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HOME ON THE RANCH

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By Phil Keren, Senior Editor

TAKING A VACATION GIVES PEOPLE a chance to try something new and make memories.

For more than half a century, Black Butte Ranch in central Oregon has offered a wide range of recreational activities in a setting that allows its homeowners and guests to connect with the brilliant and awe-inspiring elements of the natural world. Sitting at the foot of the Cascade Range, the 1,800-acre resort gives visitors a chance to — among other things — golf, swim, hike, bike, fish, kayak, play racquet sports, go horseback riding, and enjoy meals and drinks in a scenic environment.

“It’s a very large physical area that’s surrounded by national forests,” Black Butte Ranch CEO Shawn McCance says. “The Cascade Mountains are all surrounding this property. You can leave the property and go hiking anywhere in nature. The location is pretty ideal.”

Black Butte Ranch, which is named for an extinct stratovolcano in the Deschutes National Forest, is owned and managed by a homeowners association. According to its website, the ranch consists of 1,251 home sites and about 20 of those lots are still undeveloped.

Kim Kohn, Director of Sales and Marketing at Black Butte Ranch, explains the ranch was built for the homeowners, but also functions as a resort destination.

“We have a lot of families that come back here,” Kohn says. “We have a lot of legacy where houses are passed down from generation to generation.”

Members of families have a chance to try new activities in a peaceful setting.

“There’s so many firsts that happen here, whether it’s your first bike ride or your first [round of] golf, or your first swim,” Kohn says.

Kohn says Black Butte leaders remind employees that their job is to help create memorable experiences for their visitors.

“Whether you’re a homeowner or a guest, [our job] is to provide you with a really nice experience where you’ve made a memory,” Kohn says.

All photos courtesy of Black Butte Ranch.



Black Butte Ranch in central Oregon is an 1,800-acre resort that offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities to its homeowners and visitors.

Each home at Black Butte Ranch is individually owned, with about 250 occupied by year-round residents. The remaining homes are used for part of the year by owners and/or rented out as vacation homes through Black Butte's program or a third-party company such as AirBnB or VRBO. When this article was written, about 300 homes were available for rent, and, of that number, approximately 85 were available for rent through Black Butte's program. All of the amenities at the ranch are available to homeowners and renters.

"The ranch is an HOA on steroids," says McCance. "Our primary mission is to our homeowners and to provide them with first-class services and first-class amenities, however, we're also open to the public and we've got very good championship golf courses. We've got a beautiful new lodge that we just opened."

NEW LODGE OPENED MAY 1

Visitors to Black Butte Ranch will find a new 22,100-sq.-ft. Lodge that opened on May 1. The \$20 million facility includes the new Lodge restaurant and bar, second-floor lounge (Aspen Lounge) and bar, private dining room, event space, meeting room, outdoor dining, and state-of-the-art kitchen that includes a catering facility.

"The new Lodge is outstanding," says McCance.

The previous lodge was one of the first buildings constructed on the ranch and operated for more than 50 years, but McCance says a change was needed.

The old lodge had four levels but lacked elevators and the kitchen did not have enough space to allow standard restaurant and bar service to occur while a large event

was taking place.

"The building itself was cumbersome," McCance says.

The new Lodge was designed by Hacker Architects, which has design studios in Bend, Ore., and Portland, Ore. The majority of the construction work was performed by Kirby Nagelhout Construction of Bend, while landscape design was provided by Walker Macy Landscape Architecture of Portland, and Green Thumb also handled some landscaping work. Kohn notes the building was designed with the landscape in mind.

"The building didn't become the focal point," Kohn says. "It blended in with the natural setting of Black Butte...They really incorporated a similar look and feel inside so it feels very bright and airy. It definitely gives a nod to nature."

The Lodge also offers a memorable visual and acoustic experience for visitors.

"They put together a beautiful package that...amplified the Florida ceiling [and] glass windows, so you had panoramic mountain views," Kohn says.

Kohn adds the building was equipped with solid acoustics so patrons can enjoy a meal in the restaurant or have a drink in the bar while an event is happening, and these gatherings won't interfere with each other.

One of the project's highlights was the installation of glass windows so that visitors can see Black Butte as they go up the stairs to the Aspen Lounge. The new Lodge offers two fireplaces: one in the entrance area and a double-sided structure that runs from the main restaurant to Aspen Lounge.

There is also a private dining room that offers a scenic view of the Cascade Range, a public elevator and a service elevator, as well as two fire pits set up on a deck with

plenty of seating.

The kitchen is double the size of the one at the old lodge and outdoor dining is also available.

McCance says the response to the new Lodge has been "off the chart," and adds that Black Butte Ranch has already met its annual budget for catered events.

"Our [revenues] were about 50% over budget for the last month in the Lodge area," McCance says.

MULTIPLE SITES FORM 'HEART OF THE RANCH'

The Lodge, Lakeside Bistro, pool and Lakeside Kids Activity Center have collectively become known as "the heart of the ranch," Kohn explains.

