

Course Review: Bayou Golf Course

The Bayou Golf Course is a 9-hole, regulation course located just south of McMinnville. Additionally, the Bayou includes a small par 3 course. Both border the South Yamhill River, which sometimes isn't a good thing. More on that later.

Opened in 1964, the Bayou likes to promote itself as "a unique style of southern golf architecture." That's a bit of a reach, frankly, and there's not much in McMinnville that's "Southern" this side of KFC. But that's not to say that the Bayou doesn't have its share of charm. It features several tree-lined fairways that make for a scenic and challenging round of golf. It's built on flat, river-bottom land that you can easily walk — the only challenge is hoofing down and up the hill from and to the parking lot.

One thing the Bayou has is a great website that really makes the course look much better than it actually is, in all honesty. That sounds harsh, and we don't mean it that way — it's more a compliment for some excellent marketing. And it reflects well on the current Bayou ownership, which has worked very hard to make improvements.

Since Don and Pete live in Newberg, McMinnville is just a few miles west and we've played the Bayou several times. The best time to play the Bayou, in our opinion, is in the fall. The course will be dry and green, and the many deciduous trees on the course are beautiful when the leaves turn.

Here's the problem the Bayou fights periodically. That aforementioned South Yamhill River is prone to flooding in winter, and when that happens, it spills onto the course. That's not good for fairways, and it's really not good for greens. It doesn't happen every year, but it happens often enough — always, it seems, when one owner or another is just making some strides.

The Bayou measures 6200 yards from the white tees (about 6450 from the blues). You start out with a 326-yard par 4 that's pretty easy unless you go way right (several smaller trees) or way left (one big tree). Holes 2 and 3 are the track's most scenic. No.



2 is a tough, 422-yard par 4 that's tree-lined from tee to green; there's no wiggle room right or left. The No. 3 tee is in those same trees, though the green's out in the open. Still, this 168-yard par 3 frequently plays more difficult than it should, at least for us. No. 4 is a par 5 without a lot of trouble — a straight tee shot here and you're on the way to a birdie opportunity. No. 5 includes a blind tee shot, it's pretty routine once you've played it once. No. 6 is a good par 4, 391 yards and demands an accurate tee shot. Holes 7-9 — pars 3, 4 and 5, respectively, are pretty pedestrian. No. 9 measures 496 yards and runs parallel to the Bayou's small driving range, so don't go left.

The adjacent par 3 course isn't fancy, but an OK venue to hone your short game. You can play it with your 9-iron, wedge and putter. There is a lot of junk down there, especially if you hit over the greens.

The property also features a southern plantation-style "mansion" that's undergone many improvements in recent years. It was built in the late 1940s and sits on a small bluff overlooking the golf course. That area includes towering trees, vast lawns and gardens, grapevines, water features, a gazebo and a deck. It's a popular summer rental for weddings, receptions and other such celebrations.