

Course Review: Olalla Valley Golf Club

First thought regarding Olalla Valley Golf Club in Toledo, courtesy of Don, who lived in Newport his first three years out of college — wow, trees really grow over the course of 23 years. That's not the most profound statement ever, we understand, but Olalla Valley's trees ruled the day we played there.

We played Olalla Valley as part of our first-ever Golf Week in August 2007, headquartered at Don's in-laws in Newport. It was a fantastic day, which wasn't a surprise. Toledo sits six miles inland from Newport, and is frequently much warmer. Yaquina Bay tends to suck in marine air and fog and holds temperatures down, even in the summer. It's not at all unusual for Toledo to be 15 degrees warmer than Newport, a lot of degrees for six miles.

Olalla Valley, open since 1956, is a 9-hole course that measures a hair under 3000 yards. As mentioned, there are trees — *lots* of trees, and *big* trees. The trees, mostly pines, crowd the fairways on virtually every hole. If you're not straight off the tee, you're in trees somewhere. Or water. There's a small stream (Olalla Creek) that meanders throughout the course, even splitting off into several branches. And on the rare occasion that you miss the fairway but aren't in the trees or water, you'll find yourself in thick, gnarly rough. This is not an easy round of golf.

You start out at Olalla Valley with a 350-yard par 4 that borders Olalla Road and doglegs right, but doesn't really prepare you for what's to come. The second hole, a short par 4, introduces you for the first time to Olalla Creek, which crosses the fairway near the landing area from the tee box. The creek runs up the right side of the hole, then you cross a bridge as the creek winds its way over to the left side. Your approach shot is to an elevated green.



Hole No. 3 is, in some respects, the real beginning of Olalla Valley. A par 4 of 367 yards, it's a severe dogleg left with Olalla Creek winding up the entire right side of the hole. There's a big apple behind the green. We muddled along through holes 4, 5 and 6, in the trees more often than not and hitting out. Don went bogey, bogey, double; Pete par, double and whatever seven-over is. That's right, he carded a 12 on the par 5 sixth hole. Don't ask.

No. 7 provided some comic relief. Only a 314-yard par 4, you face an uphill tee shot, then the fairway drops back down severely to the green. Don rapped his tee shot left, and it bounced on the cart path several times before kicking back onto the fairway, probably a 280-yard drive. All that was left was a short pitch, except he yanked that shot left, hit a tree that was in the fairway (pictured left) and ricocheted behind his tee shot. He ended up with a double.

No. 8 (pictured above) is Olalla Valley's signature hole. A 145-yard par 3, you tee off blindly from a bluff some 100 feet above a hidden green. Just for kicks, when you peer over the edge, the green is heart-shaped. After putting out, you ring a bell to alert those behind you it's safe to hit.

The greens putt consistently, but you need to bring lots of both balls and patience to Olalla Valley.