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Creighton Farms (VA) Golf Club...Almost Heaven May 20, 2011

Even with the ever-expanding definition of what comprises the greater Washington, DC area, Aldie, Virginia is still considered a long ways out. The area, located just outside historic Middleburg, is known for rolling hills, affluent country farmers and the Virginia Golf Cup horse races. But a new landmark is now giving golfers a reason to make the trek, Creighton Farms Golf Club.

Initially a part of the Ritz Carlton family of properties, the private course is now a part of a residential community of stately mansions that dot the course. From the moment you enter the wrought iron gates, you are treated like a country squire. The staff is courteous and efficient, calling you by name even if you are there for the first time. You will even be escorted to a personal locker with your name on it.



The course is currently using a compact but comfortable building for as the temporary clubhouse until the main clubhouse is completed in September 2011, but many golf courses would be proud to have it as a permanent home. Among the cool details is the breezy slate patio overlooking the course and shelves and paneling that were made from wood produced on the property. The grass driving range has ample space and grass landing areas, and the large putting/chipping green give you an opportunity to practice the short game that you will definitely need on the course.

The course itself is as good as its reputation. Measuring a burly 7440 from the professional tees, the Jack Nicklaus Signature course is challenging enough to have been chosen to host the 2011 Southworth Senior PGA Professional National Championship. But there are five sets of tees to ensure a fair and enjoyable round for every skill level. Director of Operations/Head Pro Mike Vidal has worked at some of the best golf facilities in the world and his attention to detail can be seen in the meticulous care and landscaping of the course. Vidal points out that they even make sure that all of the fairways are mown in the same direction, it's something more easily detected when flying over the course, but it's just another sign of how much they care.

Like most Nicklaus designs, you'll have plenty of opportunities to hit driver and you will be a happy camper if your natural shot shape is a rightly fade/efly draw. But it's not about raw distance at Creighton Farms; this course puts a premium on a player who can make a good decision and then execute the shot. Any mental or physical hiccup could leave you in a recession-depth bunker or searching through the lovely local foliage. The greens are quick and billiard-smooth, but don't be fooled by their size. To have a reasonable birdie opportunity, you must hit a target area that is generally no more than 10 - 12 feet in diameter. Needless to say, competent wedge play will be rewarded.

The signature hole is the majestic 11th, a 624-yard downhill beauty. Make sure you take a moment at the back tee to drink in the stunning vistas of Loudoun County. But the most memorable hole for our group was number 12. A deceptive 367 yards from the member tees, the hole is defended by fendishly designed green with a false front that drops off faster than Charlie Sheen's career. If the pin is in the front, it's pretty easy to turn a birdie chance into an 8. Trust me on this.

After the round, make time for a hearty bowl of homemade chili, a juicy Angus burger and a glass of Virginia wine in the clubhouse. The great food and pastoral views will help to seal the deal on one of local golf's best experiences. Admittedly it takes an invitation or a membership to get on this one, but if you can manage it don't miss out. Creighton Farms may be younger than the other clubs in town, but even at the tender age of four it is the match of any course in the area, public or private.

Creighton Farms
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