

## **Bandon Trails Golf Course Bandon, Oregon**

Architect: Bill Coore/Ben Crenshaw (2005)

Tee	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Black	71	73.7	133	6765
Green	71	71.1	129	6260
Orange	71	70.8	122	5064

### Overview:

Coore and Crenshaw may have had the hardest task at Bandon being asked to bring a third course on line following the accolade and fanfare the two spectacular links courses Bandon Dunes and Pacific Dunes had received. The rugged terrain they were working with was much more challenging with distinct elements of sand dunes, grassy meadows, and dense forests. It was going to be a monumental task to deliver 18 walkable holes with unified character and natural flow.

These guys are key protagonists in the “minimalist” approach to course design that seems to be pervasive today. Their goal is not to move a bunch of dirt to create holes with a signature Coore-Crenshaw look but rather to discover holes that nature has lurking in the existing terrain. As Coore says in the book *Dream Golf*, “We don’t want our holes to look like golf holes...they should look like landscapes which just happen to include a golf hole”. Their approach to designing Bandon Trails was to spend endless hours walking the ground learning the site discussing all the possibilities as they enticed these holes to reveal themselves. The result is a cohesive presentation of unique and challenging holes distinctly different than their links cousins but just as enthralling.

The first hole is a classic links presentation with the tee looking out over a range of sea grass covered sand dunes that barely reveal a path for a golf hole. This is a bit of a design feint since you won’t really see this again until the final hole of the day. A fairway club with the correct shot shape will search out a path between the massive dunes leaving you a short pitch up to a long and narrow green wedged into the dunes above.

As you come off the first green to the second tee the look transitions quickly from links to sand barrens as you are descending into the meadow. The next five holes would feel right at home at Fazio’s Pine Barrens course at World Woods as they are characterized by the meadow’s more subtle elevation changes, plentiful waste areas and penal blow-out bunkers, and a blend of fir and spruce trees, native vegetation, and sandy soil. Thoughtful navigation of these holes is required because the arrays of sand hazards must be avoided and the rolling contour of the firm fairways will make that a challenge. The third and fourth holes meander across the meadow with the sand and mounds giving you alternative routes to play depending on the wind effect and the pin positions. The par three fifth hole composes all of the elements in a jaw dropping Kodak moment that will take your breath away. The hole has a picket fence made of old tree branches in front of the tee and behind the green an indigenous accent used repeatedly throughout the course.

At the seventh you are leaving the meadow and about to begin scaling the most rugged terrain of the course. The addition of elevation change to club selection will up the shot values from here out. The climb begins with a severe uphill par four that is the number one handicap hole on the course. Transition on this hole is so abrupt that the greenside bunker that has a two-club elevation change of its own.

A technical test is next in a short, possibly drivable par four—a tight rope walk across a ridge with serious bunkering waiting to gather a shot without proper conviction. Lots of choices on how to play this one, it can be a scoring opportunity providing you plan wisely and execute accordingly.

The ascent to the top of the property resumes as you play a very engaging ramped par five to end the front nine. They used uphill to mask the generosity of the landing areas on each shot. This hole has a links feature you see throughout the course in that this green just seems to emanate from the fairway with little texture demarcation. This provides a very hazy frame of reference for approach and recovery shots. As you saw on the links courses use of your putter from well off the green can be a valuable tool when approaching a short side pin.

My conviction is that what makes this such a difficult course is controlling your roll outs due to the combination of the firm fairways and the downhill landing areas. The problems presented by the through space on the drive and approach on ten are good examples of this. You must shape your shot to move away from the waste areas or else the downhill roll out will bring them into play. The eleventh is an imaginative natural rolling par four that scurries up and over the existing fall of the land. All they had to do was mow some grass for the tees and green, nature had already done the rest.

In this middle section of the course there is dramatic scale created by the backdrops of dense hardwood trees perched on the rugged hills. Add to it the aromatic smell of the forest and a bold dash of blue sky above and it will captivate all your senses as you contemplate the shots to be played. At this point in the round you are as aware of the nature walk you are enjoying as the golf challenge you are experiencing.

