

Bandon Dunes Golf Course Bandon, Oregon

Architect: David Kidd (1999)

Tee	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Black	72	74.1	143	6732
Green	72	71.7	139	6221
Orange	72	72.4	128	5072

Overview:

Bandon Dunes was the first of the links courses Mike Keiser envisioned for this dreamy piece of coastline in Southern Oregon. His strategy from the outset was to introduce real links golf to America where it was all about walking the course, dealing with the elements, and playing golf close to the ground. All the trappings of the resort are simple and understated, he intended to let the courses speak for themselves in the pure language of golf that he experienced in Scotland and Ireland.

His idea was to hire a young talent with a knowledge of links design who was not famous enough yet to ignore his suggestions. Fortunately, as you can read in the book *Dream Golf-The Making of Bandon Dunes*, Keiser spent years studying links courses all over the world so his opinions were worth taking into consideration. David Kidd was a twenty-something Scotsman with little design experience, the son of Jimmy Kidd who himself was a bit of a force in Scottish golf as the head caretaker at Gleneagles one of the most famed resorts in Scotland. As with so much that has gone down in the development of Bandon Dunes, it was just Keiser's gut feelings that told him David Kidd was the man for this job.

The landscape canvas Kidd had to work with at Bandon was smothered in gorse, a wiry sticker bush that is native to the British Isles. Gorse harbors the ultimately unplayable lie and is the signature element of the links courses of Scotland. The fact that it existed at all in this remote corner of Oregon was the result of a seemingly arbitrary act of an Irishman who settled in this area in 1875 and introduced the plant. Gorse flourishes like a weed and it quickly came to cover the sand dunes and gorges throughout Bandon. The gorse provided a unique opportunity to chisel a true links course out of the palisades of this seaside terrain and have it retain an aura of Scotland unfamiliar in this part of the world.

What Kidd produced was the perfect introduction to links golf in America. The Bandon Dunes Golf Course has it all-firm sandy turf for hard and fast fairways, gorse and sea grass covered sand dunes through which to wend holes, natural blow-out bunkers created by the elements pepper fairways and green complexes, stunning cliff-side exposure to the Pacific Ocean for visual drama, and, of course, plenty of seaside wind to validate the links style of golf most suited for the sum of those parts. To look at what he created it belies his prior lack of experience in links design and confirms Keiser's feeling that a Scotsman brought up in a family where links course care and maintenance were the topic of conversation at the dinner table every night would be the right man to figure out how to draw eighteen unique and genuine links holes out of this coastland.

The course begins benignly enough from a tee box in front of the viewing windows of the Lodge. A wide and inviting driving area masks the importance of picking a very particular landing area for the best look

at a very severe green complex you cannot see from the tee. This is a theme that is repeated throughout, very accurate driving lines, particular to the tee marker you are playing from and the wind direction and velocity of the day, is a must to having good chances to hit greens in regulation and putt for pars. This is why your caddie counsel is crucial to success on all of the Bandon courses-you need local knowledge even the first time you walk these links.

The opening stanza of the first three holes is just a warm up for what is to come-he gives you a chance to find a swing and start to understand the bounce of the turf and the effect of the wind. After you chase down your drive on the fourth hole you turn the corner and get your first jaw dropping view of the Pacific framing this green. Your first reminder that this is links golf in that the approach shot. Links Rule Number 1- the ground is your friend and a low pitch and run into a tight green complex minimizes the influence of the wind and improves your odds of getting it close.

The next two holes turn to the North into the prevailing breeze and now trajectory control on all shots becomes paramount. Your second shot into number five is a classic links look through a hallway created by ridges of sea grass laden dunes on either side to an alcove green set against a gorse covered back drop. Yes Dorothy, you are now in Scotland. What follows is the first of a seemingly endless number of dramatic seaside par threes on these courses that are suspended over the Pacific. You will find that measured distance means nothing at Bandon-effective distance is what you must determine. Links Rule Number 2-a one club wind on the inland holes becomes a two to three club wind on those holes exposed to the beach.

Seven to nine turn inland but they do not provide much of a breather. Kidd used the rippled and rolling topography to create wonderful elevation change and roll out puzzles to solve on each approach shot. One of the real challenges he presents is trying to determine just where the fairway ends and the putting surface begins on these green complexes. The grasses used for fairway and greens are so similar and kept tightly mown that you almost get no visual distinction between them. The good news about that is that without much transition you can often putt from 20 to 50 yards from a hole position. This is a very valuable arrow to have in your quiver instead of a pitch especially downwind or if you short side yourself on the approach. Links Rule Number 3-you can putt from anywhere.

