

Course Review: China Creek Golf Course

There was a lot to like about our round at China Creek Golf Course in Arlington. To begin, it was the first day of our Golf Week 2009. The first day of any Golf Week always brings excitement, and 2009 was going to be a little “exotic” — headquartered in Pendleton for a week (thanks to Don’s friends Bryan and Lorri Branstatter) and driving to some far reaches of Nearer Eastern Oregon, as we called it, to courses we had never seen.

China Creek was the first stop of our opening day tripleheader, to be followed by Condon and Kinzua (which is a 6-hole course). So we were excited as we exited I-84 at Arlington and made the short drive to China Creek. The course wasn’t busy, so we had a chance to chat with the owners and swap stories about Casey Creighton. Casey is the maintenance superintendent at Chehalem Glenn in Newberg, our home course, and does a great job. Casey came to us from China Creek.

China Creek is a newer course, having opened in 2003. It’s a 9-hole layout with blue and gold tees. It’s a little hilly, but it’s walkable. We played the blues, the designated “front nine” tees, which measure just under 2500 yards. The “back nine” gold tees, if you play 18, are around 150 yards longer. China Creek features three par 3s and just one par 5; par is 34.

When you step on the first tee box at China Creek, you think “Whoa, we’re gonna see some water out here!” No. 1 is a short, 114-yard par 3, and there’s a long, skinny lake that runs alongside the entire left side of the fairway and even wraps up next to a portion of the green. Obviously, you don’t want to hook it to begin your round. It turns out that’s the only water hazard on the course.

Holes 2 and 3 are pretty straight-forward par 4s, both short. No. 2 is 312 yards and straight; No. 3 is 279 yards and doglegs right. Hole 4 is a 143-yard par 3 that we both parred easily. No. 5 is straight as an arrow, 318 yards. It does include a greenside bunker on the right, one of the few traps at China Creek. There’s also a small grove of trees right of the green on No. 5, but they’re not really in play.

In fact, the tree placement at China Creek is a little



curious. There are clumps of trees scattered here and there, most apparently planted with the course development. But a lot of them are clustered next to tee boxes — adjacent to them, so not in play at all. It seemed a little odd to us that more of the trees weren’t planted along fairways so that, eventually, they’d add a little character to the course.

No. 6 is China Creek’s toughest hole. Long by China Creek standards at 474 yards, it’s the course’s lone par 5. We’ve already used the phrase “straight as an arrow” to describe No. 5; No. 6 is whatever is even straighter. It runs parallel to a fenced pasture along the back side of the property, so if you hook one you’re in trouble. Naturally, both of us did — Don on his second shot, Pete on his third, which accounted for our pair of double bogies.

Two more short par 4s on 7 and 8, both under 355 yards. No. 7 does have a tree grouping right and short of the green that actually can come into play on your approach shot, a rarity at China Creek. No. 8 has only the third bunker you encounter greenside left. You wrap up with the 162-yard finishing hole, which Don birdied to highlight his round.

China Creek was in great shape; the greens were medium speed but rolled consistently. There’s a small snack bar with limited fare but friendly staff. It’s a great respite as you’re heading east on I-84.