Sports Illustrated

The Best New Golf Courses and Renovations of 2025

Golf architecture had a big year in 2025. Joe Passov reviews golf's top additions and hands out his annual awards.

If your idea of a good time revolves around crisscrossing the country in search of outstanding new golf courses and superb renovations, you're in luck: fistfuls of such creations opened in 2025.

The best of the best wasn't quite as top-heavy as in 2024, nor as we anticipate 2026 to be, yet these past 12 months gifted traveling golfers and architecture buffs a plethora of dazzling accomplishments. Familiar design names are prevalent among this year's honorees: Think Gil Hanse, Coore/Crenshaw, David McLay Kidd and Rees Jones.

Nevertheless, they share top billing with up-and-comers who have absolutely arrived: Bill Bergin, Jay Blasi, Jeff Stein and Brian Ross. Kudos to Kidd, John Fought, Davis Love III and Kyle Franz, whose work is honored twice. For this year, we enlisted architects, PGA professionals, superintendents and other industry insiders to share their insights about the best courses to open in the past 12 months.

So, settle in: here are the top 10 new and newly renovated American courses of 2025—plus seven bonus selections.

10. Best New Private Course (Designed by a future Hall of Fame Architect): Loraloma, Spicewood, Texas

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It is very possible—mind-boggling as it sounds—that David McLay Kidd is the greatest Scottish architect since Donald Ross. For further proof, look no further than his new Texas links, Loraloma, which opened in October. Located 35 miles northwest of Austin, Loraloma is draped atop rocky, scrub-studded terrain typical of central Texas and serves as the centerpiece of a new golf and residential community.

Half the holes at Loraloma yield dazzling views of the Pedernales River, which feeds into nearby Lake Travis, and others ascend ridges, yet all eyes are trained straight down for much of the journey on the 7,410-yard, par-72 layout, such is the spunky variety provided by the humpy-bumpy, links-like fairways. Critical to the success of the course was what SI Golf Managing Editor Jeff Ritter called, "Loraloma's defining decision" which centered on the grass choice that would allow for the course to play firm and fast. That decision—choosing Zoysia wall-to-wall—was a risk that paid off. With a low mow and judicious irrigation, bouncy conditions prevail that emphasize the roll of the ball, the same characteristic one encounters in Scotland.

Memorable holes abound, starting early with the par-4 2nd, which shares a double green with the par-3 13th. The 2nd is short enough to be drivable, but push the tee shot and impenetrable cabbage awaits. A profusion of forced carries off the tee, especially from the back tees, comprise the aerial component of the round. Still, Kidd winks at the notion from time to time, such as at the shortest hole on the course, the par-3 9th, where a set of forward tees perched on a plateau allow for players to simply putt it downhill for 100 yards to the green. Whatever club you choose, lake, cliffs and more Hill Country scenery are on display.

With Nebraska's GrayBull, David McLay Kidd took the prize in this same category in our 2024 awards. Loraloma won't make you forget St. Andrews or Kidd's own Machrihanish Dunes across the pond, but Kidd's design stands on its own for a Texas version of golf that's full of ground game options, shots influenced by the wind and strategy-infused fun. Whether or not that's technically a links, it's still a winner.