

Course Review: Hidden Valley Golf Course

Here's the first thing to understand about Hidden Valley Golf Course in Cottage Grove: this relatively unknown little 9-hole course is *not* easy. It's located in a nice grove of mature trees, and if you push or pull your tee shot here, you will pay for it.

Hidden Valley opened in 1929, and just kept plugging along as the "other course" in town while what is now known as Middlefield Village underwent various points of drama from its highly visible Village Green location off of I-5. Hidden Valley certainly isn't visible from the freeway, you've got to work a bit to get there. But you're in for a treat once you arrive.

We played at Hidden Valley on the first day of our Golf Week 2008, our second-such adventure. While the bulk of Golf Week II was headquartered in Grants Pass and featured Southern Oregon courses, Day 1 featured a morning 18 at Mallard Creek near Lebanon and a stop at Hidden Valley later in the afternoon.

Folks at Hidden Valley were certainly friendly. It's not every course where you're greeted in the parking lot. The greeting came from a tail-wagging canine, but it was sincere nonetheless. Hidden Valley is nestled along the northern slope of Mt. David — which is pretty much just a big hill. The course greens are bent grass and the fairways are *poa annua*, a type of bluegrass.

Hidden Valley has one definite quirk — it's a 9-hole course, but there are actually *10* holes. You play the white tees for the "front nine," which measure 2800 yards. There are two par 5s and three par 3s, so par is 35. The blue tee "back nine" is not only shorter by about 100 yards, which is unusual enough, but it features its own separate No. 12 hole, so you don't play No. 3 twice. Since the Don and Pete "Quest" is to play every course in Oregon, we simply had to play that extra hole, even though we were only playing nine. The folks at Hidden Valley were quick to say OK to us "playing 10."

Following friendly dogs and extra holes, the next thing you'll notice about Hidden Valley — and the most germane thing from a golf standpoint — are the abundance of gigantic oak trees the course hosts.



The trees are beautiful, but huge! The old growth oaks make for a setting that feels both peaceful and secluded, but you soon have to focus on your golf game. The two par 5s are among the first four holes, so you're tested right away.

In fact, you start out with a 485-yard par 5 that includes a pond up the fairway on the left and a cluster of oak trees on both sides, giving you a good introduction that what you'll encounter at Hidden Valley. It's an absolutely perfect indoctrination, in fact, as No. 1 is straight as an arrow and teaches you right away that if you hit the ball straight here, those big trees are just pretty. Not straight, not pretty.

No. 2 introduces you to a small stream that pops up on another three holes. But the holes are routed so that the water is not really in play; it crosses the No. 6 and No. 8 fairways, for example, but short enough that you've really got to duff one to bring it in play. Putting can be a bit of an adventure at Hidden Valley. The greens are of moderate size, well-kept and feature a lot of slope. You can see that the ball is going to break, but for first-timers like us, accurately judging exactly how much break is challenging.

Finally, we did not encounter this, but apparently the other challenge in playing Hidden Valley occurs in the spring, when thousands of little daisy-like white flowers/weeds bloom throughout the fairway and rough. Finding your ball can be an adventure then, we're told. But don't let that keep you away from this little hidden gem.