

hidden gem

The Buckhorn

Friendliest little golf course in Texas

By Rebecca MacDonald



Have you ever had the feeling that the course designer at your local club is hiding in the trees, laughing maniacally as your tee shot sails into a strategically placed bunker? Sometimes those “championship” layouts seem designed only to produce maximum frustration. So if you’re tired of teeing off over bottomless canyons or watching your ball disappear into the trees, it’s time to head to The Buckhorn. If you’re sick of water hazards you could sail a boat on, and bunkers that you need a rope to climb in and out of, go to The Buckhorn. If you want, just once, to break 100, or 90 or 80, take the scenic drive out to the hill country and play the Buckhorn.

The best thing about the Buckhorn is that it's easy on your game. And so what? If you're feeling battered by the golf gods and your swing just isn't cooperating, head to the Buckhorn to remember why you took up this game in the first place. You wanted to have fun, didn't you? This is the place to have it.

"You wouldn't believe how many players come in after a round, all excited, and tell us they shot their lowest score ever," says Buckhorn head professional Edwin Dickens.

The first word that comes to mind when you arrive at The Buckhorn golf club in Comfort, just 30 minutes northwest of San Antonio, is "friendly." It starts with the pro shop staff, who give you a hearty greeting when you step into the clubhouse. They don't just check you in, they ask where you came from, how your drive out was, and in general just make you feel welcome. It continues out on the course, where the informal atmosphere and inviting hill country views banish city stress. This is not the kind of stuffy, uptight place where you worry about whether you're wearing the appropriate clothes or have the right set of clubs. You just check in, grab a cart and go.

The greens will get you

Don't be fooled, the Buckhorn is no muni track. It's lush fairways and well manicured greens are maintained in tip-top shape, even in winter. In fact, it's on the greens that you'll find the biggest challenge. They are undulating affairs where putts roll fast but true, and distance control is the name of the game. This is a course that rewards good putters, not just long hitters off the tee. Speaking of tees, The Buckhorn seems to understand about first hole jitters, and eases you gently into your game. From the forward tees, the course measures a very manageable 4,616 yards. If you like more of a challenge, just step back to the white tees, which adds a few forced carries and another 945 yards, for a total of 5,561.

The first hole, a short par 4 that runs 262 yards uphill, welcomes you to the course in true Texas country style. It's not there to challenge you or make you uncomfortable, it just

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wants you to relax and enjoy yourself. The wide, short fairway beckons you onto the course. You can see the green clearly, waiting for your ball, no bunkers in sight. See? This game is not so hard. Sure, there's a tree or two on the left, but still plenty of room if you're not dead straight off the tee. Before you know it, you're relaxed and feeling right at home.

The number two par 4 is a tiny bit longer than the first, and the fairway slopes left to right, so you want to play it down the left side. Once again, the course lets you get to the green before stepping up to challenge you. It also slopes hard from left to right, so a good strategy is to play your approach shot to the left side of the green and let it roll down (pin placement favors the far right side of the green).

On the par-5 third hole, you get a great view of the Texas hill country, and now that you've warmed up, more interesting features begin to come into play. The fairway starts downhill off the tee, then doglegs to the right. Tee shots won't



Course Facts

FROM THE FORWARD TEES

Par: 71 Length: 4,616
Slope: 109 Rating: 66

RATES

Mon-Thurs: \$31 +tax
After 4:00 pm: \$22 + tax

Fri-Sun: \$40 + tax
After 4:00 pm: \$27 + tax

Juniors play free with a paid adult.
Senior rates available.

RESERVATIONS

The Buckhorn Golf Club
6 FM 473, Comfort, TX 78013
Toll-free 866.746.2711
www.foresightgolf.net/buckhorn

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find much trouble, but on the approach to the green, the fairway narrows, and water makes its first appearance on both sides of the hole. The water on the left isn't really in play, it's too far away from the green, but watch out for the hazard on the right. You want to aim for the left greenside bunker on the approach.

Plan your tee shot carefully on the par-4 fifth hole. At only 209 yards, you may be getting confident and thinking about a birdie. It's only 110 yards from the forward tees to carry the creek that crosses the fairway, but on the other side of the creek, the fairway takes a hard turn to the left. If you use your driver, you risk going all the way through. Beware of trying to drive the green, the creek wraps around behind it, awaiting errant shots.

On the back nine, the short number 10 hole is reminiscent of the friendly front nine start—a possible birdie and an easy par. You can almost drive the green if you're a long hitter. When you go to claim your prize, line up your putt carefully—you'll find the green is again very undulating, sloping from front to the middle, then off the back again.

Number 14 is a longer par 3 at 133 yards. The green drops off in the back, so if your tee shot is too long, it will roll off. Better to be short on this hole, you can miss right or left and still scramble to make par.

The finishing par 4, at 251 yards, is not a long hole, but there is a deep bunker in the center of the fairway halfway down, just past the 150 pole. The fairway slopes right to left, so the best

approach is to play the right side of the fairway, past that bunker. It then slopes sharply right to left on the approach, with a bunker guarding the front left side of the green, so you'll be glad you played it smart.

You'll finish with a smile, and a glance at your score card will tell you that The Buckhorn is indeed a friendly course. Just be sure to bring your putting skills, as you'll need them on these greens. Because it's fairly open, there is a fair amount of wind that dries out the course quickly from the wet weather. That and the overseeded fairways make it worth the drive in winter and early spring, as well as during the regular golf season. It's a good-natured course that reminds you that golf is, after all, supposed to be fun. Isn't it? 