

Course Review: River's Edge Golf Course

Here's the problem faced by River's Edge Golf Course in Bend. This par 72, 18-hole course at Bend's Riverhouse Hotel & Convention Center isn't a bad course. It's a little funky, but it's not bad. The problem is that there are so many great courses in and around Bend that River's Edge struggles a bit in comparison, and its funkiness is just enough to turn some people off.

Designed by noted course architect Robert Muir Graves, River's Edge is a scenic track — though you see very little of the “river” (the Deschutes). You will come across an on-course waterfall and at various points in time — mostly on the back nine — you'll get spectacular views of Mt. Jefferson, Mt Hood, Smith Rock and others. Graves did a good job of incorporating the natural beauty of the property.

But there's some quirkiness as well. First off, don't even think about walking River's Edge, you simply can't. Much of the course is built on a hillside, and there are a lot of severe elevation changes and fairways that are virtually sideways at times. There are no parallel holes on the course, which is generally a plus. Correspondingly, there are several lengthy treks from greens to next tees, so while the white tees (which we played) measure a hair under 6100 yards, you'd be walking a whole lot further than that, as well as all of the up-and-down.

Accuracy is imperative at River's Edge, as it's a course with very little rough. Miss a fairway and you're behind a pine tree or in native sage and other scrub brush — or under some form of volcanic rock. Pines also guard approach angles on several greens. There's water scattered about the course, and a good number of bunkers, including many fairway sand traps — they're not all greenside here.



The greens themselves are typical Central Oregon fast, but also a tale of two nines. The front nine greens are pretty flat, so you'll have the opportunity to adjust to the speed without fighting a lot of break. You need to do that, because the back nine greens feature much undulation and some extreme break.

Your “OK, this may be an interesting round” moment comes on tee No. 1. It's an elevated tee, a narrow, tree-lined fairway that bends left and you can't see the green; your first of many blind shots. It's decent length, 377 yards from the whites, and if you've never played the course you're not quite sure what to do. (You'll get plenty of roll, so if you can hit a straight 3-wood, do that.) The No. 2 tee is at the same level as the first green, but the green is elevated. From there you climb even higher to an elevated tee box for No. 3, a big dogleg left with the fairway down below ... and so it goes.

No. 6, a short par 4, is the signature hole at River's Edge. You hit from an elevated tee, but unless you can fly it 300 yards, you don't need your driver. A large pond (and the waterfall on an adjacent hillside) sits dead center of the fairway, so the correct tee shot only needs to travel about 200 yards. Your approach shot will be back uphill, and it really shouldn't be a problem — but there are lots of balls in that pond! Again, up-and-down, up-and-down and you'll come to No. 16, where your 177-yard tee shot drops 300 feet to a small green guarded by a right-side pond.

If you like rabbits, they're all over the place, along with other wildlife. There's also a nice driving range, a small pro shop and a very good little restaurant.