

Placer Valley Club Crawl

Placer County Is Booming, And Your Driver Better Boom, Too

By David Jacobson

Placer County is booming. You can hear the boom, literally, from the home construction sites near several tee boxes at The Lincoln Hills Club. You understand why the area is booming when you play Lincoln Hills and other area courses, such as Turkey Creek Golf Club and Whitney Oaks Golf Club.

These three courses – beautiful and challenging in their own ways – provide accessible, affordable golf, especially relative to the

Bay Area. For all the population growth in and around Sacramento – from retirees to Bay Area refugees to those drawn by the region's increasing opportunities – the courses seem uncrowded and maintain a pleasant pace of play.

Non-golfers in your crowd will enjoy the area's excellent shopping, dining and historic attractions. But at these prices, and with this scenery, within minutes of Sacramento and less than two hours from San Francisco, you'll be glad you're a golfer.



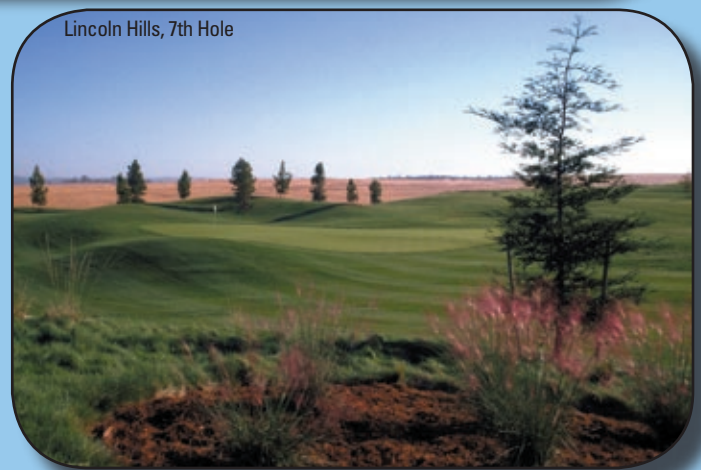
Lincoln Hills, 18th Hole

The Lincoln Hills Club

1005 Sun City Lane
Lincoln, CA 95648
Golf Shop 916/434-7450
www.lincolnhillsclubgolf.com
Public, 27 holes.

From a hearty greeting at the bag drop to your last putt – which drops as attendants clean your clubs beside the 18th green in case you need a quick getaway – Lincoln Hills provides welcoming service. The wide, rolling fairways of the OB Sports-managed course also are welcoming, and you better find them. The rough is not overly penal, but it is rough.

Even on the first hole, the 18th handicap, you need to be in the fairway, and you need to stay right. On the second, a lake beckons, though



Lincoln Hills, 7th Hole

it is more visual trouble than real danger.

The par-three fifth places a premium on club selection as you must carry water and avoid the bunker behind a tough two-tiered green. The middle holes feature granite boulders, which are not in play unless you bring them into play, and pretty rock landscaping around several of the tee-boxes.

Twelve is the signature hole, a downhill par three with a lake reflecting its surrounding trees to the right of the tiered green. The tee-boxes at twelve afford panoramic views of much of the rest of the course, including the ever-building Sun City Lincoln Hills retirement community.

This facility opened its first 18 holes, the Billy Casper/Greg Nash-designed Hills Course, in 1999. Nash alone designed the Orchard Course, which has nine holes open and the last nine to be completed this summer. After a day on The Hills, it's no wonder why the facility is expanding to 36 holes and why the homes keep sprouting up.

Turkey Creek Golf Club

1525 State Route 193

Lincoln, CA 95648

Golf Shop 916/434-9100

www.turkeycreekgc.com

Public, 18 holes.

At Turkey Creek, your hearty greeting comes from the course's namesake bird. A flock of turkeys lounging about the wooded area at the turnoff from Highway 193 marks the end of civilization as you know it.

Winding down the wooded quarter-mile road to the clubhouse, you feel yourself escaping the outside world. Over the next 18 holes you hear little but nature – woodpeckers, riffling creeks, doves, and of course, turkeys. The sights are stunning, from brave deer to a brazen four-foot bull snake on the fourth green to tree-framed fairways and greens. The scenery takes hold on the back nine of the Club Corp-managed course, but both sides offer plenty of golfing intrigue.

The second hole is a strong dogleg left that demands a tee shot on the right of the fairway to keep trees out of play as you approach a tiered, elevated green. The front quarter of the green is a slide. With the pin placed above the slide but below the top tier, your approach



Turkey Creek, 18th Hole

must land in the collection area to avoid a perilous downhill lag that can easily send you off the front of the green.

The third is a par-three with a forced water carry, and water across the fairway on the par-five fourth presents a lay-up-or-go-for-it choice. The highest-handicap hole is the fifth, a severe dogleg right with a bunker at the right elbow.

After a few holes of relative normalcy, nine is marked by several rusting antique farm implements strewn about the out-of-bounds areas. Ten will tempt big hitters to carry the lake fronting the green, while mortals will settle for a tricky third shot if they're too far right due to a gigantic granite boulder on the

edge of the lake.

Thirteen offers an elevated tee with a chute effect created by woods nearly the entire length of the hole and behind the green. Fourteen is a scenic par three with a creek in front, and again you breathe relatively easy from there until the titanic 18th.

The course's signature hole forces a water carry off the tee, bends left with a bunker at the right elbow, and then dares another carry on the second shot over a boulder-strewn quarry lake flanked by fiery foliage. No matter what this course, especially the 18th, does to your ego, you can't help but enjoy your round.



Turkey Creek, 14th Hole



Whitney Oaks, 9th Hole

Whitney Oaks Golf Club

2305 Clubhouse Drive
Rocklin, CA 95765
Golf Shop 916/632-8333
www.whitneyoaksgolf.com
Public, 18 holes

Troon Golf's reputation for tough challenges lives on. Even playing the gray tees, at 6,322 yards, is challenging at the Johnny Miller-designed track.

The first hole is straightforward enough and gives you a break if you can take the hill down the right side. The tiered green is fast but fair. The second forces an approach over wetlands to a shallow undulating green. The fourth hole, aptly named "Rock," has a massive granite boulder on the left edge of the green that plays havoc with your visualization off the tee.

The fifth is the number-one handicap hole, named "Wee Burn" in the Troon tradition of homage to golf's Scottish origins. A left-center tee shot is the only way to gain clear access to the green, and even then wetlands to the right of the green remain a threat.

Big hitters can drive the 10th with little to fear but bunkers guarding the front. The par-five 11th is a challenge for all players. Trees line a rolling fairway that gives few clues, even with a detailed yardage book, as to the

best shot, so use care. Play your second down the right fairway and your third shot is over another rock outcropping; try to draw your second left of the rocks, and you're flirting with the woods.

To the left of the 11th green stands Whitney's Tomb, final resting place of Rocklin's founder, whom you just might want to join in eternity, depending how the 11th treats you.

Fourteen, seventeen and eighteen are all

forced-carry tee shots over scrublands or wetlands. The carries are not long, but they are visually intimidating, and they come at the end of what can be a psychologically grueling round.

All told, these three Placer Valley courses provide such a variety of golf challenges, environments and amenities that you may find yourself drawn repeatedly to the outskirts of Sacramento. And bring that booming driver.



Whitney Oaks, 18th Hole