



Course Review

The 18th is a great finishing hole. Photo by Richard Fellner.

From the Carpark to the 19th Waterford Valley

By the Bushranger Golf Social Club*

Just 30 minutes from the CBD, Waterford Valley Golf is Melbourne's latest pay-for-play golf course. Strategically designed to cater to both the social golfer and the growing corporate golf market, the course offers a variety of layouts and challenges for golfers of all levels. Built on 160ha, this former "floodplain of the Dandenongs" utilises an intelligent, drought-beating water collection and irrigation system to maximise every drop, and keep the course in top shape all year round. This month, Inside Social Golf invited the members of the Bushranger Golf Social Club to put the course to the test.

RICHARD FELLNER
Handicap: 11

First, some important numbers: The course boasts 63 bunkers, 11 lakes & wetlands, 2 creeks, 12,500 Casuarina She Oaks, 132,000 shrubs & plants, and 150,000 various indigenous flora.

Unfortunately for me, my ball visited nearly every one of these blasted things.

My misfortune was either due to the wind, or a simple lack of ability. But I couldn't blame the course. It was magnificent – a fair and open layout, that, if you hit the ball well, you won't get penalised. But if you slice it 90-degrees into the rough, well, then you deserve to have a bugger of an approach shot. But this is a key point – unlike some courses which needlessly punish you with hidden obstacles or "dirty tricks", Waterford Valley lays all the cards on the table and shows you everything from the tee. It's then up to you to (intelligently) manage the course.

I was truly impressed with the quality and layout of the course. The smart design and attention to detail really shows. The four sets of tee boxes range from 5301m (reds) to 6549 (blacks). The greens were true (again, no tricks here, if it looks like it breaks left, it will break left) and the strategic positioning of bunkers around the greens allows a true variety of pin placements for each hole – allowing the course to play "friendly" or "fiendish".

Other "niceties" make this course a real pleasure: sprinkler heads with accurate distances, groomed tee boxes with clear

distance/rating markers, paved cart paths extending the full length of the holes, and bunkers with the softest, whitest, most playable sand I've ever seen. The full-size, well-maintained practice green (with practice bunker) gives you an accurate preview of the course. And the clubhouse and facilities are all top-rate – giving the impression that you're playing in an exclusive, private club. In my opinion, Waterford Valley is not only a great pay-for-play course, but it is also a premium choice for hosting a corporate golf day or social group event.

OVERALL RATING: 8/10

SCOTT WILSON
Handicap: 21

There are penalties and danger zones everywhere - but if you can navigate these successfully the immaculate course condition, wide fairways, large greens and shorter-than-usual set of par fours could mean you're in for the round of your life.

It's worth visiting this course just to hit your irons off the impeccably groomed fairways, or play trap

shots from the perfectly sanded bunkers. Think blemish-free Santa Ana couch, fluffy bunkers, generous and immaculately presented greens – a rare combination for a suburban public course.

The par 3s range from 160m to 200m and provide the toughest challenge on the course. The greens are large enough to attack with long irons and fairway woods, but you'd better be accurate. The 13th hole is a 200m round-destroying ball-gobbling monster - with large bunkers left, a huge lake right and ball magnets in both. If golf is a hard mistress, then this is medusa.

The par 4s are a lot of fun. Dog-legs, water hazards, blind fairway bunkers and greens protected by both bunkers and natural landscape mean you'll need to check the course map and plan the best approach to each hole far more than the average public course.

The par 5s range from 486m to 534m. The greens are well protected from any attempt to reach in two, but a second shot lay-up to 100m and pitching wedge

in is a safe option. The 8th hole is a ripper. Driving into a strong headwind, it is a challenge just to make the fairway.

Get a foursome together and go play this course. When you walk off, you'll have tales of everything from woe to triumph.

OVERALL RATING: 8.5/10

MATTHEW PITT
Handicap: 18

The opening Par 4 is generous and the challenges mount as the journey unfolds. Each hole has its own character and by the 18th it will have examined all aspects of your game. I really enjoyed the wide landing areas on the par 4s and 5s. It creates the opportunity for the mid-to-high handicapper to get involved. If you are 'on', you will be rewarded, however if the radar is not calibrated, there are plenty of punishments lying in wait and if you stray too far, the rough gets ferocious.

For a course Phil Ryan and owner Gary Thompson carved out of marshy wetlands, it has a great links feel with interesting undulations, peppered with swales

and curves. The 63 bunkers are impressive for the strategic care they demand and are actually enjoyable to play from due to the superb quality of the sand.

