

# Course Review: Auburn Center Golf Club

You'll notice that you're getting some extra pictures here of the Auburn Center Golf Club in Salem. There's a reason for that — there simply isn't a full page to say.

How to describe Auburn? At par 29 and a longest hole (No. 9) of 278 yards, it's more than a pure pitch-and-putt course — but barely. It's part golf course, part family fun center. There's a small mini-golf putt-putt layout on site. It's a definite mom and pop operation — the owners live next door in a house painted in the exact same paint scheme as the “clubhouse.”

Auburn includes seven par 3s and a pair of par 4s. Total yardage is 1260 yards, although three holes have different tees if you play 18, stretching the total back nine yardage to 1317! While four of the par 3s are 100 yards or under (two are only 65), Holes 3-5 are legitimate at 175, 131 and 161 yards respectively. The first par 4, No. 7, is 202.

Tee boxes are, well, pretty much literal boxes — small areas raised slightly off the ground framed by 2 x 8s. You hit off of mats at Auburn year round. The course is pretty much normal yard grass, not manicured golf course grass. The greens actually aren't bad, all things considered.

Now let's talk about location. Auburn was founded in 1959; the current owners, the Smiths, have run Auburn the past two decades. Auburn Golf Center sits on north Center Street, about 1.5 miles from Lan-



caster Mall. In 1959, Auburn would have been way out of town. Today, it's in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

The backside of the little house that serves as the clubhouse building fronts Center Street, as does the putt-putt course. And really, the entire gold course is crammed into what is essentially an oversized back yard — it's long and not very wide. The holes are right next to each other, and we mean right next. There's little elbow room, and you have to be wary of errant balls from adjacent holes; obviously, this isn't a course that attracts low handicappers. In fact, the tee box for No. 6 sits next to the No. 1 green, and you actually tee over the last portion of the No. 1 fairway to get to the No. 6 green. Heads up!

Many Oregon golf course lists don't include Auburn. While we understand that, we also very much support any course that exposes people to the game. The summer afternoon that we played at Auburn, it was busy, including lots of families and young kids. Nothing wrong with that.

