

# Course Review: Manzanita Golf Course

The day we visited Manzanita Golf Course was such a great day that the course could have been the worst course ever (it's not) and we wouldn't have cared. It was a gorgeous May morning, we were playing hooky from work and Manzanita was the first of 27 holes to be played, to be followed by 9-holers in Seaside and Gearhart. Add in a seafood lunch at the Cannon Beach Dooger's and you couldn't ask for a better time.

We were pleasantly surprised at how well groomed Manzanita appeared as we pulled in. We were greeted warmly by the pro shop staff, who listened with interest as we explained our Quest to play every course in Oregon. It turns out Manzanita Golf Course is quite the unique layout, one of those little Oregon golf gems that make the game so fun. At 2,192 yards and par 32, Manzanita isn't long. The course, open since 1987, is built on a hillside and features majestic fir trees, lush fairways and excellent greens that demand your attention. We saw a couple of deer during our visit; apparently elk make the occasional appearance as well.

While there are frequent elevation changes — again, it's pretty much built on a hillside — it's not a difficult walk. The fairways are very tight, you've really got to hit it straight. By the same token, with the longest hole being 320, you don't have to hit driver if yours isn't dependable. But you don't get as much carry as you're used to because of the thick coastal air, so the course plays *somewhat* longer than listed.

Manzanita Golf Course offers you nine holes that are all very different. The course will make you think — it's challenging but it's not what you'd call *hard*,



at least so long as you keep the ball reasonably in play. While the five par 4s at Manzanita are short, the four par 3s are more than legit. They measure 205, 160, 195 and 225. Trees are a factor, as are the many bunkers. There's water on No. 9.

Again, we played in May, a time many Oregon courses can still be very mushy, but Manzanita was in great shape. We've since heard from others that the course drains well and is playable year-round.

The poa annua greens at Manzanita are relatively large, and that unusual-for-Oregon grass choice keeps things interesting. If you're putting *with* the grain on poa annua, your ball will zip along. Putt *against* the grain, and the speed drops significantly — a characteristic of this larger-bladed grass.

Two holes in particular stand out at Manzanita. No. 5 (pictured above) is probably the layout's signature hole. The tee area is some 80 feet above the fairway, and provides not only a wonderful view of the hole but also of nearby Neahkanie Mountain. It's only 280 yards, and with that big downhill drop even we Average Joes can't help but think, "Gosh, I could drive this green and putt for eagle!" Alas, that didn't happen for either of us.

If No. 5 isn't the signature hole, then No. 9 is. A big, 225-yard par 3, there's water on both sides. Fortunately we played in the morning, before the usual afternoon coastal wind kicked in off the ocean. It's a daunting finishing hole, a last reminder that while Manzanita Golf Course may be short, it's not easy.