My favourite hole was the exquisite par 4 16th with its glorious lone fairway gum and invigorating tailwind! Nestled at the base of the Dandenongs, and occupying a long corridor of land, not unlike the links land in St. Andrews, Waterford Valley boasts some superb vistas for an inland course and the feel of an adventure unfolding with each nine running 'out and in' from the central clubhouse and its well stocked bar. I'm sure it is a course that will grow on me the better I score and I can't wait to get back there and play it again.

OVERALL RATING: 8/10

MICHAEL DAVID
Handicap: 27

On arrival at the pristine Waterford Valley Golf Club, things are not what they seem. It is a young course in years but an old course in style. Opened in 2006, and 10 years in the making, it seems mature with much of the vegetation appearing well established. For a course that has been virtually built from scratch,

it is as remarkable as it feels very much at one with its environment, as if the land was already a golf course built by Mother Nature and someone has just rocked up with 18 flags and mown out the tees, greens and fairways.

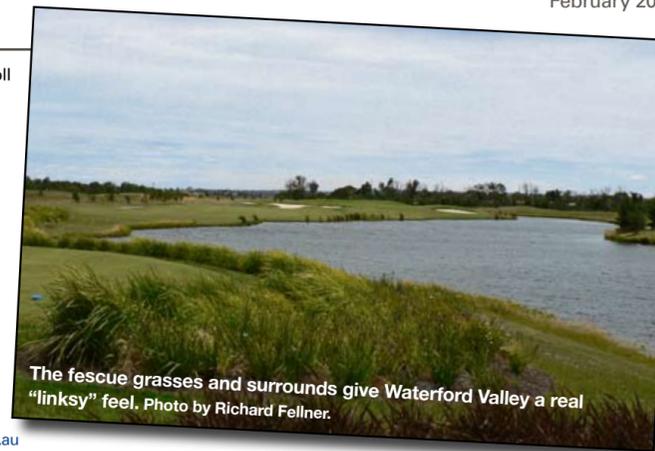
It lulled me into a false sense of security from the start. I looked down the first and thought an easy straight drive and a lazy 8-iron should set up a comfortable birdie putt to get things rolling. How wrong I was! Enter the wind and things immediately got interesting. Swirling breezes from left to right, zephyrs from front to back and gusts from top to bottom sorted me out. I had to open up the very dusty course management file, as every shot now demanded that I think my way around this course.

My favourite hole was the sleepy little par four 15th (and not just because I parred it!). It seems innocuous enough but requires thoughtful club selection from the tee, and, as I showed, will only reward the most cunning of golfers with par or better. All in all a magnificent challenge awaits every keen golfer from the very 1st tee and throughout the journey at Waterford Valley. With its large landing zones and huge,

sweeping greens that roll true and consistently, it is a pleasure to tackle and a great test of golf.

OVERALL RATING: 8/10

*Bushranger Golf is an online social golf club open to players across Australia. Membership is free, and offers the option to obtain affiliate handicaps via Golf Access. For more information, visit: www.bushrangergolf.com.au



The fescue grasses and surrounds give Waterford Valley a real "linksy" feel. Photo by Richard Fellner.

| Player | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | Total |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| 1 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 2 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |
| 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |
| 7 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 8 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |
| 9 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 10 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |
| 11 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 12 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |
| 13 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 14 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |
| 15 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 16 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |
| 17 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 48 |
| 18 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 48 |

NEED TO KNOW: Waterford Valley

Length: 5301 (Red Tees), 5612 (White Tees), 6109 (Blue Tees), 6549 (Black Tees)
Green fees: (\$50 weekend, \$45 Weekday, \$28 (9 holes).
Carts: \$25.
Par: 72
Designer: Gary Thompson, and Phil Ryan, of Pacific Coast Design
Address: Bunjil Way, Rowville, VIC 3178
Phone: (03) 9753 3200 **Web:** www.wvgolf.com.au

HOW TO GET THERE

From the city: take the M1 (Monash) to Ferntree Gully Rd, enter (going south) at the intersection of Ferntree Gully Rd & Scoresby Rd intersection.

Sidebar: The Food

Waterford Valley offers traditional golf fare from the snack shop/counter (Pies, sandwiches, etc – all at very reasonable prices), in addition to a full range of beer and soft drinks. For Corporate/Group events, multiple catering options are available, including breakfast/lunch/dinner packages served in a variety of dining room configurations that can accommodate between 20 and 200 people, including a private bar.

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