From the thirteenth tee to the final green you are going to play a unique array of challenging holes traversing some of the most rugged terrain in Bandon. On the tee of the par four thirteenth you feel like you are standing in your socks at the top of a playground sliding board—good luck staying on your feet on any shot on this hole. The green itself is like a bikini waxed tortoise shell—getting the simplest pitch shot to remain where it lands is quite a chore.

It is such a severe transition from the thirteenth green to the Kitzbuhel starter's gate that serves as the next tee box that they have to provide you an automated ride. The fourteenth is a very enticing short par four where the effective landing area for your tee shot is the size of a picnic blanket. From the perfect landing spot the pitch required is very precise. The green is the shape of a size nine left orthotic insert and the surface available is not much bigger.

Fifteen is a quasi-breather because the landing area is sufficiently generous to fool you into believing this is an easy hole. But the second shot is to a raised narrow green set in a tight alcove of sand and furry growth. The shot demands the utmost accuracy to keep the ball under the hole and avoid a sure three-putt.

Standing on the sixteenth tee you have a sense of what it is like to be a window washer on the Empire State Building. You are looking straight up the face of a fairway incline that looks like it will not hold your ball

much less your full body weight. Add a prevailing wind in your face and you have the full Chinese death march par five experience ahead of you. The good news is the ball seems to not only hold on the steep incline, but with the firm fairway, it actually bounces forward way more than you expect. The green sits exposed on another high point on the property so the real challenge here is getting an approach shot to hold on a firm windswept green and then two-putt on the way out of Dodge.

The par three seventeenth is the most photographed holes on Bandon Trails. Much like the postcard three par you saw on number five, which just so happens to be about 30 yards to your left, this one is pure eye candy. But beware this is an unwrapped Halloween treat tinged with a little of the wicked witch's juice so prepare to be challenged. You are playing a short shot across an environmental divide to another tortoise shell green wedged between some very unforgiving bunkers. Good news is they gave you a chipping area long and right. Bad news is the recovery shots from there are as difficult as from the unforgiving bunkers. If they offer you a bogey and a free pass to the eighteenth tee I would take it.

You are now transitioning rapidly out of the sand barrens to the links motif you started with four hours ago. Much like number one, the Trail ends with a finishing par four that is links golf from tee to green. The tee shot is a blind carry over a massive hill to an undulating landing hollow below and to the left. From there you have a three story short iron to a long and narrow green draped across a plateau adjacent to the clubhouse. This green is exposed to the Pacific winds and will be firm and fast so figure out a way to keep your approach in front of the flag you can barely see.

Once you have putted out do a 180 and appreciate the stunning view back down this last hole and of the tree laden hills beyond. It should occur to you what a remarkable achievement it was that Coore and Crenshaw composed such a dramatic and playable golf course on this rugged and diverse terrain.

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

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##### #1 Par 4 392/356

This is a short technical links hole to start with. The driving area, cloaked between the dunes, is wider than it seems but the preferred side is up the right letting the ball feed back to the center with the prevailing slope. Depending on where the tee is at you want something 200 to 220 right center working off the elephant cheek on the right. This should leave you in a low area below a gingerbread man bunker on the left at 120. Your second shot is to a naked green slightly above you that is nestled among low sand dunes. What a simple and pretty links style presentation to begin with.

##### #2 Par 3 214/155

The links look passes quickly to something more in a wooded sand barren style. You can't help but admire the composition of this course and the way it blends 3 distinct environmental looks into one presentation. This hole was just chiseled out of the wooded terrain and presents a little hide-n-seek with the front of the green obscured by the furry hilltops between the tee and green. Elevation change and wind influence over your shoulder will make the club selection a thought process. Best place to miss is short left-

anything missing to the right of this green is a major chore to get up and down. There is also a collection area middle left of the green from which you will have a relatively simple cross pitch.

#3 Par 5 549/532

This next par five plays across the meadow-it would feel comfortable on the Pine Barren's course at World Woods. Drive across a sandy waste area at the right edge of the bunker you see in the center of this mogul strewn fairway. The mound in the center of the fairway will deflect balls to both sides of the landing area. Bunkers on the left of the fairway are definitely in play. From there you need to check wind direction and carry distances to decide how to position your second shot for the best angle at the day's flag. The flag's relative position to the pot bunker in the center of the fairway at 45 yards will determine what side to lay up on. The third shot lands over that same bunker and feeds on to the green that leans back to front and to the right. The green drops off sharply at the back so don't go firing at back pin positions.

