

Desert Willow Mountain View Course
Palm Desert, California

Designer: Michael Hurdzan (1998)

Tees	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Black	72	6913	73.4	130
Blue	72	6507	71.5	128
White	72	6128	69.8	126
Red	72	5040	69.6	126

Overview:

Mountain View is the demure younger sister of the feature Firecliff Course at Desert Willow. Designed by the same crew of Michael Hurdzan and Dana Fry with Tour Pro John Cook commiserating, it shares the look and feel of Firecliff with a more user friendly interface. It shares the stunning backdrop of the San Jacinto Mountains throughout the course and plenty of money was spent moving dirt to create interesting topography with desert flora plantings as accent. No shortage of Kodak moments here.

Mountain View was built to be the member's everyday course, a kinder, gentler experience with less obvious danger and reverberations to the scorecard. The metric difference of 5 less in the slope from the 6500 yard Blue Tees speaks to this. There is simply more unfettered access to the preferred driving areas and the green complexes on approach and the severity of penalty for missing either is less significant. The small greens have somewhat milder undulations and are kept at a pace much less disarming than her more athletic sister.

Having said that this is not a course where you can play on auto pilot., it takes your full concentration to plot your way around. If I have any criticism at all it is that most of the holes are relatively straight, very few holes that turn dramatically to focus your attention to the A drive position off the tee. But even without elbows on the corners the green complexes still dictate a preferred drive position in the generous driving areas.

The small size of the greens and the fact that many are raised from the fairway is the scorecard's best defense. The front pins are particularly difficult because there is no advantage way to be short of these pins and have an uphill birdie opportunity. Your pitching recovery game will get a workout because you will miss greens so an adept short game is a must to scoring well. Much like Firecliff reading these greens is difficult with all the static of the mountain backdrop and the manufactured topography. If you have your Everything-Breaks-To-Indio compass on hand it proves relevant on many of the reads.

This is a fun afternoon of golf, an opportunity working taking if you are in Palm Desert for long enough to play both courses at Desert Willow. I actually like it as a warm up round the day before taking on the full Firecliff challenge.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis (Blue/White):

#1 Par 4 399/369 yards

The day begins with a slight leaner left par 4. Drive to R/C between the fairway bunkers and look up at the 35-yard green set slightly to the left sandwiched between side hills with bunkers. Teeny green is slightly stepped and falls away at the back left so get your measure to the day's flag carefully.

#2 Par 4 369/355

This has a visual appearance similar to #1. Drive straight away between the fairway bunkers and leave yourself a shortish club into an interesting green complex. Green sits slightly above you behind a deep face bunker dead center in front of the green. The only place you don't want to end up is buried in the face of that bunker so do not get cute with a front pin. Once again the green falls away in the back half.

#3 Par 4 433/418

The challenge ratchets up quickly with the longest four par on this side and the #1 handicap hole in front of you. Drive L/C past the bunker on the left to get a look at the green diagonally oriented to the right. You will have a long club into this green no matter how far you hit it so don't overreach on your backswing on this tee box. Pins on the right are hard to get at because the green falls hard right past center. A par here is most likely done with a very adept pitch and a made 15-footer.

#4 Par 4 349/323

I like this right after the long one-a cute technical hole. You drive over the desert flora to center toward fairway bunker on left and let the fairway topography straighten it out. The approach is played into a dell green setting where the putting surface sits on a diagonal to one bunker front right with one more aiming bunker directly behind the green. With a short club in hand this is a scoring opportunity.

#5 Par 3 192/172

The mountain back drop behind the green is stunning so don't be distracted from the task at hand.. Straight forward L to R shot across a dip into a raised green set off from a desert bunker on the right that continues all the way around the green's right side. The surface leans to the right bunker and falls off the back to the left so do not overcook the fade.

#6 Par 5 455/429

Some serious eye candy on this short five par. Water cordons the right of the hole most of the way up that will command attention. The optimum driving line is at the boulder left of the green. The green is actually 2/3 moated on the left with a handsome boulder wall edging the right approach green. It could be reachable in two but I think you have to lay up to a distance and attack with a wedge unless you have a club in your hand that you can loft and hold a small green.