The inward nine begins the march back to the sea with a funky links hole that will blow your mind. Another wide open driving area that demands a precise decision to place your ball in a position to negotiate the blind approach to the green created by a giant mound about 50 yards short of the green. This hole reiterates Links Rule Number 4-measured distance on the scorecard tells you nothing about your likeliness of making a par.

The twelfth hole is probably the most photogenic of all the three pars on the grounds. It is innocuous enough looking from the elevated tee with the green sprawled across a mound wrapping around a sod-wall bunker and framed by a tufted muffin dune on the right and a small wall of dunes on the left. Oh, did I mention that there is this ocean that dominates the rest of the horizon. The shot required from about 150 yards here will take all your guile and talent to pull off. The best shot is an Irish knock down draw that starts at the front right edge of the green and uses the curve and contour of the putting surface to feed to the pin. Links Rule Number 5-the best shot path is often not directly at your target. Using ground contour and roll out in a diversionary approach to your destination is often the preferred route.

Kidd takes you away from the sea for two holes to catch your breath like he did on the front but is setting you up for the crescendo, a finish that will dominate your thoughts well past dinner. The fifteenth is a marvelous par three, not dissimilar to number six but with a little less visible exposure to the ocean. When you walk around the dune behind this green to the sixteenth tee prepare to be wowed.....let me take that back...prepare to be overwhelmed by the distracting coastline vista that dominates the next hole.

From the tee on sixteen you look across a rocky gorge at a split fairway created by a furry bunker laden ridge that bisects the landing area. You likely have a wind aided drive so the upper (and desired) fairway is well within reach. Links Rule Number 6-the actual size of the challenge is often disproportionate to it's appearance. As it says on your side view mirror, things are often closer than they appear. If you hit a soaring tee ball to the upper fairway the walk up that ridge to rediscover your ball is very pleasing indeed. It will be followed by a knee-knocking sensation as you contemplate the short pitch to a wind exposed green hanging perilously over the gorge.

Turning for home the last two play along a cavernous environmental area on the right that separates Bandon Dunes from Bandon Trails and the Bandon Preserve Links Par Three Course. The visuals here of cypress trees, gorse canyons, and majestic shorelines make it well worth the cost of admission.

When you are done take the time for a 19th hole refreshment in the Lodge bar that overlooks the tenth tee. If you are lucky enough to do this late in the day the silhouettes of golfers against the setting sun will be an image you would not mind capturing in a photo for over your fireplace at home.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis (Black/Green):

#1 Par 4 386/352 yards

From a tee a few steps from the Lodge Kidd gives you a wide driving area on this dogear right. Try not to be spooked by the thought that about 50 people eating their breakfast are watching you hit this first shot of the day. Hit it with purpose at the center bunker and it should feed to the right for the best approach to the green. When you get to you ball you will be astonished at the elevation change to a green jacked up on a ridge to the right with a couple of threatening natural blowout bunkers embedded in the hill short left of the green. Best shape for the approach is turning right to left and working against a hump in the middle left of the green. Back pins are hard to get at so don't be stupid this early in the round.

#2 Par 3 189/155

The parameters of this par three remind me of #13 at Tralee Golf Club in Ireland. Tee shot from a perch must carry the waste area to a green set on top of a grassy slope framed beautifully by the gorse and low tree growth on the dune face behind. Green surface is masked for your sight as it sits down in a bowl so you just have to visualize the target and trust your caddie's effective yardage. With a collection area to the right of the green balls will leak off a shelf in the right side of the green. Prevailing wind is generally out of the left which provides the collection area with even more donations. This might require one more club for the uphill and the wind.

#3 Par 5 543/489

From this tee setting, the highest point on the course, you get a first full look at the ocean to the west. It is a major "Wow". The architect is carefully orchestrating your experience as he gives a glimpse of some of what is to come. Your tee shot is down a hallway accented by gorse on both sides-hit a strong one to center. Second shot needs to be well placed to the left to get a look at the green set slightly to the right. I like a lay up to 75 yards on the left at the top of the ridge which leaves you an on-level pitch to a green that is framed by a pair of hairy eyeball bunkers set in the face of the hill that supports the green. This green has a good tilt from right to left so expect a roll out on the ground accordingly.

#4 Par 4 410/362

From the tee you play between another pair of gorse covered hills at the bunker through the fairway where the hole bends to the right. Your drive needs a left bias to get a clear view around the corner to the green below. Warning, once you walk down to your tee ball and turn the corner the ocean view will overwhelm you. The lamb chop shaped green is set on the edge of the world-next stop would be Tokyo. Deep bunkers set in the nook of the chop are a no-no. The approach here is a links runner, a low trajectory Irish one coming in from the right into this alcove green setting that will kick off the mounds Kidd provided with this in mind.

