

GOLFADVISOR

The 10 best par-3 golf courses in the U.S. offer quick, fun, scenic rounds

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What if you could play a beautiful and challenging golf course in less than three hours? Less than two hours maybe? Well, you can if you play any one of the country's best par-3 courses -- whether they're 18 holes or nine holes.

Sure, there are times when you want to get out and see what you can do on a 7,000-yard beast (on the appropriate tees, of course). After all, if you like hitting the driver, that's pretty unlikely on a par-3 layout. But even then you might be surprised. The Challenge Course at Monarch Dunes on the central California coast, for example, has a par 3 where most players could hit drivers. But I digress.

What makes a great par-3 golf course? Basically the same elements that make any course exceptional -- beautiful scenery, terrific conditioning, an interesting layout and plenty of challenge. With that said, here are some of my favorites across the U.S.



Jack Nicklaus' Top of the Rock Golf Course in Hollister, Mo. sits high above Table Rock Lake. (Courtesy of Branson Tourism)

Top of the Rock Golf Course near Branson, Mo.

[Top of the Rock Golf Course](#) is Jack Nicklaus' best (and only) short course. This short Nicklaus Signature course is also a little pricey -- \$115 for nine holes at last check -- but it does include the additional putting course, a bag of range balls and a canyon and nature trail tour. Located just south of Branson, Mo., which is an emerging golf destination, Top of the Rock Golf Course is part of Big Cedar Lodge and located high above Table Rock Lake, offering great views and terrific conditions. It's also an Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary course.