

# Course Review: Tokatee Golf Club

Up the McKenzie River Highway out of Springfield — past fine little burgs such as Waltherville, Leaburg, Vida and yes, Nimrod, among others — lays one of Oregon’s true golf course gems. The Tokatee Golf Club has consistently been named one of the top public courses in the state, no matter whose list you’re reading. With its Three Sisters backdrop, Tokatee is a “must do” Oregon golf experience.

“Tokatee” is a Chinook Indian word that’s best translated “A place of restful beauty.” That certainly describes the property, which Eugene lumberman N.B. “Nat” Giustina purchased in 1962 to fulfill his dream to build a course up the McKenzie with a Three Sisters view. Tokatee’s site had been logged of its old growth timber in the 1940s, so the land clearing process including dynamiting dozens of huge stumps. But four years later, in 1966, the front nine opened. The second nine followed in 1969.

Tokatee is at once scenic, well groomed and, importantly, fair. There are trees. There is water, in the guise of both native streams and ponds. But neither the trees nor the water come into play unfairly provided you hit the ball at least decently — and there are several holes where you can bomb away without fear of either.

Pete especially liked Tokatee because the surrounding scenery reminded him of his native Kalispell, Mont. Don and Pete both agree Tokatee is a great golf course in a great setting that’s just the right difficulty for the average duffer to have a chance to score decently without feeling you’ve played an easy layout.



Tokatee features relatively straight forward fairways and hazards where you can usually see what you need to avoid and plan accordingly. You’ll need to put the driver away on some of the narrower fairways in the middle of the course, but, as mentioned, there are other places you can bomb away.

Tokatee has long been known for greens that are in excellent shape and generally easy to read. No tricks, no hidden breaks — pretty much what you see is what you get. The course measures about 6000 yards from the white tees, is 6250 from the blues and jumps to over 6800 from the blacks. Holes 1, 2 and 3 (par 4, 4 and 5) are trouble-free. Things tighten up on the 148-yard par 3 fourth hole, and pretty much stay that way through the remainder of the front nine. You begin to encounter lakes early on the back side. By the time you negotiate a short (116-yard) par 3 on 17 and a gently doglegging final hole of 365 yards, you’ve had one of the best days of golf in Oregon you’ll ever have.

There are two other characteristics Tokatee is known for that appeal to many golfers: it is both affordable and it’s imminently walkable. Obviously “affordable” is relative, but you can usually play Tokatee for \$50 or less — a course that would easily be twice that if it resided an hour or so further east in golf mecca Bend. And it’s basically flat. Unless you have issues with the higher altitude, it’s a course you can walk and just simply enjoy. Wherever you live, it’s worth the trip, especially if you’ve never been there.