

Pocono Mountains, PA



The Pocono Mountains of Northeastern Pennsylvania have long been a weekend retreat from Manhattan and Philadelphia, ninety minutes to the east and two hours south, respectively. It's a destination famous for mountain scenery and outdoor activities like skiing, fishing, hiking and camping. It's been a honeymooning getaway and tranquil escape from big-city hustle and bustle. But the Poconos have also developed an identity as a stand-alone golf destination, with a wide range of worthwhile courses culled from different eras. It's an attractive amalgamation of old and new. We'll begin with the old:



Buck Hill Golf Club

Donald Ross happened by in 1922, and his [Buck Hill Golf Club](#) design, since expanded to a 27-hole layout, remains a classic more than ninety years later. This parkland style routing has no forced carries but some leg-strengthening climbs and small, devilish greens with steep-faced bunkers. Furthermore, the course wends lazily deeper into the woods as the round progresses, particularly when playing the White-Blue combo, in that order, and culminates in a crescendo of spectacular golf holes. One feels alone in the golf universe on the Blue nine and in concert with the architect, whose legend and aura seem present in the old-growth trees and unspoiled surroundings.



Skytop

Skytop is a classic antiquity. This farmland golf course might be what comes to mind when you hear the words “pasture pool.” It’s a 1920s-era design by Robert White, a native of St. Andrews, Scotland, who later became the first PGA president. Here you can play the ball from tee to green along the ground on almost every hole save for No. 18, which is a curious finishing hole that requires a nearly vertical short approach over a chasm and stone wall into a green that tests even the best putters, so canted is the surface from back to front.

The imposing main lodge is a stone monolith, with outbuildings that contain another thirty rooms and cottages. The surrounding 5,500 acre property, filled with lakes, streams, hiking and horseback trails, makes Skytop one of the premiere destinations in the region.



Great Bear

In the modern category, **Great Bear** is a Jack Nicklaus creation with loads of characteristics seen in modern architecture. Forced carries, huge greens and Nicklaus’ signature left-to-right shot routing are prevalent throughout, particularly on the testy par-3s, two of which measure a meaty 222 and 199 yards, respectively, from the back tees. Both of those one-shotters are on the back nine, not coincidentally, as the course gets increasingly tougher as the round progresses.



Woodloch Springs

Woodloch Springs is a Rocky Roquemore creation from 1992. His efforts prompted Golf Digest magazine to call it “a sanctuary of golf and greenery.” It’s a memorable combination of tight fairways and sizeable elevation changes, as the course curves and bends its way through fern-carpeted forests, lush wetlands and broad upland meadows. With four sets of tees on every hole, all levels of play can be accommodated. The brawny 14th hole requires a dramatic 220-yard carry over “Hells Gate Gorge” which is carved from the rugged mountainside by rushing water some 200 feet below.



Split Rock

Split Rock is another Pocono Mountains ‘must play’ which mirrors Woodloch Springs in its mandate that golfers both think and execute shot after shot with guts and precision. This is a course that’s both an

emotional and literal roller-coaster. And while both Woodloch Springs and Split Rock will leave a golfer feeling fully engaged, a full complement of golf balls in the bag at day's end is another matter entirely.

Owing to the topography and winding byways of the region, it's hard to pinpoint the best eateries in any linear fashion. Suffice it to say there are plenty of fine dining options, casual bistros and quiet country inns to be found around most any corner, at any crossroads or in any leafy hamlet. Frogtown Inn and 6 Acres Restaurant in Canadensis is highly regarded, as is Bailey's Rib and Steakhouse in Mount Pocono. The Hotel Fauchere in Milford has two worthwhile options: Bar Louis and the Delmonico Room.