comprehensive story on this famed golf

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The Woodcourse is yet another classic Jerry Matthews design.

course you need to read, "Walk a Crooked Trail - A Centennial History of Wawashkamo Golf Club" by Frank Straus and Brian Leigh Dunnigan
<http://www.wawashkamo.com/>

The Jewel and The Woods at The Grand Hotel

Grand Hotel is home to two picturesque nine-hole golf courses known together as the Jewel. Built in 1901, the Grand Nine is adjacent to the hotel and overlooks the Straits of Mackinac. Architect Jerry Matthews redesigned the course in 1987. The holes are fairly short with three sets of tees: blue at 2,405 yards, white at 2,258 yards

and red at 2,053 yards with a par of 33. The back nine is called Woods Nine and was designed by Jerry Matthews in 1994. This modern course features bent grass tees, greens and fairways. The holes are longer with three sets of tees: blue at 3,040, white at 2,645 red at 2,159 with a par of 34. Traversing into the interior of the Island, the Woods nine feels like a golfer's private escape in the woods while the Grand nine feels like the ultimate executive course.
<http://www.grandhotel.com>

Middle Channel Golf & Country-Harsen's Island

The Champion Auto Ferry runs every 20 minutes during the sum-

mer from 6:00 AM to midnight. It is a short trip and will only cost you half a sawbuck. If you have the bucks you could also fly to Harsen's Island for your golf holiday. The 18-hole course, built in the 1920's has not changed very much. It plays to 6100 yards and has two sets of tees.
<http://www.harsensisland.net>

Belle Island Golf Course-Detroit

Belle Isle Golf Facilities are composed of two entities; Belle Isle Golf Course at Riverbank and Oakview built in 1922, and The Belle Isle Practice Facility and Driving Range on Riverbank across from the Nature Center.

The course is an executive 9-hole course with 7 holes at par three - distances ranging from 130 to 160 yards. Two holes par at 4 with longer distances - 290 yards and 300 yards. The practice facility was built by Rick Smith and was part of the First Tee movement.

Grosse Ile Golf and Country Club -Grosse Isle

Grosse Ile Golf and Country Club was incorporated in 1919 giving it a long and rich history on the island. The course is located in the center of the island on over 300 acres of land. It is one of a number of Donald Ross courses built in Michigan. The concept of a club invitational was born at the club in 1937 as a fundraiser and it has been going ever since. The course has hosted a number of prestige tournaments, the 66th Western Amateur being one of them. They also held the 93rd Michigan Amateur with the champion being recent Grosse Ile High School, Jeff Cozzort.
<http://www.gigcc.com/>

West Shore Golf and Country Club-Grosse Isle

According to the information on their website, the original golf course was designed by George B. Ferry, golf architect, in 1908 and was named Island Country Club. It was the first private golf club established on Grosse Ile on what was originally known as the Fox Farms property. A flagpole, donated by Mr. Charles E. Haisley on July 4, 1928 for W.M. Lacy, still remains as a reminder of the original golf club

During the ensuing years the property was purchased by William R. Stadler, renamed West Shore Golf & Country Club, and leased to the members. During World War II the course was closed, but used as a training camp for the Detroit Lions football team. The Golf Association of Michigan held their 57th annual Amateur Championship at West Shore in 1975. West Shore was once again the scene of the same

event in 1981. West Shore hosted the USGA 1986 U.S. Amateur Public Links Sectional Qualifying Rounds, and in July 1987, hosted the U.S. Junior Amateur Championship regional. West Shore Golf & Country Club in conjunction with Grosse Ile Golf & Country Club, co-hosted the 1989 Michigan PGA Professional Championship, held Monday the 15th of May, 1989.
<http://www.westshoregolfcc.com/history.html>

Dan Tribble's Iyopawa Island Golf Course

It appears Dan Tribble is a man who has it all or at least a person that owns his own island golf. At Iyopawa the golfers find themselves in a casual atmosphere at all levels of play. The course is located on a unique site of 36 rolling acres on beautiful Coldwater Lake's Island. Actually, it is set on a peninsula, but that is the name they give it.
<http://www.iyopawaiisland.com/>



Iyopawa Island