The Lakeside Bistro — next to the Lodge — is a poolside eatery offering items such as artisan pizzas, hamburgers, and salads. There is also the Lakeside Pool, which includes a pool for children, hot tub, sauna, and fitness center. The site offers "gorgeous panoramic mountain views," Kohn says.

The kids activity center offers a wide array of programming for homeowners and guests.

The General Store, described by McCance as "an upscale convenience store," serves deli sandwiches, ice cream, growler refills, wine, local products and curated gifts.

The Glaze Meadow Recreation Center is "a little bit more family-friendly," says Kohn, who notes the facility has indoor and outdoor pools, tennis courts, and a family zone offering pickleball, bocce ball and basketball.

'THE FOOD IS AMAZING'

Kohn praises Executive Chef Don McCradic for the team he's assembled, which includes the catering staff led by Ryan Corwin and the pastries group, guided by Heather Stugart.

"The food is amazing," Kohn says. "People will come for the views, but people are coming for the food, which is fantastic."

The trout, chicken, pork chops, and the

fruit tart dessert are some of the menu items that are well-liked by diners.

McCradic notes that having the chance to work in a state-of-the-art kitchen in the new Lodge factored heavily into his decision to work at Black Butte Ranch. The job gave him the opportunity to build his own menu, mentor a staff, and operate in a unique environment.

"It's an inspiring beautiful place," McCradic observes. "We also have this core of longtime homeowners who are passionate about the ranch, yet still willing to try new things, and we have so many guests yearning for an escape from their usual day-to-day experiences."

In addition to the Lodge Restaurant, the Lakeside Bistro and The General Store, the other dining sites are Robert's Place — near the 18th hole green at Big Meadow Golf Course — and the Glaze Meadow Snack Shop at Glaze Meadow Recreation Center.

GOLF COURSES ARE PLAYABLE

Golfers have a chance to test their skills on two 18-hole championship courses. The oldest of the pair is Big Meadow, a 7,002-yard layout designed by Robert Muir Graves in 1972. The 7,007-yard Glaze Meadow course, designed by Gene Bunny, opened a decade later, and was renovated in 2012 using a design from architect John Fought.

Kohn says Big Meadow was designed to encourage golfers to take a moment to experience the area's natural beauty.

"The master design was made to get you to slow down and go around a bend and then come to a beautiful vista," Kohn says. "You're going to be tree-lined, you're going to have beautiful bunkers, and then you're going to come to a vista where you see Mount Washington or Three-Finger Jack."

One of Big Meadow's positive traits is its playability.

"You're not necessarily getting beat up by the golf course and we think that's a good thing because you want to enjoy where you are," Kohn says.

The lining on some of the bunkers was redone and the sand was refilled at Big Meadow. The second phase of this



work will occur in 2024. Some trees were removed "to allow more sunlight to the greens," Kohn says.

Zack Hall, Senior Public Relations Account Manager for DVA Advertising and Public Relations, which represents the ranch, says Big Meadow's bunkers were put in to help guide players around the course.

"It's a really fun golf course with some of the coolest greens in central Oregon," Hall says.

The greens have plenty of sloping and undulations, as well as "interesting target areas where it changes the hole dramatically depending on the pin position," Hall says.

The Glaze Meadow course is a little more open, and sits on a slightly higher elevation, Kohn states.

"You've got this beautiful tall grass, these water elements, and then you're going to have this beautiful mountain view at the same time," Kohn says.

Hall says John Fought redesigned Glaze Meadow and "dramatically changed the first three holes."

Jeff Fought, Director of Golf at Black Butte Ranch, notes families have come to the ranch for years as a way to escape the demands of everyday life, and adds the two golf courses are a major part of what makes the place special. The courses can be used by people of all ages and ability levels.



There are two 18-hole championship golf courses at Black Butte Ranch. At left is Big Meadow, a 7,002-yard layout designed by Robert Muir Graves in 1972. Above is Glaze Meadow, a 7,007-yard course designed by Gene Bunny in 1982.

"[The] courses [are] designed so parents or grandparents can come out with their kids or grandchildren, and everybody [can] have a great day," says Jeff Fought, who is the brother of John Fought, the golf course designer. "Yet, both courses will challenge even the best players."

The 12-hole Little Meadow Putting Course was also designed by John Fought and opened in 2020. McCance says the putting course gives golf newcomers a way to try out an important component of the game.

"The families really enjoy it," McCance adds.

AN ABUNDANCE OF ACTIVITIES AT BLACK BUTTE RANCH

Golf is just one of numerous recreational activities available to homeowners and guests at Black Butte Ranch. There are four outdoor pools, one indoor pool, two fitness centers, 14 tennis courts, 12 pickleball courts, paved walking and biking paths, as well as opportunities to hike, bike, and go horseback riding.

One special feature is a path that runs through the meadow where animals can be viewed near the trail. Kohn notes some homeowners and guests will post a photo of this spot on social media and describe it as their "happy place."

"It really is a spectacular place," McCance adds. "We're proud of it." **C+RB**