#5 Par 4 428/400

This is one of the coolest seaside holes you will play at Bandon-subtle, intriguing, and downright difficult. This is a bear of a hole, with the Pacific on your left, playing into the prevailing wind, The fairway is littered with tufted mounds making it visually intimidating. Negotiating the path of this is like playing down a hallway with a howling breeze just above the height of the walls. You want to hit it up the right side of the split fairway with a slight draw to get a peek at the green tucked to the right. A beautiful blowout bunker about 125 out on the right is a signature accent on this hole and you will play across this to a green wedged between two sea grass covered ridges. It will take an articulate approach to get on this green and avoid the bother. If you feel the shot in is beyond comfortable reach don't be embarrassed to lay up and try to make par with a pitch and a putt. This green tilts a bit to the right so your ball may wander once on the ground. As you play the seaside holes keep in mind the wind effect is ratcheted up considerably-a one club wind adjustment inland becomes two clubs or more.

#6 Par 3 161/153

The putting surface of this three par is set magnificently against the ocean horizon and it has steep banks off both sides which are likely to repel indifferent approaches. This is a very deep green which is useful since you are still playing into a prevailing wind, make sure to increment the club choice accordingly. The long green falls away from you and to the right but a clever shot to the right side of the green with a right to left curve will probably hold on the slope. You are now getting the full sense of how much the challenge is heightened by the ocean breeze.

#7 Par 4 383/372

Mercifully you are turning back inland the next five holes so let your senses unwind. The mood is tamer but the golf demand is still at a very high level. The series of tee boxes on this hole are hidden like WW II pill boxes in the grassy dunes. From this perch you see an expansive fairway but the best line is down the left over the sea grass to a piece of fairway you cannot see from the teeing ground. The elements on the hole from there will push your ball to the right as you must negotiate a deep swale that creates a dramatic false front and false side protecting one of the most radical greens out here. If your second shot fails to reach the putting surface, any pitches from the front or right of this green will take full links creativity so use the ground to control your pitch. The real drama on this hole is the heaving three tier green, the severity of which will surprise the uninitiated. If the pin is back right play the center tier and putt up to the hole.

#8 Par 4 359/342

Major cross bunkers on this short par four so take a good look at the yardage needed to carry the bunkers. If you can make the carry, the best line of attack is down the right. Taking on the full breath of the bunker is not for the faint hearted but there is a reward if you get over that side. You can take a more conservative approach driving it up the left side past the bunkers. The narrow green opening makes the green seem narrower than it is. The 46 yard long green banks at you and to the right visually seeping out of the fairway so you can barely discern where the putting surface begins. Use the hump in the front left of the green to feed balls to center.

#9 Par 5 558/520

A mellow finish to the outward half, the key on this one is avoiding the sand. He plotzed pot bunkers in the center of the driving area, now that is linksy. You can play left of them for the more generous landing area but it is slightly longer to the green from there. From the right side you will have a shot at reaching the green if the wind is off your left. Beware that there are equally punitive bunkers in the lay up area at about 150 and again at 75 yards. So if your second is a lay up be articulate-I like it short of the bunker on the left at 75 yards. This bunkerless green has severe slopes and rolls that are not obvious to the eye. Good deal of lean from the right of the green to center. Hit the halfway window in the Lodge for a power bar and some electrolytes, the biggest challenge is yet to come.

#10 Par 4 362/339

The back nine starts with a radical tone to it. As you have seen often today, this driving area is wide open yet it takes some calculation to pick the appropriate line to play. There is a blind access element created by the nasty hill with an embedded bunker about 30 yards short of the green. This puts the onus on the player to make a decision on the tee on how best to approach the green. The best drive line is at the double tree you see between the last bunker on the left and the one short of the green. This will leave you down the left to get a peek at this very small green. You can actually bank an approach off the side of that knob if you have an angle of approach from the left. The bunker you see on this second shot is way short of the green so do not be fooled. Walking off this green you will be reminding yourself that it does not take great length on a links course to challenge par.

#11 Par 4 384/351

Form the tee take a moment to look way back...Mr. Peabody back...behind you to see the back tee. From there the hole measures over 450 and would be impossible for all mortals. Drive is straight away at the broccoli tree on the horizon well right of the green. The ball will feed into a valley below just right of the fairway bunkers. From there you are looking up at a green set to the left on a natural shelf. The access to the green is on the left so your best line of approach is from that side just off the fairway bunkers. The sod faced bunker in front will deliver the evil decree to your scorecard and must be avoided. This long skinny green slopes right to left and away from you.

