



Ferry to Frye Island Golf

By PETER BLAIS

The eighth hole plays over a cattail-fringed pond to an undulating green surrounded by tall pines. It may be one of the most picturesque par-3's in New England.

Okay, so the Frye Island ferry may not remind anyone of the *Queen Elizabeth II*, and the island's golf course may come up a bit short on the list of top 100 island layouts.

But just 18 miles along Route 302 from Portland, and a five-mile jaunt down Cape Road, lies the Frye Island ferry dock and the beginning of a Maine golf cruise that is sure to please and will leave one with a much healthier wallet than a Caribbean golf getaway.

Car and passenger ferry service to Frye Island, which became a separate town in 1998, runs from April 27 and will continue until early November. The town operates the two small ferries as well as the nine-hole Frye Island Golf Course nestled in the island's interior.

The boat normally departs on the half hour, but increases in frequency to every 15 minutes during peak summer season. (Call 655-4258 to check departure times.) The short trip affords stunning views of the granite cliffs of Frye's Leap and up Sebago Lake to the White Mountains beyond. The boat holds six to eight cars, for those preferring to drive once they disembark following the ten-minute crossing. But parking is limited at the ferry dock, so duffers may want to hoof it or take advantage of the course's golf-cart service from the dock to the links.

Passengers unload the ferry next to Frye's Leap General Store & Café, where the food is excellent and the beverages cold. The golf course sits about a mile from the dock. Private camps, beaches, and docks line the dirt roadway leading to the inland links.

Architect Geoffrey Cornish, one of the most prolific and respected course designers in New England, originally crafted an 18-hole layout on the site. Only the back nine, opened in 1972, remains today.

Island residents donated labor and funds to build the clubhouse, which features a pro shop, dining room, and deck. Green fees are a very modest \$10 to \$28. Golf carts are available, although the layout is easily walked.

The course is in a woodlands setting with trees obscuring views of Sebago Lake. But that may be the only disappointing thing about the Frye Island Golf Course, where the golfer is just as likely to see deer, fox, and snapping turtles as he is other players during a typical round.

The three sets of tees range from 2,651 yards on the forward tees to a healthy 3,255 yards from the tips, allowing golfers to use every club in their bags. The fairways are generally tree-lined and tight, with water coming into play on four holes. But beware; the bedrock just beneath the turf can

occasionally send a seemingly well-placed shot careening off in an unexpected direction.

The 400-yard first hole sets the tone. The green is out of sight off the tee, requiring a precise shot through a wooded corridor to the elbow of the dogleg left. The second shot, which is also likely to be blind, is to a bowl-shaped green. Golfers can take out any frustrations on the propane tank hanging from a tree next to the putting surface. In fact, it's supposed to be struck with a metal bar announcing to players behind that the green is clear.

The second hole is a par-5 that forces the golfer to skirt a pond along the left side before playing up to a huge double green that is shared with the sixth hole. Make sure to aim at the nearer of the two flags.

The signature hole is the par-3 eighth, which plays 170 yards from the back tees over a cattail-fringed pond to an undulating green surrounded by tall pines. It may be one of the most picturesque par-3's in New England.

A cold beverage in the clubhouse is a perfect way to finish off a round. With any luck, a local resident will stop by to answer the inevitable questions about island living. And Jim Hodge, the longtime Val Halla golf superintendent who took over Frye Island last year, is happy to discuss some of the drainage and agronomic improvements he plans for the course.

Before you leave the island, allow some time for a return trip to Frye's Leap General Store & Café to watch the day draw to a close, preferably with a drink in hand. Just don't miss the last ferry. ✱

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