

Pinehurst #8
Pinehurst, NC

Architect: Tom Fazio (1996)

Tees	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Blue	72	6698	72.3	133
White	72	6302	70.2	130

Overview:

There was quite a bit of anticipation when Fazio, a North Carolina favorite son, got the nod to build his first course in Pinehurst to honor the Centennial Celebration of this golfing mecca. The course he designed easily met all those expectations. It is a spectacular but playable course meandering up and down through the tall pine trees and fresh water marshes. The course is panoramic-many sweeping downhill holes where you can clearly see all the challenges in front of you. Big segmented greens with good speed and breaks that will challenge your judgment as well as your execution. This is a thinking man's golf course-approaching each hole with the right forethought can make a big difference on the scorecard.

Bunkering is plentiful but it is not overdone. Most greens are accessible from one angle on the front-so pay attention to position your ball properly for the most advantageous approach. The landing areas are always more generous than they appear-he often uses the change in elevation to mask the landing areas from view but if you look carefully at the yardage book you will see that he gives you plenty of room to play to. The greens have significant slope-many fall off to one side or the other. The shots into the greens need to take this into account to get your ball close enough for birdie opportunities.

The course starts out kindly enough with a sweeping downhill dogleg left that reminds me of the first at Spyglass Hill. The pace remains tepid for the next few holes until you reach the fourth which is a massive dogleg left par four which will change your mindset for the day. What follows the rest of the front side are a series of very technical holes that demand you control your roll out to avoid the adjacent trouble. The ninth is the angry sister of the fourth which it parallels in the opposite direction-big dogleg right with an uphill approach into a difficult green. The back side starts quietly enough but from 11 through 13 you play a series of very difficult holes in an area where they turned a sand pit into a visually intimidating series of hazards. From here in the challenge ratchets up considerably. The fourteenth is your classic warf style hole with water from tee to green on the left and a putting surface that seems to be hanging precariously above the water. The last three holes work up and down the hillside that leads to the clubhouse. In all cases you are tempted to hit it farther than you need to-like the ending of the front side it is all about controlling your ball flight and positioning. The finishing hole brings you up the hill to rediscover the view of the clubhouse perched atop the hill. The cool one that is waiting for you in the bar will be eagerly anticipated.

He designed this to be a walking course-the greens and tees are in close proximity. Make sure you arrange for a caddie ahead of time-the experience is enhanced considerably taking this one in from ground level with some local advice.

Hole-by-Hole:

#1 Par 4 338/321

The opening hole reminds me of the first of Spyglass but it has one less shot in it. You don't need to hit the driver here-three wood should put you in the corner of the dogleg left with about 125 to a green that is set well below you. The green is bunkered on the left but tips to the right so your best attack angle is from the right edge of the fairway. The green has a serious fall off to the right back so attacking that flag is a pitch back on to the green. This is an example of where the local knowledge is key-knowing how the ball will react when it hits the slick angled green can be the difference between a cross county putt or a cruise two putt from below the hole.

#2 Par 5 532/502

Gentle snaking par five that is seemingly routine if you don't do anything heroic or dumb. Drive to right center-at the bunker you see on the right turning back to the left. You can drive through the fairway on the right if you are too long. Now layup to 100 left to a flat lie between to the fairway bunkers. This leaves you with a shot angled back to the right green set behind two bunkers. This green is very large and tips to the left and back, so you must get your wedge shot in the area of the pin.

#3 Par 4 377/357

A ramping uphill par 4 all the way from tee to green. The tendency here is to overswing to compensate for the hill but if you just club longer you do not need to press your swing to get where you want to go. Drive to left center at the edge of the reachable fairway bunker. From this angle you get a peek at the green which is open on the left. The green is sharply raised above you and bisected by a ridge running front to back . Balls hit tentatively will roll back to the bottom of the hill leaving you a pitch up to the cup from the front left.

#4 Par 4 438/406

This is the beginning of a spectacular set of holes. Big waste bunker flanks the entire hole of this dogear right to left. Drive just off the corner of the waste area and have it tumble down the hill to right center of the driving area. From here you you get a panoramic view of the green set well below you to the left. Again the opening to the green is on the right-the green has a look and feel identical to the second green at Avenel but the front left bunker is not as onerous. If you drive it well you end up with a good chance to work one close to the hole even though it is likely to be a long iron.

#5 Par 3 138/116

This is a simple hole to par a tough one to birdie. It is a little pitch to a big green set below you. Probably about nine iron to center over one lonely but nasty bunker in front. Try to stay below the hole for the most aggressive putt. The green seems to lean a bit left so balls will wander away from the hole in that direction.

#6 Par 5 584/565

Feel the noose tightening, this is a hard serpentine hole. The hole goes left-right-and back left again at the end. There is a big momma bunker from about 175 yards and in on the left of the fairway. The drive to center is somewhat intimidating because you have to carry the cross hazard right in front of you and to an elevated landing area above that. You are now looking at a dicey layup to right center-to the right of the big bunker just in front of the bunker on the right at 130. The green is tucked back to the left behind a few lone trees and a large bunker front right. Big green slopes off to the left.

