

Shinnecock Hills - A Jewel in the Crown of American Golf Courses

Shinnecock Hills is true golfing royalty.

This prestigious course is situated less than two hours drive from the centre of New York in Southampton.

In 1891 the Scottish architect Willie Davies created the first 12-hole layout through the sand dunes.

An additional 6 holes were added in 1894 by the head professional Willie Dunn making Shinnecock Hills a full 18-hole layout.

Further land was acquired in 1920 running to the east of the clubhouse which meant a redesign and six new holes created by Charles B Macdonald and Seth Raynor.

Changes to the local infrastructure meant further changes.

A new version of Shinnecock Hills was built between 1929 and 1931 under the watchful eye of William Flynn and William F Gordon enlisting the help of a local Indian tribe from the nearby Shinnecock Reservation to complete the course.

The course pretty much stayed the same until being lengthened to 7,445 yards by Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore ahead of hosting the 2018 U.S. Open.

Shinnecock Hills holds the distinction of being one of the five founding clubs of the USGA and also holds the distinction of being the oldest incorporated golf club in the US.

Shinnecock's clubhouse is one of the most distinctly recognisable sitting on higher ground and offering commanding views over the course and surrounding land.

Construction began in 1892 with extensions being subsequently added carefully building on the original structure.

The club hosted its first US Open in 1896 - the second one ever played but it was 90 years before it hosted its second in 1986.

Shinnecock had the honour of hosting the 100th playing of the US Open in 1995 with Corey Pavin playing a pinpoint 4-wood shot into the final green to set up a decisive birdie on the 72nd hole to claim victory.

The tournament was played again on this classic links course in 2004 with Retief Goosen coming out victorious.

The tournament returned in 2018 where Brookes Keopke defended his U.S. Open title to become the first player to do so since Curtis Strange in 1989.

Shinnecock is also on the roster to hold the 2026 tournament.

Other prestigious tournaments held at Shinnecock include the U.S. Amateur in 1896, the Women's Amateur in 1900 and the Walker Cup in 1977.

The course is set up in the style and feel of a traditional British links-style course although Shinnecock is not a true links course.

The sand dunes lend themselves as natural defences to the weather which can get pretty rough with the Atlantic Ocean in close proximity.

There are over 150 bunkers on the course with long fescue grass adding further difficulty for any wayward shot.

There are a number of standout holes to choose from.

One of the most famous or infamous holes is the par 3 7th.

Its design is based on the famous 'redan' par 3 15th at North Berwick West in Scotland featuring an 'L' shaped green that is well protected by bunkers.

During the 2004 U.S. Open, the green got so dry that the green staff had to water it between groups playing the hole so that golf balls had a chance of holding the rock-hard surface.

The back 9 offers a stern test for any golfer as this side features more undulation in the fairways meaning accuracy off the tee is of paramount importance to hitting the small green complexes.

Shinnecock Hills is, without a doubt, one of the jewels in the crown of golf courses in America.

Getting the opportunity to play this masterpiece is one that can not be overlooked and will live long in the memory.