

singapore
scene



BY
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A TOUGH, FASCINATING CHALLENGE ON

THE HORIZON

It's unique. It's fascinating. It's challenging. And, best of all, Horizon

Hills Golf

and Country Club, located in the heart of Iskandar Development region in Johor, is an enjoyable layout. Many holes of the Ross Watson-designed course leave you with a difficult approach into the greens – whatever the distance – with dangerous greenside bunkers lurking.

In many other instances, you could find your ball between trees, near shrubs or around the foliage on the fairway fringe.

And the degree of difficulty varies depending on whether you play from the white or blue tees.

It's fascinating because every hole has a different characteristic – dogleg right, dogleg left, water at ideal spots or just plain fairways laden with fine carpet of paspalum grass with bunkers at landing areas that call for course management and correct choice of clubs.

With a masterful design, Horizon Hills has won the hearts of many golfers who have visited this jewel of the Malaysian south.

And it has also made a name for itself thanks to its slick, undulating greens and well-rolled fairways that will test even the professionals.

With a futuristic drainage and irrigation system – and buggies are not allowed on course to preserve the beauty – the layout allows you to work your way through a golfing adventure not often seen in this part of the world.

Watson, a preacher of risk-reward design, shows off his architectural beliefs as early as Hole No. 2 which is a tricky par-five.

The view from the slightly elevated tee-box presents the unwary with a slight jolt – two creeks bisect the fairway coupled with a lateral water hazard running the entire length on the left.

Standing on the tee, you wonder: “How do you play this hole?”

A simple three-wood would suffice off the tee with a lay-up shot towards the first creek, but the going gets harder from there because it would take another precise long iron or rescue wood to carry the second creek while avoiding the myriad of bunkers that guard the elevated green.

This hole sets the tone of the course – risky shots that will reward the golfer if executed successfully.

The par-three eighth is also much-talked about. It is only 160 metres from the blue tee

but water comes into play all the way to a green that is big enough for medium- to long iron shots or the rescue wood for the higher-handicappers.

Unfortunately, the stroke off the tee has to be true because the only bail-out area is on the right, which means trying to save par is still very much a question-mark.

The 18th is one of the unique finishing holes in golf and, tough though it is, I see it as the best challenge from the white or blue tees.

Rarely seen in golf, there is an island fairway on the right to tempt long-hitters off the tee. This is the only way if one intends to reach the green in two.

The average golfer – and mid-handicappers like me – will play down the left side landing just short of a creek that bisects across the fairway.

There is little stress on the lay-up second shot but the approach to the green is where one pauses to access one's options.

Water hugs most of the green but there is only a thin sliver of fairway that attaches the green to the mainland. Therefore, another precision short-iron is required.

The long-hitter who intends to find the island fairway needs a carry of about 220 metres off the blue.

Anything short, or right will mean a watery grave. This is surely a hole that makes you think more than once before deciding on the option.

For as media consultant Manpreet Singh says: “The course layout challenges your brain and courage before every shot and, to top it all, the greens are not forgiving. This makes it an exciting and enjoyable course to play, one that makes you want to come back again.”



(Above) The unique, finishing par-5 18th hole provides the best challenge to the golfers.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

Top 5 Golf Course of the Year

– Hospitality Asia Platinum Awards (Hapa) 2010-2012.

2nd runner-up Best Course in Malaysia

– Asian Golf Monthly Awards 2011/2012.

Gold winner Hapa Malaysia

– Golf Course of the Year 2011-2013.

1st runner-up of Best Golf Excellence/Exhilarating Experience

– Hapa Malaysia 2013-2015.

2nd runner-up Best Course in Malaysia

– Asian Golf Awards 2014.

photo courtesy of Horizon Hills Golf and Country Club



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