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[These Oregon Resorts Really Get My Golf Goat](#)

Silvies, Pronghorn Are Far From The Coast, And Close To My Heart

By Vic Williams

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Though they're three hours and a big chunk of wide-open Outback apart, two Oregon resorts are helping remind golfers that there's a lot more to the Beaver State than Bandon Dunes in the worth-the-drive department: [The Retreat, Links & Spa at Silvies Valley Ranch](#), 40 miles north of Burns, and [Pronghorn Resort](#) about 20 minutes northeast of downtown Bend.

There's nearly 90 holes of golf between them, creature comforts and outdoor adventures in ample measure, and accommodations and food that match or surpass anything else the Pacific Northwest.

Both are upscale in their own way.

Both beckon traveling golfers with the promise of remote yet refined experiences that simply can't be found elsewhere in these parts, or perhaps anywhere in America.

Alone they each make for a sublime early fall excursion; together, if you have the time and imagination and determination (and, yes, the bucks), they make for one helluva high country ride.

I'd visited and written about both Silvies and Pronghorn in recent years, but the chance to check out their latest wares—a new course at the former and a new boutique hotel at the latter—over four whirlwind September days was too tasty a proposition to pass up.

So into the car I jumped, heading north from my home base of Reno.

Hop in.



dastardly hilltop green on McVeigh's Gauntlet at Silvies Valley Ranch.

OF GOATS AND MEN: SILVIES

There is no golf course in America quite like McVeigh's Gauntlet, Silvies' rollicking eight-hole, par 25, mountain goat-tested trek over sage-scented hill and dale.

Actually it's seven holes and par 23, with a 2-par "bonus hole" that'll test even the smoothest short game, but who's counting.

On this layout, only survival counts.

Just ask Bruce the Goat, my caddie for the hour-long Gauntlet jaunt.

That's right, a goat. Bruce and his fellow horned looper, Mike—playing hooky from their regular place among the several thousand goats raised on some of Silvies Valley Ranch's two hundred thousand acres—take turns lugging up to seven sticks in each of two leather pouches slung over their sturdy, short-haired frames. They show up, mostly keep up and, but for the occasional *bahh* for a handful of grass from their patient human handler, shut up.

Bruce calmed me with his serene stare as I spied at the toughest opening tee shot I've ever seen, just a tick over 150 yards but all uphill to a green perched somewhere beyond the intervening sea of sage, with only its lonely flag visible. No bailout, no place to hide, no hope.



The par 2 bonus hole on McVeigh's Gauntlet

One lost ball. Mulligan. Second ball lost. Drop, chip, putt, another putt. Five that was really a seven. On a par 3.

Bruce shrewdly kept his opinions to himself as I and my two playing partners hiked, Sherpa-like, from one hole to the next. He wisely looked away while I hacked up the bonus hole, coming nowhere close to its seven-inch cup at the end of a bumpy 25-yard runway. He "read" a putt on the fourth hole, the highest point on the course, before leading us down, down, down as the round wrapped with a stirring, narrow par 4 and what Yazzie Voigt, head golf pro, calls "the best par 3 on the property," with its long narrow, Biarritz-style green.

Sure, the goats are a gimmick of sorts, but a welcome one that manages to showcase the "natural" Silvies ethic in a golf setting. This place also attracts eco-tourists, fishermen, hikers, cyclists, business retreaters—anyone looking to engage with nature in myriad ways while soaking up Silvies' brand of Western luxury.

For golfers, the centerpiece is Oregon-born architect Dan Hixson's masterpiece, the reversible Hankins and Craddock courses, which share 27 greens and alternate in-play days. Read more about them and the original par 3 Chief Egan course [here](#); rest assured that you've never played anything like them.

There's still time to check Silvies out this fall with a three-day/two-night [package](#) that includes unlimited golf on all four courses, complimentary use of the new fitness center, fishing gear and more. Days are still warm, nights are crisp—perfect for sampling the stout seven-course Ranch Table dinner tasting menu (as well as a la carte breakfast and lunch options), and perhaps a dram or two from the area's largest whiskey collection. You'll always find a chevon, or goat meat, dish featured in the dinner lineup, and let me tell you, it's delicious.

Just don't say that to Bruce.



Is this heaven? No, but close: Pronghorn resort's Tom Fazio course.

JOY IN THE JUNIPER: PRONGHORN RESORT

A lot has transpired since Pronghorn's two sublime courses—the first by Jack Nicklaus in, the second by Tom Fazio—opened as part of a fully private club/residential development in the early 2000s. Ownership and management changes. Economic challenges. Shifts in scope and vision.

I've visited several times over the years on my own, with friends and my family. I've played both courses, marveled at the setting, service and welcoming culture. And I've always held this special place in high esteem, among my favorite getaways on a long, fortunate list.

But now, as the century's third decade dawns, Pronghorn is a destination in full. A new wave of gorgeous homes are going up, set well back from the flawless Troon Golf-managed fairways of the Nicklaus, which is now fully public though members love to play it, too, and the otherworldly, ghost tree-studded, still-private Fazio, accessible if you tee it up with a member.

There are still luxury homes and townhouses for rent via Pronghorn's Residence Club which are also sold as fractionals or full-owned, deeded properties that owners can opt to include in a rental pool.

There are excellent running and mountain bike trails (gotta try those fat-tire beasts), a full gym and spa, the Pronghorn Golf Academy featuring Golf Tips Top 25 instructor Jeff Ritter's Make The Turn performance coaching program and a newly build Tru-Spec fitting center.

There's one of the best fire-steamed pizzas (trust me) in creation in the Trailhead Restaurant or a full-on gourmet feast in Cascada, the 55,000 square-foot clubhouse's high-end eatery.

But what really pushes Pronghorn into stand-alone destination territory is the Huntington Lodge and its three stories of its sleek, spacious smartly appointed rooms with built-in gas fireplaces and comfy sitting areas, some with terraces overlooking the outdoor pool and patio, with the Fazio and snow-capped Cascades beyond. I stayed a night there recently and loved it — it's not overdone or ostentatious. It fits the landscape and enhances the entire Pronghorn design ethic. Truly, it's perfect for any kind of rarefied Central Oregon stay, in any season.

On that note, Pronghorn offers [several specials](#) for multi-night stays. Team it up with Silvies and you've got one unique, incredible Oregon experience.