

Everything Golf Should Be

BY RON GREEN JR.

BANDON, OREGON | The challenge of Bandon Dunes goes beyond the collection of golf courses and the scenery and the remote charm of a golf life along coastal cliffs that frame the Pacific Ocean.

It goes beyond the pancakes at breakfast, the meatloaf and mashed potatoes at dinner and the taste of a chilled pint when you finally settle into a big chair outside after your long walk.

It goes beyond the imagination that created one of the best par-3 courses in the world and the

laughter that erupts during late-afternoon putting contests at the massive Punchbowl green and the shared sense of why everyone has come to this outpost that's not near anything but perfect.

Bandon Dunes is the kind of place that after spending several wind-whipped days there last June, days when the staff apologized because even in the windy summer season they'd rarely seen four days of such unrelenting gusts, the thought of leaving is softened by the idea of coming back. ►



◀ Our group arrived the week before the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay, in the early part of Bandon's high season that runs from May through October. Our visit coincided with past U.S. Open champion Geoff Ogilvy's visit and he could be seen, bag on his shoulder, getting his fill of a place that checked all the boxes for him.

"It's everything that the direction of golf needs to go," Ogilvy says. "Stay on site. Simple hotels, simple but classy and nice. Everybody walks. The price comes down for your second round. Your third round is free. If you play four in a day, they give you \$100."

"There's a par-3 course. I run out of superlatives. The place is just amazing."

If you've been to Bandon Dunes, you understand. If you haven't been,

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– Geoff Ogilvy

it's more than a bucket-list destination. It may be the best example of what a golf destination can be.

That means it's OK to wear your windshirts to dinner. It means it has its own enormous practice facility and you're not plunking down \$12 for a bag of yellow balls. It means the place sleeps soundly each night

because the days are so rich.

When the original Bandon Dunes course, designed by David McLay Kidd, opened in 1999, it was a revelation. It looked and felt and played like the grand, ancient links in Scotland and Ireland.

Pacific Dunes by Tom Doak opened in 2001, Bandon Trails by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw opened in 2005 and Old Macdonald, a Charles Blair Macdonald-inspired layout by Doak and Jim Urbina, opened in 2010.

Though they sit shoulder to shoulder, each of the courses has its own personality. The original sets the tone, playing out to and along the cliffs, with wide fairways and big greens.

Pacific Dunes is extraordinary for both its setting and its demands. If you want to find out how good you ►

local knowledge



The Lodge

- To this point, the toughest thing about Bandon Dunes is simply getting there. Although there are some relatively new options, it's still an effort. Normally, you'd have to fly to Portland, Ore., and drive nearly five hours down the coast to Bandon. If you fly into Eugene, Ore., it's about a 2½-hour drive. United Airlines offers twice-a-week flights from San Francisco to North Bend, Ore., and from Denver to North Bend, which is about a 40-minute drive to Bandon. Starting today, PenAir is also offering daily service from Portland to North Bend.
- Accommodations at Bandon Dunes are not too plush, not too Spartan – in other words, they are just right for a golf resort. Rooms are spacious with plenty of room if you are sharing space with one of your golf buddies so that you don't trip over one another. Beds are comfortable and bathrooms are plenty big enough. There are five options, starting with the Lily Pad, lodges with two queen-sized beds, which are the most economical option. The Inn has 21 single and 18 double-occupancy rooms, with coastal or forest views. The Lodge, by the Bandon Dunes clubhouse, has 17 single rooms and three four-bedroom suites. The Grove features four-bedroom cottages. Chrome Lake consists of 21 buildings with two-bedroom suites upstairs and two units downstairs.
- One of the best things about Bandon Dunes is its shuttle service. No matter where you are on the property, a shuttle bus will come by at any moment to take you to the course, the clubhouse, the restaurant or your room. You never have to wait more than a few minutes. It doesn't hurt to tip the drivers, either. ►



Keiser's most recent addition is the Punchbowl, a 100,000-square-foot putting green inspired by the Himalayas putting course at St. Andrews. Each day, an 18-hole course is set up on the two-acre green and at each "tee" there is a metal stand to hold your beverage of choice while you're putting.

are, play Pacific Dunes when the breeze is blowing.

Trails is the surprise because it's tucked away from the ocean, playing through a wooded section of the property. At any other place, it would be the star, it's that good.

And Old Mac probably creates the most difference of opinion with its take on classic holes such as the Redan, the Eden and the Biarritz. It's big and bold and a blast to play.

With Mike Keiser as the visionary and touchstone, Bandon Dunes has grown into a place to celebrate the

game, the outdoors and the kinship created by climbing the hills and chasing shots into greens perched on ledges above the ocean.

"There's something for everyone," Ogilvy says.