#4 Par 4 408/363

More sand and scrub look here as you continue across the meadow. This cool par four flows across the wavering hills and is dominated by the presence of a string of nasty sand traps that collar the left side of the hole and a tall hurdle ridge that bisects the fairway. The shortest carry over the ridge is on the left and that is the best angle to the green tucked back to the left. Driving line is the lowest point of the tree line on the horizon. You may not be able to see the putting surface from the driving area but the best place to miss is short and right. Bunkers sandwich this green that is ramped back left to front right.

#5 Par 3 133/124

Climbing into the foothills for a splendid looking postcard short par three that will test your acumen. Club selection is crucial. The green looks like a three tiered bonsai tree-the tiering segregates acceptable tee shots. Fierce bunkers are embedded into the face hill upon which the green sits so don't be short. Take note of the creative fencing made of old tree branches they have at the front of this tee and behind the green. This naturalist accent is used throughout the course and gives it a very indigenous look.

#6 Par 4 395/359

Similar rolling topography feel on the next one as number four, there is a big driving area with one lone bunker in the center. Big carry to clear the bunker so the left side of it is preferable. If you hit one in the slot on the left of the bunker it will shoot forward adjacent to the second bunker in the center at 109. There is a long waste area that cordon's the right side of the fairway the last third of the hole so the approach shot seems cloistered. A bit of a bail out area is provided short and right as the waste area ends before you get to the green.

#7 Par 4 440/406

The tone is about to get a bit more ornery as you start ascending to the high point of the property. Protecting your scorecard becomes very important in the this section of the course. It begins with a demanding ramped par four that plays 10% longer because of the elevation progression. Plenty of room to stretch your elbows off the tee but you cannot afford to visit sand along the way or your potential score on the hole jumps

geometrically. Hit it large up the left for the best approach line over the yawning bunker that dominates the left side coming in. Plenty of room if you clear the bunker to bounce one into the green. The green sits on a diagonal and it is shorter on the left with a bunker through that side and wall of death bunker short right. This is a stepped two story green.

#8 Par 4 321/299

Major downshift for this short par four that ambles across a ridge in the fairway providing fall off to both sides. If you are full of Wheaties or Red Bull you might take a poke at this green with a strong right to left driver. Otherwise lay up a 200 yard shot at the gap between bunkers right of the green. This should leave an attack wedge position and allow you to go pin seeking on the second shot. The green leans right to left and has serious undulations so try to avoid a very long first putt.

#9 Par 5 567/522

You have entered the dark forest now so discerning the wind influence will become more difficult. A steeplechase ramped par five is next where you have to give proper consideration on each shot to the carry lengths and the wind effect. Resist the visual bait from the designer to cut the corner off the tee there is a nasty bunker that will consume your ball on the left. Drive at the bunker you see in the right center of the fairway. Depending on what you have left you could take a shot at the green, there is through room long and left. More likely you will try to lay one just beyond the next hurdle bunker up the left-it would be a short pitch from there. The approach is played into a long putting surface that is tipped back to front. With tactical planning and execution you should have a birdie opportunity on this hole.

#10 Par 4 418/393

Wolf in sheep's clothing on this simple looking dogear left that has a long waste bunker collaring the left side of the driving area and beyond. This has the effect of tempting you to use the right side of wide landing area. Do that because anything down the left with a draw will get a ground feed into wolf's left jowl. From the right side you will have to hoist your approach across the waste bunker the last 90 yards up the right side to a round green raised from the fairway. The bail area left of the green will trundle a weak approach well away from the green that is snuggling the back of that waste area on the right.

#11 Par 4 445/429

The challenge will ramp up further in the next three holes. Walking this one you can appreciate how they used the natural flow of the land to bring out the challenge nature already had in store for you. The visual on the tee says big dogleg right but the turn is much less dramatic than that. Drive up the left side to get a wide angle view of the green that sits below tucked next to a water feature on the right. Your second shot is downhill, likely one club less, that needs to move right to left off the water and slip inside of a bunker on the left just short of the green. The hill on the back side of the bunker will give some pitch forward and right feeding your approach onto a 50 yard deep putting surface. This green rolls out so don't be surprised by the amount of movement you get once the ball gets on.

