

Changing Courses

Way beyond the Monterey Peninsula and the sand hills of North Carolina, top designers have carved out exceptional, out-of-the-way greens that are becoming America's new bucket list-worthy links.

by Shaun Tolson

Hole 5 at Ozarks National
in Missouri

Courtesy Big Cedar Lodge

OREGON

A tee shot on the 95-yard fifth hole at McVeigh's Gauntlet—the new, seven-hole short course at **SILVIES VALLEY RANCH** (silvies.us) in east-central Oregon—lands pin high about a yard from the green. Given the strong headwind coming in from the north and the vast expanse of sagebrush that encircles the green only a few yards from the putting surface, the outcome is pleasing. The caddie, Mike, is less impressed. Maybe that's to be expected. After all, Mike is a goat.

The Gauntlet is the fourth golf course at The Retreat & Links, the official name of a 34-room resort nestled inside 140,000 acres of a working cattle ranch. The facetious caddie program only highlights the rugged and extreme nature of the course's seven holes—a layout that course architect Dan Hixson describes as "fantasy golf." Outfitted with leather-and-canvas packs that can hold six clubs, a dozen balls, tees, and six canned beverages, the goats make an already memorable round of golf even more distinct.

"It's really not about my architecture," Hixson says, acknowledging that, aside from the areas used for the tee boxes and greens, he moved and cleared little land to create the Gauntlet course.

"It's the experience of being out in frontier Oregon and seeing fantasy holes

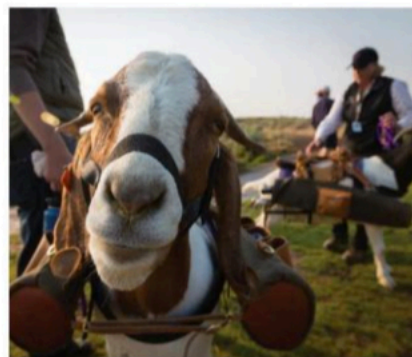


to play golf and have fun on. The goats add to that."

The ranch's two reversible, 18-hole courses that opened in spring 2018 deliver a more traditional links experience, playing just over 7,000 yards in both directions and utilizing nine shared greens. Wide fairways and large putting surfaces accompany dramatic vistas of the surrounding Ponderosa pine-covered hills. "This is the only place in frontier Oregon," says Colby Marshall, vice president of livestock and guest services, and general manager of The Retreat & Links, "where you can have this type of experience and play 54 holes of unique golf."

Top Accommodations: Two-bedroom lakeside cabins, from \$950. ♦

From above: The Retreat & Links features 34 cabins; Mike, the goat caddie; Gauntlet, a new, seven-hole short course in east-central Oregon.



Courtesy Silvies Valley Ranch (3).