

NOVEMBER 2017

The GRAIN

A New Read on Golf



TRAVEL ISSUE

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PHOTO BY ALISHA HARLEY

SILVIES VALLEY RANCH

Words **Jeff Wallach** | Photos **Brian Oar**



A new project in the high desert of eastern Oregon is attracting attention not just for the quality of its new reversible golf layout, but also for the vision behind what may be the best new resort to come along in the American West in many years. **Silvies Valley Ranch**, located outside of Burns, is the first golf property envisioned by eastern Oregon native Scott Campbell, who made his fortune in pet hospitals and has now devoted his resources to a pet project that may just put Burns on the golf destination map.

MORE THAN GOLF

"Our communities (in this region) are severely economically depressed due to the loss of the timber industry," Campbell said. "After much research and thought, we decided the best way to help was to prove that true destination tourism could thrive in this beautiful and isolated remnant of the Old West, frontier

Oregon, if done well. To that end, we decided to create a golf experience that was unique in the world, our goal being to create a 'must play' course like Bandon Dunes, which is at an even more isolated location."

Perhaps, but Silvies Valley Ranch is still a five-hour drive from Portland, three hours from Boise or Redmond, and six hours from Reno. Private planes

can land on a 5,000-foot paved runway on the ranch, or at the Burns or John Day airports 45 minutes away.

But there's no doubt that this boutique frontier resort's ranch theme is authentic — the 140,000-acre property is home to herds of certified organic cattle and American Range goats, as well as other sustainable agricultural practices. This love-

the-land ethic is most evident in the acts of restoration going on across the property, from the preservation of original homesteads to the re-creation of natural habitat.

An ATV tour of the ranch with Colby Marshall — whose title, VP of livestock and guest services, is quite the hybrid — should be as mandatory as checking in to receive your own camo golf

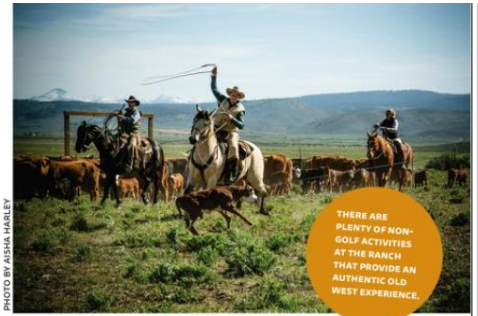


PHOTO BY AISHA HARLEY

THERE ARE BLENDS OF NON-GOLF ACTIVITIES AT THE RANCH THAT PROVIDE AN AUTHENTIC OLD WEST EXPERIENCE.



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cart for use on the property's tamer acres. Other activities include cattle roundups, goat herding, fishing, tours of Indian caves, and shooting at three different gun ranges, including a sharpshooter's range.

REVERSE COURSE

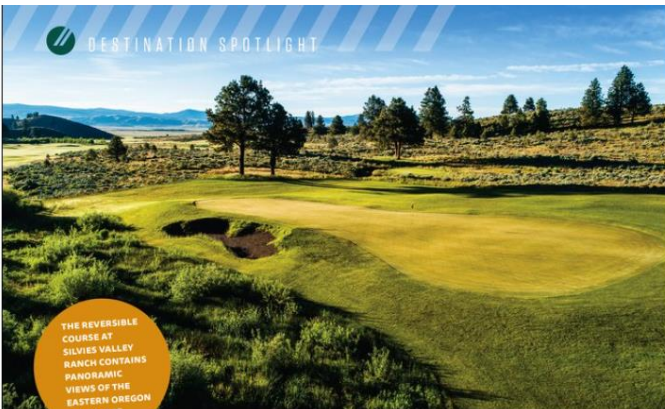
The resort's golf courses — the Craddock and the Hankins, named for pioneer families who homesteaded this land — were designed by Oregon-based architect Dan Hixson. They provide an unusual and humorous journey, especially when you see that the back tees are pink and the forward tees black. Pithy quotes are laser cut into the metal rake heads in the bunkers, and you can win a Horseshoe Nail, the

Many players dread playing from a bunker. You see your ball go in one and you automatically think any number of unrepeatable things. At Silvies Valley Ranch, the bunker rakes are stamped with sayings all their own, created by Tygh Campbell. Here are a few favorites:

- Need Lessons? ■ Nice Try
- Oops ■ Nice knickers!
- I hate sand ■ Try again
- Take a Mulligan ■ Fore!
- Beer brake? ■ Drink Cart!



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THE REVERSIBLE COURSE AT SILVIES VALLEY RANCH CONTAINS PANORAMIC VIEWS OF THE EASTERN OREGON LANDSCAPE.

resort's specialty cocktail, by one-putting the Craddock course's final four greens.

The fully reversible layouts are far more than simply mirror images because they employ 27 different greens. As per Campbell's orders, the courses have no water features, but they do have 100 gorgeously sculpted bunkers. The golf plays in opposite directions on alternative days.

Craddock opens along dramatic ridge tops and features a few blind shots before settling down into the meadows. On

the third hole, you may wonder about a tee-side bunker until you realize that tomorrow it will be a greenside hazard as you come the other way.

The bunkering in general is often more deceptive than penal. The final trio of holes play into a huge, grassy tureen sprinkled with wild bunkering, and the course ends with an eminently birdie-able hole, a nice change from most courses that save the toughest holes for last. The Hankins course opens in the same grassy amphitheater — reached via a downhill

tee shot full of drama — but contains more pronounced elevation changes than its counterpart.

SHORTER SWINGS

The resort also features a walking-only par 3 course called Chief Egan. Named for the last Paiute war chief, it's a mountain meadow layout on Paiute Creek and playable in an hour. What it lacks in hilly drama, it makes up for in clever green complexes that may elicit a few head scratches.

Hixson is also currently

Sustainability is an important focus at Silvies Valley Ranch. The clubhouse is solar powered, and rather than using massive amounts of insecticides, the superintendent employs swallows and bats to control mosquitoes."

finishing the shaping of a seven-hole (possibly eight holes if he's able to add a par-2 putting hole) "challenge course" called McVeigh's Gauntlet — a collection of difficult and dramatic holes playing through steep hills. The venue should prove to be a perfect option for winning back whatever cash wagers were lost during your 18-hole round.

RARE AIR

At almost 5,000 feet above sea level, these are the highest courses in Oregon, which means peak golf season is from June thru mid-October. Depending on the weather, the courses are expected to be open from mid-April through mid-November. Green fees are

\$220 for overnight guests (there are a variety of luxurious onsite accommodations), while day guests pay \$260. The fee includes all the golf you can play in a day (some guests have totaled 63 holes at a time). Carts are \$20 a day (not per person).

Sustainability is an important focus at Silvies Valley Ranch. The clubhouse is solar powered, and rather than using massive amounts of insecticides, the superintendent employs swallows and bats to control mosquitoes. Some 60 percent of the property incorporates gravity-powered irrigation to minimize water usage and help create the lowest carbon footprint possible.

The remoteness of the property may discourage the kind of people who might not get what this place is really about (as the remoteness of Bandon Dunes once did); but Silvies Valley Ranch is not a golf resort — it is a visionary resort property tied to an ethic of deep care for the land, which just happens to have a reversible golf course as one of its many charms. ■

For more information and reservations: www.SilviesValleyRanch.com



PHOTO BY DAVID ZANTZ

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