

Harlan Coben, What's New in Travel, The Road to Shinnecock and more



# The Met Golfer

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# The Amateurs

The heart of the game is alive  
and well in the Met Area

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What Else is New: The Met Golfer Expanded Content- Travel

By: Ken Van Vechten

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Golfers are an intrepid lot. As with Magellan or the Voyageurs, if you suggest that the world beyond is full of empty spaces, they'll set out to prove that there is some there out there. Explorers of the terra incognita of the golf map can now venture to the high basin and range country of eastern Oregon, to The Retreat and Links at Silvies Valley Ranch.

Much of the deserved chatter about Silvies comes from designer Dan Hixson's reversing Hankins and Craddock courses; play it one way today, reverse it tomorrow. The grounds making up these two distinct 18-hole routings include 27 greens and a three-pack of unidirectional holes in the middle of each. If that's not enough of a game-different experience, the soon-to-open McVeigh's Gauntlet 7-holer will sport club-carrying goats as caddies. And since it is a long way to travel from pretty much anywhere – it's a three-hour drive easterly of Bend (with air service from across the nation at nearby Redmond Municipal Airport), which is not to be confused with North Bend, 250 miles away on the coast – a fourth, water-all-around, 9-hole par-3 course is in the works.

Good golf is great, and sometimes it also just kinda happens. Fittingly for this austere, hauntingly beautiful part of the world, Hixson let meadows, hills, hydrology, ridges, and sentinel pines dictate the land-use plan. From the outset he wasn't sure what the tally of holes would be, never mind the number of courses.

"The owner wanted me to prove to him, on the land, that there was a great golf course waiting here," Hixson said in a phone interview. "He did not want to bring in dozers and reshape the environment. We weren't going to go in there and blow the place up. It was an evolutionary thing."

Chic-rustic accommodations of all configurations handle the "sheets" portion of the adventure, a regionally oriented food and beverage program bountifully covers "eats," and for those non-golf times you can fill up those long western summertime days with the spa, shooting sports, fishing, mountain biking, hiking, and herding – it is still a fully functioning ranch.