#7 Par 4 363/338

What follows is another slight dogear left that leans to the right. Best drive is left center off a nest of bunkers on the left. The green sits straight at you with an available opening up the gut but has a back left shelf that can present a Clark Kent pin position.

#8 Par 3 155/147

Shortish par three where you carry it over the edge of the desert flora to a green framed by bunkers tucked to the right. Enigma here is in club selection. The shot plays half a club less down hill and the green falls off back left and back right so your landing pads are in the front third. Getting it close is a challenge.

#9 Par 5 531/509

A very scenic hole to finish the outward half with a truncated par 5 that requires articulate shots from tee to green. Water in front of the tee and off the right of the driving area that then crosses the fairway at about 180 out from the green for consideration on your second shot. Your lay up has to negotiate this transition and end up left center for an attack angle to the green perched above desert sand on the right.

#10 Par 4 388/363

One of the coolest holes of the day this middle sized par four has a pretty desert waste area on the right most of the way to the green. You drive straight away to a flat plateau that leaves you a look down at a green setting with water pinching from the right and wrapping around the green. Two deep bunkers straddle the front of the putting surface. This requires a very articulate approach shot.

#11 Par 3 173/156

This Par 3 is a long forced carry into a green set diagonal to the right so it favors a L/R shape. Green is squeezed by deep face bunkers on either side but they provide a holding mound left center to control roll out of your tee shot. Beautiful framing of the green by the water in front, palms left and behind, and the mountain range off in the distance. There is a bail area 40 yards short of the green on the left for those without kishkas. Green falls off to the back left so long left ends up longer and leftier.

#12 Par 5 487/470

A zig-zag par five is defined by a cluster of desert sand on the left of the driving area and more sandage on the right of the lay up area. Drive at the fairway bunker through the fairway on the right. Ensuing lay up to 100 yards on left to get a look at a shelf green tucked to the right behind a deep bunker. Long can end up in a vortex of grass moguls as the green falls off to the back left.

#13 Par 3 181/162

This is the second par three in three holes. Another angled green to the right with a forced type carry across a low desert area flanking the right of the green. The bunker delineating the back left of the green helps to provide some depth perception to the shot.

#14 Par 4 426/397

The first of four par fours in a row and maybe this is the hardest of the bunch. Drive at the chimney behind the greenside bunker on the left. Even with a long drive to right center you are looking at a lengthy second into a raised green tucked behind a sea of desert sand and scrub on the left the last 130 yards in. This green is stepped from front right to back left.

#15 Par 4 404/382

Another long straight one with bunkers framing the left you want to hit your drive to center. The second is downhill into a right kidney shaped green that wraps around a side bunker on the left. The back left pins are going to be hard to get out without taking on the bunker.

#16 Par 4 366/348

Following the two long ones you have a bit of trickery here. Drive area doglegs left around a massive configuration of sand. A controlled draw off the tee will follow the line of the hole and leave you with a middle iron second across the edge of the encroaching water on the right into a semi-cape green set to the right. Sand borders the left of the green for definition.

#17 Par 4 317/300

Theoretically in the drivable Par 4 category but I think not. This short kitchy par one you drive it across a pond to about 70 yards up the neck of the fairway buffered by sand. Second is a short pitch across the sand that truncates the hole and wraps around the right of this teenie green. They did provide a catch shelf on the left to hold your approach.

#18 Par 5 519/490

Par 5 finish has real character and will send you home with something to remember. There is a whole lot going on here. The hole doglegs left twice so proper positioning on all shots matters. Off the tee you play across a desert waste area to center off the bunker mass on the left. Beware there is water wayward right. Second is either up the neck of the fairway to 130 on the left or taking on crossing the water bisecting the fairway to 90 on the right. Green sits back to the left-the second dog leg-in a hollow of hills and trees behind the water and a fronting bunker. A finishing par here is very gratifying.