#12 Par 3 199/153

This is the postcard hole for Bandon Dunes Golf Course-maybe the most photographed out here. The back drop of the ocean framed by a sentinel furry mound to the right of the green makes this a stunningly innocent visual. But beware, you have to pay close attention to the tactical choices weaved into this landscape. The green is relatively flat and straddles one lonely, sod-faced pot bunker on the left that will wreak psychological havoc on everyone who plays this hole. It looks like you can miss left of this bunker but that leaves a very delicate pitch up the slope to the shallowest part of the green. Best tee shot is a low trajectory knock down the right of the bunker with a curve that feeds onto the front right. You can then putt up and over to the pin location of the day. The image of this green against the Pacific will cling to your mind long after the round is over.

#13 Par 5 553/537

This hole has a fabulous old school links look to it. The fairway heaves with a tempest of humps and swales from tee to green-you can imagine playful porpoises leaping up from between the waves in the fairway. That appearance is very disconcerting and leads to lots of existential possibilities for the roll out of shots on this hole. Drive straight to center at the flat top tree on the back horizon. Lay up is right center to avoid the wetland that encroaches the hole from the left at 180. There is a deep swale that will eat up a meek approach in front and to the right of this long and narrow green. This is a scoring opportunity but you have to keep your sea legs about you and hit articulate shots.

#14 Par 4 359/332

This is another wide open driving area with a rippled topography and five oddly shaped bunkers to deal with. Check the yardage to determine which of the bunkers to use as your driving line. You must be left center off the tee or you have a blind approach coming up. Right rough is solid dead. The green is diagonally embedded into a ridge in front of a wall of dunes and looks like your retriever lounging at the foot of your platform bed. If you took the left line you have a look at the green set diagonally 8 to 2. From that side this is a scoring opportunity.

#15 Par 3 163/131

The last chapter of this story is about to begin as you are back at the ocean for a last look. The elements are familiar-the ocean, the gorse, sea grass, and sand-and they compose together to make for one intimidating looking task. There is a long ridge that forms a side board to the hole down the left and since there is no bail

out to the right you have take on this ridge. At the green it falls away sharply to the huge bunker on the right, the deepest one you will see. From the tee the green looks an endless pool against the horizon which does not give you much of a visual frame of reference for the back of this green. It looks like there is no way your ball will stay on the small surface. You definitely have to hit an articulate shot into this green, best approach is something along the left feeding onto the green.

#16 Par 363/345

In terms of sheer visual impact you won't see anything as spectacular as the view from this tee. You take in the entire length of the hole with all it's seaside elements and then the seemingly endless coast of Bandon beyond. The fairway is bisected by a long ridge and the upper fairway is well within your reach and worth going after. Ignore the chasm in front of you, you just need to take an aggressive line over the left side of the ridge and let it rip. Playing the lower fairway leaves you with a major hurdle to cross on a path to a green suspended over the beach on the other side of the ridge. If you play up the left and avoid a couple of arbitrary pot bunkers at about 75 yards, you end up with a relatively short pitch into a green protected by another sod-faced bunker. The green tips away from you. Do not play aggressively to any right pins-the gorge to the right of the green is much closer than it appears.

#17 Par 4 389/375

Another spectacular visual the full length of the hole. It is an architectural bait and switch on this tee. The fairway runs out at about 250 on the right so your eye biases the drive line to the left. But there is a nasty string of pot bunkers down the left that mitigate that strategy. I like a 220 shot to right center which will leave a slightly longer shot over the environmental canyon on the right to a very wavy green just above you. This is the longest green on the course so pay attention to the pin position of the day as you select your approach wrench or you will be looking at roller coaster three-putt territory. The side swales and fall offs adjacent to this green will lead to some very innovative pitches. As you walk down the hole you will notice little figures wandering in and out of the hills just on the other side of the canyon. These are the drunken hordes at happy hour on Bandon Preserve, the spectacular 13-hole Par Three course next to Bandon Trails.

#18 Par 5 543/513

Some people think this finishing hole is a bit anti-climatic but you have to end up back at the house somehow. It is actually much more tactically interesting once you give it a good look. A drive to center will leave you just off the bunker on the right. The lay up from there is at the center of the club house on the horizon which will leave you on the left side of the fairway around 75 yards from a ramped and tilted green set to the right behind a couple of sandy nasties. There is a ridge a third of the way into the green that runs across from 8 to 2 which you can use to bank a low pitch toward pin positions in the center and back right of the green.