



# BETWEEN BEND AND BOISE

SILVIES VALLEY RANCH IS ALL ABOUT GOLF, GOAT CADDIES, GREAT FOOD, GOOD TIMES

Photos by Alice Scott

Forget the notion of a dude ranch, folks. Midway between Bend, Oregon, and Boise, Idaho, Silvies Valley Ranch and Retreat is a serious business with a “mission and promise of caring for our environment, livestock, family and friends.” Dr. Scott Campbell and his wife, Sandy, returned to their Oregon ranch roots after opening over 900 Banfield vet clinics with PetSmart. They sold their shares and wheeled their fortune into a land venture with new goals – to create jobs, improve habitat and build tourism by sharing the American West lifestyle. The upshot is a fun-filled, 140,000-acre working ranch and golf retreat on deeded and leased National Forest and BLM lands in and surrounding Silvies Valley Oregon.

### The key to your cart

At check-in, guests saddle up in their own golf carts for transport around the ranch during their stay. Special lithium batteries and heightened suspension



The clubhouse (above) includes pro shop, bar, restaurant and open patio with panoramic views. Tours of John Hopper’s homestead (below) reflect the simple life of long ago.

propel a fast (really fast) ride over the terrain where cattle graze. Elk and pronghorn antelope herds also appear, safari style, on general manager Colby Marshall’s eco-tour. Also a native rancher and former D.C. environmentalist, Colby knows where the wildlife roam. He unravels yarns of history along the way, like how, long ago, the French paid fur trappers to eradicate 200,000 beavers to deter settlements. Beavers’ damming is pretty darn important for creating a spongy environment for vegetation growth. Dams washed out and the water table dropped, making it difficult for homesteaders. When the Campbells bought the property, they instituted a wetlands restoration project. Culvert systems fixed the water flow and the spongy meadow returned, along with deer, elk and birds. Now international foresters flock here to learn how to solve water issues.

Remnants of seven homesteads reflect the 1800s heritage. The seven



Clockwise from top left: A clubhouse patio table overlooks the Chief Egan course; aerial view of the ranch (courtesy of Silvies’); elegant table setting at the Chef’s seven-course dinner in the lodge; the antique spreader; a curious her of American Range goats; the practice green in front of the course’s opening holes.





Western motif welcomes guests in the lobby (left) and throughout the ranch. A lake (right) and executive course is named after Chief Egan, the last war chief of the Paiute tribe. Goat caddies (bottom, courtesy of Silvies') work for peanuts.



Shelly Marshall pauses on her trusted horse, Sadie. She never tires of the valley's panoramic vistas.

theme permeates ranch life in honor of those early settlers. On Friday nights, everyone looks forward to the chef's seven-course meal in the ranch house bar and restaurant. Rustic décor punctuates an elegant table setting where the chef introduces each creation. A tray with various knives is passed for meat cutting. Guests' personalities are jokingly defined by their cutlery choice. Before and after dinner, cowboys/girls and golfers belly-up to the well-stocked bar. The evening is consummated lakeside by the patio's flaming fire pit with storytelling and stargazing.

### The golf games

Though the Campbells do not golf, their friends do. Through their fantasy of a course on the beautiful landscape, they realized the potential for tourism. Enter Dan Hixson, who created a reversible loop of Craddock and Hankins 18-hole courses, named after settlers. The isolated tracts traverse the rolling hills and pine forests without encroachment

of houses or civilization. The links-style routing provides open-range fairways with elevation diversity between tees and greens. Land in any bunker and get razed by the metal rake, which son Tygh Campbell has etched with sayings such as "Better get lessons."

Fun is the name of any Silvies' game. The 18<sup>th</sup> hole of the Hankins side is a grip-it, rip-it downhill, downwind opportunity where mere mortals are challenged to hit the longest drives of their lives. Achievers who "nail it" are awarded a special drink, the Horseshoe Nail, and an album in the clubhouse records the drives for posterity.

The Chief Egan executive nine plays out by the lake below the clubhouse, where breakfast and lunch are served. Antique implements dot the courses and ranch. Dr. Campbell believes the manure spreader was appropriately positioned next to the clubhouse for golfers' BS. It could also serve the adjacent caddy shack where goat caddies hang out until hired for the recently opened

McVeigh's Gauntlet course, a seven-hole treat on top of a razorback mountain.

### Get your goat

Silvies' novel goat caddies are garnering much attention, having appeared on Good Morning America. They are fitted with a custom Seamus saddlebag to hold six clubs, six beverages and peanuts for tips. B-a-a-a-d jokes abound. Besides the few goat caddies, the ranch hosts the largest organic meat goat herd in the world. Over 2,000 American Range goats are tended by Peruvians from a long lineage of shepherding with the help of their Great Pyrenees dogs, an entertaining sight. Sandy Campbell has a quest to deliver the best, healthiest goat meat, or chevon, served in the ranch's gourmet restaurant and sold to others. Ranch guests depart with a new meaning for "get your goat."

### Straight shooters

If your golf shots are lacking, take a shot at the Rifleman, Sharpshooter or Pistolero gun ranges. Colby or one of his

retreat team members sits down with each participant to study a litany of safety rules before anyone touches a firearm. Not only is safety more paramount here than on any other range we have experienced, but the instruction on how to accurately aim and hit a target was, well, spot on! All three shooters were hitting the bull's-eyes, punctuated with laughter and "wahoos!" Colby advanced us to a Smith & Wesson 500, a hefty .50-caliber handgun. Scary and intimidating, it sounded like a portable cannon. Shooting can be a bonding experience with bragging rights, just like golf. And Colby might send you away with your holey paper target scrawled with a nickname like "Dead Eye" or "Annie Oakley."

### Horseback is a verb

Do not expect single-file trail rides. Steer your own steed on the open prairie with Colby's wife, Shelly, the stable's ring leader. Safety again was ensured by a test of skills in the arena before heading out on the range. The only sign of life was a small herd of cattle huddled under trees by the pond, a red tail hawk circling overhead and a small striped snake slithering across the stream. There is no greater feeling of solitude than out on the range, riding with Shelly. Meanwhile, back at the corral, Colby was hanging on a rail monitoring the herding of 100 cattle as the brand

inspector checked them off before loading for market. It is indeed a working ranch where creativity and fun are always worked in. Under consideration is a machinery experience in the sandpit. Picture big boys with their John Deere Tonka toys. And almost completed is the spa and fitness center with a climbing wall, full-size pool and Jacuzzis.

### Getting there

Fly into Boise and drive three hours west, or fly into Bend/Redmond and drive three hours east, or personally wing it to the private airstrip on the Ranch. Lodge rooms and luxury cabins are all artistically decorated with western motif. Cabins have two master bedrooms and full kitchens. Amenities include plaid wool robes and a private Jacuzzi on the deck overlooking Otter Lake. Binoculars are on hand for spotting fauna and fowl. Before you go, check out the comprehensive website for pricing and packages. It tells the whole ranch and goat stories with a humorous style giving a true flavor of Silvies Valley Ranch and Retreat. Live chat is available to customize your vacation or conference. Give it a go at [www.silvies.us](http://www.silvies.us). ■

*Danny and Alice Scott are America's Golfing Couple. They live in Gilbert and travel the world in search of great golf retreats.*

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