#12 Par 3 242/235

Probably the most mundane hole out here in a disarmingly long three par. You are likely hitting three wood at an accessible green with some mounding in front that will feed a wide approach toward the green. Green is 40 yards deep with a sandy terrarium accent piece left of the green. The best view on this hole is from the green back to the tee where you once again are reminded that they carved these holes out of a dense forest.

#13 Par 4 401/374

The pressure on your scorecard continues to build. Another hole that just seems to have been drawn out of the existing terrain-it has such a natural feel to it. This medium length downhill par four backs into the forest with a wiggle left and a shake right. From the tee your eye lures right across a dent in the fairway toward the green setting to the right. Ignore the visual and aim your drive at the left edge of the green to get the angle back to the green-missing right off the tee brings some dense foliage into play and a tree line on the right may impede access to the green. The green is a hanging chad over a large sand depression and wedged up against a deep bunker and Sherwood Forest in the back. To add some challenge, this is a turtle back green complex with a false front and a steep fall off left as well. You need to hit an articulate approach with teeth to avoid roll offs to trouble here. A par on this hole is an accomplishment.

#14 Par 4 325/306

A ride provided by management up to this next tee is the indicator that you are about to play where only pack mules had ventured before they discovered this hole. This is a handsome and visually compelling old school short par four. The tee shot needs to hang on the shelf of the fairway up the left in front of the fairway bunkers to get a good look at the tiny green and avoid having to take on the deep faced bunkers that protect the right side access. A tee ball that bleeds right will funnel well down to the lower area of the wide fairway but the approach will have no depth to work with over the face bunkers. The approach shot has no margin of error right but he has provided a small bail out sanctuary to the left of the putting surface. The long green is shaped like a left orthodic sloping away toward the back. The drift wood fence accent as you descend from the precipice tee to the fairway is very charming.

#15 Par 4 406/367

One last breath before a very difficult finish. This shape of this hole kind of reminds me of the 17<sup>th</sup> at Pine Valley in that you drive left to leave yourself a peek up the right at a raised green sitting in an alcove of trees, scrub, and sand. Playing into a prevailing wind you need to hit an assertive one at the left side of the cross bunker you see in the distance. You are left with a short club over the cross bunker at a tightly bunkered green with lots of undulation and a false front to boot. Careful you don't go past the flag, any downhill putts here require a full bat chute just to stay on the green.

#16 Par 5 530/494

Your ascent back up mountain continues playing into the wind on this abrupt Otis Elevator three-shot par five. The incline is so severe, you may need a sherpa guide and a llama to traverse the path from tee to this green. The driving area looks intimidating but the landing area slopes from the right and will feed balls back to center. The second shot is a draw that will follow the contour of the fairway to the lay up that leans from the

right. Beware of the gorse accented bunker on the right-this is no where to play from. The green sits above you with a mean looking bunker protecting the right and one behind for good measure. You guessed it, there is one last severe slope from right to left once on the green. You will be fatigued mentally and physically once you finish putting out here.

#17 Par 3 180/163

A visual masterpiece that composes all the elements of Bandon Trails into one postcard image. Don't get caught up in the look, there is a beast in this beauty. Probably playing into a crosswind so you should shape the shot to stand the wind. The hole is framed by a fur browed bunker right and two more gnawing into the putting surface on the left. There is a false front forces you to fly the ball well onto the green set on a diagonal 7 to 1. This tiny domed green will feed balls into a collection area long and right of the green, from which you can salvage a par with a crafty up and down.

#18 Par 4 399/372

Back to the linksy look to finish with a hole running adjacent to the opening hole. You have a blind drive over the hill to low landing area left center. The prevailing right to left slope should feed a well struck ball to the bottom of a hollow on the left with a clear look at the green. From there you elevate your approach to a long, narrow, and shelved green tilting left to right with large cavernous bunkering accenting the left of the green. Calculate a club increment to this approach because of the uphill and if there is any wind coming over the top of that hill you can probably add one more. Once you are on the surface you will probably have a very racey putt because this green has full exposure to the Pacific winds and it is likely dried out and crusty as a result.