

Course Review: Salem Golf Club

There's little doubt in our mind that Salem Golf Club is one of Oregon's more underrated courses. Established in 1928, Salem Golf Club is truly a "classic" course — a traditional, tree-lined, 18-hole golf course with strategically placed water hazards, lush fairways and smooth greens. It's a challenging track for all ability levels. While a semi-private course that offers memberships with some accompanying advantages, it's easy to get on for public play, even on weekends. Check GolfNow.com for online deals.

We played Salem Golf Club on a nice summer afternoon with friend Don Clements and "Brother Dave" — Pete's sibling Dave Siderius. The course is a little unique in that it features two sets of tees for men (blue at 6200 yards; white at 5900) and two sets for women (gold at 5500 yards; red at 5200). Sure, at other courses the more accomplished ladies can simply play one of the "male" tees, but we liked that Salem Golf Club distinguishes that not all women golfers are created equal, either, and gives them their own set of options.

While we took (increasingly rare gas-powered) carts as part of our online special, Salem Golf Club is flat and you could easily walk it. The course is littered with beautiful, old growth trees — oaks, pines and any number of others. Wildlife was in abundance; we saw lots of waterfowl, a couple of hawks soaring above, dozens of squirrels. There's a historically old apple orchard adjacent to part of the course. The clubhouse and one other on-course building are stately, colonial-style structures, dating back to near the club's origins, and the course's traditional routing brings you home on Nos. 9 and 18 with impressive views of both.

We found the course meticulously maintained. The greens are moderate in size, consistent with the course's age, and putted slightly above average from a speed standpoint. Breaks were moderate,



nothing too tricky and nothing you couldn't easily read ahead of time. There are occasional greenside bunkers guarding some of the dance floors, but simply negotiating the trees to get to a green proved more difficult than anything. There are also several water hazards. The fourth hole, a 352-yard par 4 and Salem Golf Club's No. 1 handicap hole, features a modern-for-this-course water and fountain feature that guards an elevated green.

But, as you might imagine on a course filled with mature trees, we found tee shot accuracy to be the biggest necessity when playing Salem Golf Club, especially as many fairways actually narrow as you approach the green. The front nine features three each of par 3s, par 4s and par 5s, while the back nine includes the more traditional two par 3s and two par 5s. Many of the par 4s are of moderate to short length, so if you can hit your 3-wood straighter than your driver — a great golf theory, though not one we always accomplish — that's a good option on many holes, as you'll still leave yourself a very reasonable approach shot.

Salem Golf Club is also a popular practice facility for South Saalemites. There's a large practice green, but the big draw is a simple but effective driving range that features both open grass tees and a covered, lighted area for late evening and/or rainy weather practice. We didn't eat there, but there is a nice clubhouse restaurant with outside seating (when the weather allows) that overlooks the first tee and ninth green. It's all part of the overall ambiance and challenging golf we found at Salem Golf Club.