Unless you're looking for a place where the beverage cart rolls by every three holes and cart paths trace the rough line on every hole. That's not Bandon Dunes.

Here's how much fun Bandon Dunes can be: After you've played all four courses, you can ask everyone in your group to rate them in order of

their favorites and you'll probably get a different list from everyone. That's what we did and we managed to reach a consensus – the par-3 Preserve may be the most fun you can have on a golf course.

The Preserve, designed by Crenshaw and Coore, opened in 2012 and is brilliant in both its design and its concept. It's a 13-hole course with holes that range from 63 yards to 150 yards and it's every bit as good as its big brother Pacific Dunes, which annually ranks among the best layouts in the world.

more local knowledge

► Dining options are varied at the resort. McKee's Pub probably gets the most traffic during the week. Located next to the clubhouse and across the parking lot from The Lodge, it offers outstanding meat-loaf, tasty lamb stew, a steak or, if you are of a mind, a cheeseburger that will hit the spot. McKee's has an extensive beer lineup. If fine dining is what you're after, The Gallery in The Lodge can accommodate. Lamb chops and Northwest steelhead are favorites and The Gallery has an award-winning wine list. Pacific Grill at Pacific Dunes is a favorite for lunch or dinner. The seafood chowder is not to be missed.

► Bandon Dunes is a walking-only resort with an extensive caddie program. Caddies can be reserved and the resort recommends that you keep your caddie on every course of your visit. But if you wish to carry your own bag, it is permissible, and the club provides trolleys with oversized tires at a nominal cost.

– Mike Purkey



It's where you go in the afternoon, when you don't want to stop after 18 holes on another course but your legs are feeling the effects of a couple of 36-hole days. It's where you can play an eightsome, bring some beer and make some bets.

"The Preserve, you can't get better than that can you?" Ogilvy says.

"Every new golf course in the world should build a short course. Every one. It could be two holes. Kids will play golf. The Preserve for a 10-year-old boy is like me playing Pacific Dunes. He can play real golf with

real tees and real greens and real hazards and real shots. He can get to the greens in regulation and putt.

"I just love short courses and I love that they did that. It's almost the most impressive thing there. They are almost the best greens and the best holes there anyway and they're 80 yards."

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◀ at each “tee” there is a metal stand to hold your beverage of choice while you’re putting.

“The original mini golf,” Ogilvy says.

Keiser may not be done yet at Bandon Dunes. There’s a piece of property just south of the Preserve where he’s contemplating an executive course because there’s not enough room for another big course.

He’s also still working on a municipal course not far from the resort. Keiser recently toured the property with

designers Gil Hanse and Jim Wagner, and the project – which was put on hold last year – may be alive again.

It would offer a Bandon-quality layout with sharply reduced rates for locals and state residents while also being available to resort guests.

Just something else to like about Bandon Dunes.

“Everything they’re doing there should be emulated where they can emulate it,” Ogilvy says.

It’s that kind of place. ●



Old Macdonald

MORE INFO bandondunesgolf.com

a perfect day

Pacific Dunes is crafted to get your attention on every shot and the ocean views are there to get your attention between shots.



Since there are a multitude of ways to have a perfect day at Bandon Dunes, we will give you some options. The Gallery will start your day off right with a big breakfast, a must if you are to walk 36 holes that day. Three-egg omelets with all the ingredients are a favorite or you might become addicted to the blueberry pancakes. You also can pay one price and eat your fill at the buffet.

It’s tough to choose a course that would begin a perfect day but for the sake of this story, we’ll choose Pacific Dunes, since it’s the highest-rated at the resort. We were the victims of wind upward of 30 mph or more, which makes it tough to enjoy the golf, but the surroundings are nothing short of remarkable. Pacific Dunes is crafted to get your attention on every shot and the ocean views are there to get your attention between shots.

After lunch, head to Bandon Preserve, the resort’s 13-hole par-3 course that is as unique as anything you will find in the game. Holes range from 63 to 150 yards, and no

two holes are the same. We had 16 in our group one afternoon and decided to play two-man alternate shot – together on the same hole. We had to play alternate-shot because of rules that no more than eight people can be playing on a single hole at one time. With the brutal winds, 8-irons were going no more than 90 yards into the breeze, and a pitching wedge could cover the longest holes downwind. With repeated runs to and from the snack bar for adult beverages, there was an abundance of laughs and little serious thought to the golf.

Two of the best things about dinner at McKee’s Pub – besides the food – are that it’s immensely casual and management has a great attitude about big tables, at which all of your group can sit. It takes a little extra time to get everyone ordered and served and drinks refilled, but the storytelling is more than worth it.

After dinner, a cigar and a cocktail on the patio can signal the end to a perfect day – but not before making plans for the next perfect day.

M.P.

Pacific Dunes