

The following article is part of a series of articles Huddleston Bolen lawyer Chris Plybon writes on golf and golfing around the world. It was originally published in *The State Journal*. For information on the publication, go to: [www.statejournal.com](http://www.statejournal.com).

### **Is This (Golf) Heaven? No It's Oregon**

By Chris J. Plybon, Esq., Real Estate Lawyer, Huddleston Bolen LLP

I began reading about Bandon Dunes well before it opened in 1999. By the time we managed a trip in the summer of 2000, the first course (Bandon Dunes) was open and 10 holes on the second course, Pacific Dunes, were available for play as a "preview". The resort's slogan is "Golf as it was meant to be" – our group couldn't have agreed more and were hooked from the start.

Today the Bandon Dunes resort boasts three outstanding golf courses, accommodations perfectly designed for the golfer and excellent dining. A very promising new, fourth, course is under construction. Each of the existing courses is regularly ranked by golf publications in the top 15 of their lists of "Best Public Courses in America", with Pacific Dunes regularly appearing in the top 5.

The Bandon Dunes course was designed by a Scot, David McLay Kidd, and has an authentic Scottish links feel. Seven holes play along a bluff with spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean. Pacific Dunes has more the feel of the courses on the west coast of Ireland, with a bit more elevation change as it winds through steep dunes along the same Oceanside bluff as Bandon Dunes, providing even better ocean views. The third course, Bandon Trails, was added in 2005. It starts near the ocean, winds through a meadow and over a hill into a pine forest. If you were dropped blindfolded into the middle holes of Bandon Trails, you could probably be convinced you were in the Carolinas.

The newest course, Old MacDonald is scheduled to open fully in 2010. The course is a tribute to the designs of Charles Blair MacDonald, one of the first golf architects in America. The course is visible from Pacific Dunes and we've watched it take shape over the past two years. They currently allow a limited number of groups to play 10 of the finished holes as a preview. A friend who was there a few weeks ago reported that Old MacDonald is as good, if not better than the existing courses and just as fun to play.

Service at the resort is friendly and non-intrusive. If you want to be pampered they are more than willing to do so. If you want to change your shoes in the parking lot and carry your

own clubs – that’s fine too. One afternoon we ran into a backup on the 7<sup>th</sup> hole of Pacific Dunes. We noticed that there was no one behind us and that the 3<sup>rd</sup> tee was a short walk from the 6<sup>th</sup> green. While re-playing holes 3-6 a ranger (“players assistant”) came along and asked what our tee time had been. We immediately confessed what we were doing and prepared for our dressing down. His surprising response was – “that’s a great idea” and followed up a suggested routing of holes that we could play to stay behind the backup, still play 18 total holes and finish on number 7, near the clubhouse when it got dark. This is not the reaction you get when you vary from the norm at most “famous” courses.

There’s a lot to like about Bandon Dunes, but I thought I’d include 4 aspects of the resort that may not find emphasized elsewhere:

1. The Practice Area – Complimentary to resort guests, your room key activates the ball dispenser at the practice range. The huge practice area opens at dawn and closes, as I was told, “when the last golfer leaves”. There are three separate driving range areas, each with numerous greens and pins at which to aim, a multi-acre putting green, and separate chipping and short game areas.
2. The Short Course - When one of the practice range areas is not in use, they set pins in 9 of the aiming greens in the driving range area, stick a green flag on the honor box to let you know the short course is open, and transform that portion of the driving range into a 9 hole par three course. You can simply walk out, play the course and pay what you like into the honor box. It’s a great way to start your trip if you’ve arrived late in the day or a good place to settle arguments in the evening after your round.
3. Getting around – All of the Bandon courses are walking only (unless you have a doctor’s excuse). Caddies are readily available and very professional. Unless you prefer otherwise, you’ll usually have the same caddy for your entire stay. If you don’t want a caddy, there are numerous pull carts with giant wheels. When you take a pull cart they tell you to pull it directly across the greens (sacrilege everywhere else) rather than taking it around the green. The fescue grass is tough and they found that cutting across caused less damage than everyone wearing a path by going around the edge of the green. It was like penetrating a force field to make myself break such a cardinal rule the first few times I started pulling my cart across the green.
4. Gorse – This invasive, gnarly, prickly shrub is native to Scotland and adds to the feel of the place. Apparently this part of the southern Oregon coast was settled by Scottish immigrants who upon arrival planted gorse to make them feel at home. As it is wont to do, the gorse devoured everything in its path and quickly spread over large parts of the coast. I’m told the area was the last place the real estate folks thought of taking the developer when he made his trip to scout locations for his planned courses. When they finally got around to showing him the property ruined by this ugly shrub, he saw exactly what he had been looking for.

If you are planning a trip to Bandon keep in mind that the grass is different and the courses are less manicured than inland courses. The greens tend to be firmer, slower and

slightly bumpier than most upscale courses. The firm fairways produce unexpected bounces and have a lot more roll than we're used to in this area. The wind is almost always a factor. Rates drop 50-60% beginning the week before Thanksgiving. We've visited in late November several times and found the weather isn't bad at all, most days in the mid to high 50's or low 60's.

In short, Bandon Dunes may well be the best place for a links style golf trip this side of Scotland or Ireland. For information, visit <http://www.bandondunesgolf.com/>.

### **About the Author**

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