



Bryce Resort ~ Worth the Ride

Nick Ciattei



From the outset let me say that my visits to Bryce Resort have been just too few and far between. I really will have to work on that. Located about 20 minutes off I-81 in the western Shenandoah County town of Basye, this resort offers a plethora of four-season activities that keep visitors to this part of Virginia as busy as bees. The winding stretch of road from the interstate that leads you to Bryce transports you to

what can only be described as a hidden gem. Spread over 400 acres on the eastern side of Great North Mountain, one of the main attractions to this hideaway is the wonderful 18-hole golf course. The Ed Ault design opened in 1970 and at 6260 yards from the tips, this par 71 will not implode any player's scorecard. The layout is a player friendly mix of tree-lined holes and several others that play across rolling open land. The strategic test of this tract is keeping the ball in play and most importantly, OUT of Stony Creek. This pesky, yet beautiful, tributary comes into play on 12 of the holes.

The unique feature that sets Bryce Resort's golf course apart from all others is that the front and back nines are separated by the lodge and the resort's airport. The landing strip isn't often used lately, but every once in awhile you'll catch something other than a Titleist flying through the air.

The front nine opens with one of the great holes in the Shenandoah Valley. The 573-yard par 5 gently doglegs to the right and requires two forced carries over the aforementioned creek from the tee box and on your approach. It's a three-shot hole for all mortals and par is always a good start. Two is a solid par 4 where you face a similar second shot over the creek to a green bordered by



bunkers. The first of the 3 pars is the third hole, a lovely morsel set against a forested backdrop. A slight draw off the tee around a towering oak tree with a hybrid or fairway wood will leave you a short iron into the par 4 fourth. The fifth hole canters slightly to the right so favour the left side of the fairway with your drive for optimum results. Six is a

reachable par five that doglegs sharply to the right. If I had to pick a hole that's often overlooked at Bryce, it would be the seventh, a par four that also moves to the right. You hit your drive over a large section of the creek, with plenty of wooded trouble left and over the green. Any miscues on this hole will lead to a tough scramble for par. The par 3 eighth plays from an elevated tee to the course's longest green. You get a terrific view of Bryce Resort's ski slopes from the tee of the par 4 ninth. During this writer's most recent visit, I enjoyed hearing stories from the locals about their ability to play golf in the daytime and ski at night certain times of the year.



Bryce Resort's inward nine begins with the challenging par 4 tenth. Heading south by your compass, your drive here must thread the narrowest fairway on the course. The first of three par 3s on the back side comes at number eleven, where I always like to take an extra club. Twelve is a short par 4 that I've seen driven by people who use illegal drugs or don't work for a living. I've been close to getting on the putting surface with the driver, but normally I like to lay back for an ideal wedge play. The par 5 thirteenth is notable for two traits: 1) very few have ever reached this uphill 550 yarder in two and 2) the devilish green that slopes sharply from back to front is a three-putt bonanza. Holes fourteen and fifteen represent the prettiest part of the layout, with several manicured flower gardens. Part of the uniqueness at Bryce is that residents claim different gardens around the course and care for them. The par 4 fourteenth tumbles beautifully downhill towards the green, protected on the right by a large pond that also borders the signature par 3 fifteenth. Members tell me that the par 5 sixteenth is the most maligned hole amongst their posse. It's a true target hole, where three well-placed shots will set you up for a birdie. How easy is that!? Favour the right side of a sloping fairway on the par 4 seventeenth. The closing par 3 is protected by a deep bunker that fronts the left of the



putting surface. PGA Head Pro Doug Zimmerman and Superintendent Dean Freeman do a first rate job with the course and its amenities. The ryegrass fairways and bentgrass greens are kept in marvelous shape, and for the tariff you pay, Bryce is a tremendous golf value.

You would have to go all the way back to 1909 in the history books to discover



Hole 13 Par 5



the genesis of this mountain retreat originally called Bryce's Mountain Resort. As first just a summer refuge, it was not until the late 1960's when the ski slopes opened to the public that it became a four-season destination. The ski facility at Bryce is recognized as one of the premier resorts in the mid-Atlantic. A frequent recipient of "The Most Family Friendly Ski Resort"

by trade publications, Bryce will take a major step this year with the introduction of their new Quad Lift which will get skiers on the mountain more quickly for a longer day on the slopes. Even during this past mild winter, Bryce was able to make snow throughout the season because its slopes face the colder west side.



In addition to the links and slopes, Bryce continues to ride the cusp for the modern day thrill seeker with a wide range of other outdoor activities. The Zipline Adventure whizzes you as high as 65 feet over 3,000 feet of cable at speeds of up to 40 mph. Bryce is also the home of the nation's first mountain tubing run. There is also grass skiing, mountain biking, wall climbing, and Euro-Bungee. More conventional outdoor recess can be found at Lake Laura with swimming, boating, and fishing. Of course if you can't find anything else to do, there's tennis, hiking, and even a round of mini putt-putt.

This year, Bryce Resort hosted the mid-Atlantic Civilian Military Combine in April with hundreds of contestants from all over the region meeting in a competition combining power and endurance.

Last but not least, Bryce Resort is also a community with homes and residences sprinkled smartly across the mountains. The homeowners are the backbone of the resort and contribute to the success and wonderful lifestyle that is experienced there. A breezy two-hour hop, skip and a jump from the Washington, DC, beltway, Bryce Resort has been able to lure folks from near and far to spend a day, a weekend, or a lifetime there. Either way, it's a journey well worth the ride.

For more information visit bryceresort.com

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