

Houston, TX



Woodforest

The spring of 2016 will long be remembered in the city of Houston, and not fondly. In late April, apocalyptic rainstorms devastated large swaths of the largest city in Texas, and the fourth largest city in the nation. Some area communities received as much as sixteen inches, and 240 billion gallons of rain fell across the region. That amount of water is equal to filling more than 360,000 Olympic swimming pools, or the same amount of water that tumbles over Niagara Falls over the course of almost four days.

It's not hard to imagine that many area golf courses were hit hard, if not practically washed away in the days-long deluge. But luckily for the traveling golfer, there were some area facilities that because of elevation or propitious location, were spared the worst. They emerged mostly unscathed from the storms that flooded a thousand homes, covered 3,000 square miles, caused more than five billion dollars in damage, and turned parts of the city into a disaster area.



Woodforest

Woodforest Golf Club in the suburb of Montgomery is a good example. Designed by local resident and former PGA Championship winner Steve Elkington, the course meanders through the majestic pines and towering oaks of Northwest Houston. Thoughtful bunkering and burbling Fish Creek meander through the property, wreaking havoc with offline drives and approach shots. The 27 holes on site are uniformly handsome, as is the brand new clubhouse.



The Highlands Course via [Wildcat Golf Club](#)

Wildcat Golf Club is 36 holes of scenic challenge, all within sight of the downtown skyscrapers and NRG Stadium, home to the NFL's Texans. The courses are popular with all of the area's professional teams, so it's not uncommon to see a Texan, a Rocket (NBA) or an Astro (MLB) on the driving range or in the clubhouse. Both the Highlands and the Lakes courses were designed by Roy Case, and both were built on a landfill and old oil field. The Highlands is links style and somewhat better regarded of the two courses, while the Lakes Course, as the name implies, has plenty of water and a notable amount of elevation change. The Highlands feels a bit like a Hill Country course, with rolling fairways and lovely views. But there are holes with a links feel also, featuring natural areas and open, treeless fairways. It has a few forced carries over deep ravines and the occasional blind shot.



The Lakes Course via [Wildcat Golf Club](#)

The Lakes has encroaching water on nearly half the holes, though things are mostly dry at the outset. Midway through the opening nine is where the tone of the golf course changes, and it becomes a thrill ride with abounding water, several split fairways, uneven lies caused by the rolling terrain, and some elevated greens.



[Tour 18](#)

[Tour 18](#) is the original replica course, not a replica of a replica course, if that makes sense. There's nothing humble about this audacious effort in the town of Humble, and the renditions of Augusta National's Amen Corner, the island green from the Stadium Course at [TPC Sawgrass](#), the church pew bunkers of [Oakmont](#), The Blue Monster at [Doral](#), and additional efforts mimicking holes at [Merion](#), [Shinnecock Hills](#) and even [Pebble Beach](#) make this a fun, albeit somewhat contrived test of the game.



Hole 18 at the [Golf Club of Houston](#)

Finally, and also located in the town of Humble, [The Golf Club of Houston](#) offers daily fee players the chance to test their skill where the PGA Tour's best convene every springtime just prior to Masters Week. The Members Course is off limits to the visitor, but the Tournament Course is available. Among the more interesting holes is the staunch finisher, as the 18th plays a full 480-yards with water down the entire left side. The final hole is a microcosm of what a player encounters earlier, as this Rees Jones–David Toms collaboration has both water and natural wetlands on a number of holes. Conditions are considered among the best in the area, particularly around tournament time.

Just for the sake of iconoclasm, we'll start with a top-notch vegan eatery in this steer-loving capital. [Green Seed Vegan](#) has morphed from a food truck into an honest-to-goodness restaurant, and showcases all sorts of fresh-made juices and their Dirty Burque, rivaling almost any juicy burger one might find. Speaking of which, since meat-eating is the rule and not the exception, we'll also suggest a couple of super-popular spots for carnivores: [Killen's Steakhouse](#) and [Killen's Barbecue](#). The Steakhouse is among the best in the city, and has the elegant formality of great steakhouses everywhere. Killen's Barbecue on the other hand is a place to get down and dirty. The robust aroma of pecan, oak, and mesquite smoked beef and pork ribs, brisket, sausage, pulled pork and link sausage explains why sometimes famished patrons are waiting for hours to get seated. Other viable

choices include [Gatlin's Barbecue](#) and [Rudy's](#), both of which inspire their own legions of loyal customers.