



Does it get any more Australian than this? Not only is Growling Frog in Ned Kelly country but also boasts roos aplenty. Picture - Richard Fellner.

From the Carpark to the 19th

By Rod Morri

The Growling Frog Golf Club

The clubhouse and car park at The Growling Frog are situated on a spectacular hilltop in Yan Yean, about 40 minutes north of Melbourne. The course takes its name from the Growling Grass Frog which is native to the area and is sprawled across a valley below at the southern tip of the Great Dividing Range, not far from Ned Kelly's first home in Beveridge.

RICHARD FELLNER
Handicap: Yankee Accent

You gotta love the name "Growling Frog" (the "Yan Yean Links" just wouldn't have the same flair!) Even telling your mates "I'm having a hit at the Growling Frog" is sure to induce either a cheeky grin or a flummoxed stare.

The Frog offers a test of skill for all levels of golfer. I personally used 13 out of the 14 clubs in my bag (the 3-iron was banished for poor performance). The greens are firm, roll true, and are in magnificent

condition. (I'm told the fairways were quite nice, but as I rarely found myself anywhere near one, I really can't comment!). The relative ease of the first two holes lulls you into a false sense of security. Starting with #3, however, the hammer drops. With strong head- and side-winds, uphill doglegs, bunkers everywhere, hidden lakes, knee-high magoomba on the borders, ball-grabbing trees on the right, mounds in the middle, and a bevy of firm and slippery, multi-tiered greens, you may suddenly feel like you've been head-whalloped with a ball-washer. Thank goodness for the beverage cart, as I found many sorrows that required drowning. Bringing it home, holes 15-18 offer a fantastic finishing set, with breathtaking views, gentle tailwinds, and beautiful greens surrounded by native stones and grasses. Overall, the Frog is a truly enjoyable, top-quality course, and tremendous value for money. Be sure to bring your best mates (like I did), as it's certainly an experience to be shared.

OVERALL RATING: 8/10

MICK VAN RAAY
Handicap: Sky-High

I love an elevated tee. Even if you're a genuine dyed-in-the-wool "hack" like me, it always feels like you could crunch your drive a country mile. So approaching the par-4 10th hole at the Frog, the "grip-it-and-rip-it" urge is irresistible. Just when you're all warmed up after the front 9, the 10th sits up and says, "OK Laddie-o, no more excuses, hit the wizz out of it!" If you are a straight hitter, and if you really get onto it, and you catch a heavy tailwind, then you could just about drive the green. Or, like me, you could just crunch a banana slice OOB into the practice fairway! Either way, it's a great hole.

Overall, the Frog is a beautiful, tranquil and truly 'stralian course to play. I'm a high handicapper, but I still found plenty of places to feel confident about my game. Set in the heart of some beautiful bushland, the course has a real "links" feel about it: sparse on trees, a second cut of rough that's brutal for finding wayward shots (and equally brutal to hit out of!). I

found the greens to play true, not too fast and not too slow. All round, a highly recommended course for anyone above pure beginners' level. The amenities are shining and classy, and the fully-loaded pro shop offers great service. The Frog is a true "destination" course, and a bit of a hike from the city, but well worth the journey!

OVERALL RATING: 8/10

ROGER BROWN
Handicap: 9
(unless we're playing for money)

Easily one of the best public access courses in the surrounds of Melbourne. The layout rewards the aggressive golfer, suggests good course management for solid scoring, and still maintains a liberal smacking of forgiveness for the hack. The carpet-like fairways and the true-rolling, medium-pace greens offer few excuses for errant shots. The rough can certainly swallow its share of balls, and even during one of the worst droughts in our history there was still enough water to cause trouble for all of us.

The hole that stood out for me is the par-5 11th. For a chance at par, a straight drive is just the beginning. The uphill second and third shots - particularly into a head wind - are no picnic on this gentle dog-leg. Water, heavy rough and lots of fairway bunkers make things even tougher. Finally, at the green, there are bunkers aplenty, with a long steep slope guarding the front, which will catch any short balls and spit them 20m back at you. Happy with a bogie, I took mental note of this one.

All in all, my hat is off to Graham Marsh, and credit to the maintenance crew and clubhouse staff.

OVERALL RATING: 8/10

MATTHEW PITT
Handicap: 16
(unless I'm playing against Roger)

The course is a fantastic layout and a pleasure to play, with a range of strategic challenges for golfers of all standards. The fairways are wide and the rough is not impenetrable if, like me, your radar is not quite working perfectly.

NOW HERE'S A NOVEL IDEA: get the readers to do the course reviews!

To trial the concept this month we enlisted the help of the Bushranger's Social Golf Club to review Growling Frog Golf Course in Victoria. Co-founder of the Bushrangers Richard Fellner, a former journalist, picked three of the club's members to accompany him on the day and their review appears here. Richard and his partner Matthew Pitt also run Fore! golf, a company specialising in organising charity, corporate and even social club golf days. Bushranger's are open to new members and their web-site, www.bushrangergolf.com.au, is well worth a look. For Fore! golf log on to www.fore.com.au. If your club is interested in taking the Car Park to the 19th Challenge, tell us in 250 words or less why we should pick you for a future issue. Send answers and contact details to: ed@insidesocialgolf.com.au or by mail to Car Park Challenge PO BOX 1050, Cronulla, NSW, 2230. Good luck and enjoy!

For the low handicapper, strategically placed hazards require consideration and respect. Most of the holes offer options to the canny player on how best to tackle par and often there are juicy choices available which require weighing up the risk and the reward.

most picturesque holes on the course, they are three of the most challenging and interesting to play and offer a stern test for all parts of your game.

OVERALL RATING: 8/10

I liked that there were very few hidden dangers. Nearly all the bunkers are visible from a distance, so the first-time player can assess what lies ahead and play with confidence. The fairways were in excellent condition, the greens were true and ran at a consistent pace (not that this helped me!)

There are so many great holes, it is hard to choose one above the others. The string of closing holes is superb, and 15 (Par 5), 16 (Par 3) and 17 (Par 4) all feature a 19th century stone wall marking the OOB down the left side. Not only are they three of the

Right: The golfer's enjoying a beer after their round.



Player	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total
Wayne Rogers	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	72
Wayne Rogers	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	72

NEED TO KNOW: The Growling Frog

Length: Men 6,185 metres. Women 5,328 metres
Par: 72
Designer: Graham Marsh
Green Fees: W/days: Adults: \$30. Under 18's: \$15. Pensioner/senior: \$15. W/ends: Adults: \$38 Under 18's: \$20. Pensioner/senior: \$15. Carts: W/days: \$30. W/ends: \$35. Nine hole rates also available.
Address: 1910 Donnybrook Rd Yan Yean.
Golf bookings: (03) 9716 3477.

HOW TO GET THERE



Sidebar: The Food

The Frog's food is a shot above the typical golf course fare, with dishes that wouldn't be out of place among the better restaurants in Melbourne. With sweeping views of the Great Dividing Range, classy ambience and unbeatable service, it's a destination in itself.

For golfers, you can't beat the "Golfers Only" specials which gives you a choice of Fish & Chips, Chicken Parma, or the popular Frog Burger (don't worry, it's 100% beef!), each served with chips, salad and a frosty VB for a modest \$12. Beer-Factor: A VB/Carlton runs \$4.50, while imports go for \$6.00.

Our foursome gave the food an overall rating of...

9/10

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