

Rockledge Golf Club

Where history, tradition and great golf come together



The 8th hole is a 188-yard par-3.

Golf is a game steeped in history and tradition, and those are certainly the hallmarks of one of central Connecticut's top municipal courses, Rockledge Golf Club in West Hartford.

It's where golf legends Tommy Armour and Julius Boros worked and played. It's where LPGA player Elizabeth Janangelo learned the game. And it's where countless others now simply enjoy a great round of golf on a challenging but pleasurable 18-hole layout.

"We work hard to preserve the traditions of the past and make them come alive for today's golfing public," said Head Professional Richard Crowe, who has been at the course for 27 years. "Rockledge is one of the older public courses in the area, and its history is what sets us apart."

Rockledge opened back in the 1920s, built originally as 14 holes in the southern end of West Hartford by Mike Sherman. After World

War II, William Mitchell made revisions to the course adding five new holes to complete the full 18. In the 1960s, the town acquired the course and has operated it ever since.

And Rockledge is traditional in the purest sense of the word. Most holes run parallel to each other, separated by lines of mature trees and other landscaping. The rolling terrain and many creeks, streams and brooks that meander through the course give Rockledge an old-course charm. Here, there are no island greens or 600-yard holes typically found at newer, modern courses.

At the same time, Rockledge has worked to maintain the playability of the course while recognizing how changes in equipment have impacted the game. New and improved bunkers were created recently on many holes along with new tee placements on back tees and water hazards to finish the front and back nines. New drainage was also added.

Crowe explained that Rockledge is now a little more forgiving for the average golfer, but more challenging for low handicap players. "These changes have made Rockledge more of a championship-caliber test of golf," Crowe said.

The highest-rated hole at Rockledge comes quickly into your round. The par-4 3rd hole appears flat and wide open, but at 435 yards, you'll need two long and straight shots to reach the green in regulation.

However, just before that is one of most interesting and fun holes to play at Rockledge, the 292-yard 2nd. This is a sharp dogleg to the left with an open and flat landing area. The par-4 turns quickly uphill to a green that slopes back to front. A precisely placed drive will put you in position to attach the pin.

Also on the front nine is one of the best par-3s you might find in the entire state. The 8th hole is 188 yards from the back tees, and it appears to be much further away because the green rises steeply uphill. And two gaping bunkers both left and right leave little safety for shots hit short. The green poses an entirely new challenge with two tiers connected by a sharp incline. Reaching the wrong tier could easily lead to bogey.

The back nine starts with the second most difficult hole on the course. It's another par-4 that plays well over 400 yards with an elevated tee box. The tendency here is to grip-and-rip, but large trees on both sides of the fairway will force you to punch out if your tee shot strays.

Your second shot will require a fairway wood, hybrid or long iron, and while the green itself is one of the largest at Rockledge, once again bunkers guard the green left and right, where a water hazard beyond adds to the challenge.

The 18th hole offers a challenging finish to your round. Another lengthy par-4, the hole runs slightly downhill to an elevated green with a severe back-

to-front slope. Crowe says to hit your approach shot high, straight and below the pin. Downhill putts, especially in the heat of summer, can be treacherous.

Overall, Rockledge plays 6,436 yards from the back tees with a rating of 71.1 and a slope of 129. Three sets of tee enable you to choose the best distance for your game.

Rockledge prides itself on offering a first-rate experience for players. The goal is to offer customer service that golfers usually don't find at public courses. "Our staff is dedicated to making golfers feel welcome here from the moment they arrive," Crowe said.

That includes golfers who show up without a tee time. While Rockledge sets aside 80 percent of the starting times for advance reservations, the remaining 20 percent are available for walk-ons. Still, Crowe says, it's best to reserve in advance, and you can do so seven days before by telephone, in-person or online.

Rockledge offers amenities such as an expansive 28-bay driving range that allows you to hit full driver. A practice bunker and two putting greens also are available to help sharpen your short game.

After your round, you can relax on the picturesque deck that overlooks the 9th and 18th greens while providing a panoramic view of the Farmington Valley hills. Angelo's on Main is a full-service restaurant and tavern that serves both lunch and dinner.



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West Hartford, CT | www.golfrockledge.com

2009 Club Champions: Men: Joe Dancsak
Senior: Skip Pons
Women: Bobbie Torrison
Senior: Pam Dimock
Course Record: 64 – Pete Davidson (2003)