#7 Par 4 346/323

This is one of his diving downhill finesse holes-it plays much shorter than the measure. Drive to right center over the hill-there is a big bunker flanking the right of the driving area-and the ball will tumble down toward the green. Now off the downslope you have a short iron pitch to a green below you that is protected by a very nasty bunker front left. If you are right center off the tee you get the best angle at the opening of the green and its banking left to right. This hole will drive big hitters crazy.

#8 Par 3 201/177

Probably the nicest of the short holes out here. Long iron across a big gap to a green set on a 7 to 1 angle that is hanging precariously over the environmental wilderness and bordered by a saving bunker and pitching area. The strategy has to be to aim at the front left and try to run it up the green as far as you need to. Green is very large so it should not be illusive if you stay out of the junk.

#9 Par 4 418/395

This is a long uphillish dogear right around a sand waste area almost tee to green. Big landing area above you just off the edge of the wasteland. This leaves a long club to a raised wide green that is still slightly above you. Only one bunker protecting on the left but it is pretty deep. The green has a ridge that divides it through the middle from front to back-very important to land it on the flag side of this ridge. Front center has a funneling effect so balls that hit just short will end up below the putting surface. This is a chip and putt par for most of us.

#10 Par 4 415/387

Reminded me of #2 at Pine Needles. Saddleback par four with a blind tee shot over the top of the saddle. Hit it to right center for an elevated view of the green set below. Take it in-it is a beautiful sight. Deep bunker protects the front of the large acorn shaped green. It is probably a club less going down off a downhill lie but pick the right club and swing hard-you need the spin to hold this green. You can bounce it on through the opening on the front if that seems an option. Back right pin is sadistic.

#11 Par 5 574/547

Another wander left-wander right-wander left three shot hole. Drive left center at the bunkers. Now layup to center just off the second bunker at 100. Now you have a shot to a slightly raised green that is well protected by a wall bunker left and below the green. The front pin is very tight but the green opens up toward the back. Green slopes back to front and to the left.

#12 Par 4 328/320

This is a wonderful short dogear right. Three wood off the tee to the left side for the optimal attack angle at the green. Major wastage on the right side of the hole that leads to high scores. Green is sandwiched between bunkers front and back and set on a diagonal to the fairway. You need to drop a short club in here with laser accuracy to avoid the bogie. Front left pin is in a very shallow area-play right of it and putt across.

#13 Par 3 184/165

Interesting but simple challenge here. This medium length par three has a waste area on the right and bunkers on the left but they really do not come into play at the green complex. This is a Pinehurst two type green-raised above the fairway so ball seem to repel off to the lower chipping areas. The green is ramped slightly front to back so if you pick the right club in you will have a makeable uphill putt. This hole is a scoring opp so use it.

#14 Par 4 363/363

Wow. That says it all. Big dogear left after a force carry over the marshland. You have to pick your line carefully trying to stay in the hole on your first shot because if you are too conservative you can drive it through the fairway and then the hole becomes unplayable on the second. The drive line is a turning draw twenty yards right of the edge of the bunker across the lagoon. If you turn it over the ball will roll toward the green and you have less than 150 at a very dicey green arrangement. The hazard flanks the green and is definitely in play for any shot that is leaning left. Big bunker in front on the right so you really need to have a short club you can elevate all the way into the green in your hand. Green pitches right to left so a fade coming in will work against the slope and hold position nicely. A grand hole with a big challenge-four here is an accomplishment.

#15 Par 3 166/145

From this point on there are good scoring opportunities ahead. Second three par in the last three holes. Not very long so it is a short iron but the exposure to the marsh makes unpredictable winds a factor in club selection. Collar bunker on the left of the green buffers the marsh. Green is tilted from the left so the shot is probably favoring that side and letting it ground fade toward the hole.

#16 Par 4 381/332

The fairway of the uphill driving area is flanked by bunkers but this is the side to favor since the green has one lonely but deep bunker protecting from the right. If you hit it solid up the left you have a short iron to a tiered green below you where the left front is a distinct section from the back. With a good drive position this is a birdie opportunity.

#17 Par 5 489/464

This is a long hitters dream-a five par under 500 with a downhill drive to boot. This calls for a slight fade aimed at the corner of the bunker on the left. Green is certainly accessible if you are within your fairway wood length. If not you have to layup just outside 100-it narrows considerably past that point. The shallow green is tilted left to right with a bisecting ridge front to back. Balls missing long and left will leave a rolling chip down the slope of the green. Another good chance for a birdie here.

#18 Par 4 426/417

This plays similar to 16 but it is a good two clubs longer. Uphill driving area again-favoring the left side off the bunker is the ticket. Now you have a middle to long iron to a green above you that has bunkers on both sides. The green has a large bump in the center that creates three distinct sections so you need to find the one that holds the flag to avoid a difficult two putt. Very strong finishing hole if there is something still on the line.

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