

# Shennecossett Golf Course

A Ross classic where the river meets the sea



The 15th hole is a 195-yard par-3.

There aren't many golf courses where you can be distracted on the green by a nuclear submarine or a three-mast schooner cruising in a nearby river.

But at Shennecossett Golf Course in Groton, that's part of the charm of playing this unique seaside layout.

Shennecossett is located at the mouth of the Thames River where it empties into Long Island Sound. That makes for some highly memorable backdrops. You're likely to see sailboats, ferries and, yes, even a submarine heading upriver to the U.S. Naval Base or the Barque Eagle from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

"The views here are tremendous," said Head Professional Todd Goodhue. "There is nothing like playing golf by the water, and that's what we're all about."

But beyond the majestic vistas of the southeastern Connecticut coastline, you'll

discover a classic golf course whose roots date back over 100 years and display the trademarks of a master golf architect.

Shennecossett's original layout was designed by renowned Scottish architect Donald Ross, who left a legacy of over 400 golf creations before his death in 1948, among them Pinehurst No. 2 in North Carolina. Ross built courses that took advantage of the land, creating holes that were close together, so you won't have long walks from the green to the next tee. He also liked greens that invited run-up shots if you were short, but severe drop-offs beyond if you were long. This certainly is the case at Shennecossett.

While the course is still a celebration of the Ross signature, a major reconstruction project in the late 1990s has produced three new holes that now make Shennecossett truly one of the most picturesque golf locales not only in Connecticut but the entire Northeast.

The town of Groton traded land with neighboring Pfizer so the pharmaceutical giant could expand their worldwide research facility. Shennecossett gave up three holes on the front nine in exchange for land that Pfizer owned across Eastern Point Road right along the river. The three new holes built on that land are as fun to play as they are to stroll.

The trio of new holes begins with the par-3 15th. The back tees play 195 yards downhill, requiring a fairway wood or hybrid for most players. The green is huge, but slopes back to front and is guarded in front by two large bunkers left and right. The idea is simple: hit the ball long and straight.

Next up is Shennecossett's new signature hole. The 16th begins on a manmade platform built over marshland. The 400-yard hole is a clear dogleg left that requires precision off the tee. Too far right and you'll hit through the fairway. Go too far left and you could be lost in tall grass.

From the fairway, you begin to feel the true beauty of this hole. The approach is to a slightly elevated green, but beyond that and to the left are commanding views of Long Island Sound and the Thames. If your timing is right, you'll see Long Island ferries that appear to be heading directly at you as they chug to the pier in New London. The smell of salt air and the offshore breezes make you pause and appreciate where you are.

As you arrive at the 17th tee, you'll want to take one last look before heading inland again. Here is one of the most fun holes to play at Shennecossett. It's only 345 yards, but you need to leave your drive short of a protected hazard just below the highly elevated green. Calculating the correct distance is critical. Do so, and your reward will be an easy wedge play.

These new holes give Shennecossett a completely fresh feel while preserving the best of the Donald Ross trademark

design. And, indeed, the rest of the course is vintage Ross.

There may not be a more difficult par-3 in the state of Connecticut than the 4th hole. With a new tee complex, the hole now ranges between 150 and 210 yards. But it rises up to a small elevated green that falls off severely in all directions, and the green itself is somewhat humped, making even accurate shots difficult to hold. You can almost imagine Ross smiling as he drew it out.

Another hole that typifies the Ross design is the par-4 10th. The hole starts on one side of Plant Street and finishes on the other. The fairway seems wide and expansive, but the land slopes to the left and can kick balls off the fairway into heavy grass. And the green, again elevated, falls off in all directions and is surrounded by bunkers.

All told, Shennecossett plays to 6,582 yards with a course rating of 71.1 and slope of 124. Three sets of tees allow you to pick the best distance for your game, but on some holes there is little difference between the back two tees.

In 2008, Shennecossett was honored by the CT Section PGA with the Walter Lowell Distinguished Public Course award. This annual honor, which recognizes courses that serve as a model for providing playing opportunities to all golfers, commended Shennecossett for its storied history.



## Shennecossett Golf Course

Groton, CT | [www.shennygolf.com](http://www.shennygolf.com)

**2009 Club Champions:** Men: Dwayne Thomas  
Women: Kit Bryant  
**Course Record:** 65 – Casey Roan (2006)