

Pasatiempo Golf Club Santa Cruz, California

Architect: Alister MacKenzie (1929) and Tom Doak/Jim Urbina (2007)

	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Gold	70	72.5	141	6495
White	70	70.8	134	6093
White/Green	72	69.5	133	5780
Green	72	68.5	132	5595
Hollins	72	67.0	118	4438

Overview:

It is impossible to separate the character of this course from the reputations of entrepreneur Marion Hollins and renowned architect Alister MacKenzie, two seminal characters in the introduction and development of west coast Golden Age golf courses of the 1920's. The two joined hands at Cypress Point setting a standard for what this area of the country could produce and their relationship was solidified with the development of what would become MacKenzie's home course-Pasatiempo. Marion was also responsible for introducing him to Bobby Jones, who would eventually tap Mackenzie to build his most famous creation of all in Augusta, Georgia. But seeing that MacKenzie lived here and tweaked the course right up until his passing one has to look at Pasatiempo as his swan song to the use of perception and deception in making so many great courses over his career.

Many of the great California courses like Riviera, Bel Aire, LACC, Pebble Beach, Cypress Point, and the Cal Club used the unique rolling terrain, prevalent arid conditions, and sandy soil to present a strategic version of golf where the movement of the ball initiated by the ground would determine success or failure in their play. We rarely hear the use of the term barranca in relation to golf architecture outside of this region, but in many ways these deep recessions created by nature of scrub, rock, and sand-often just dry bed streams, are the unique challenge that make California golf what it is.

MacKenzie combined the use of barrancas with bold fairway undulations, slopy segmentation on the putting surfaces, and wildly diverse flash bunkering to make Pasatiempo the ultimate strategic test of golf. Power and length alone are no match for careful strategic planning and shot articulation when going around this place. Set against the stunning backdrops of the California coastal topography, the back nine presents the most varied array of holes that wed these parameters to challenge players of all caliber to be on their best game.

Looking down the first two holes you get the sense that position off the tee relative to the segmentation of the green propagating varied pin positions is going to matter all day. When you see how MacKenzie works the slopes within the segmentation of the putting surface it becomes clear that it is not only approach angle that matters but use of the putting surface itself to move the ball into the most advantageous place to putt from. Three putts are in your day, delimiting them is important to keeping the bogie monster at bay.

Two par threes in the next three holes that are the 2nd and 6th handicap holes tells you something about how challenging this day is going to be. The 3rd is a long uphill shot into a precipice green complex saddled by deep bunkers on both sides. Standing on the tee there is an enigmatic cross bunker that is 75 yards short of the green that will have you scratching your head as to why it is there. One needs to remember this hole was created in 1929 when hickory clubs were still around and elevating a Cleek on a long par three was not given.

The 5th is an even longer one-shotter than the 3rd and once again the uphill shot to the green will demand a solid club and a half more to cover the false front and bypass the massive bunker that dominates the left side approach to the green. The green is a four leaf clover so there are many corners when they can hide the pin.

The 7th and 8th are two really old school holes you just would not see built today which makes them a treat. The 7th is an appetizing uphill corridor short four which calls for a well positioned tee shot on the left side of the fairway to have a look up a narrow putting surface set on a 7 to 1 angle to the approach area. The green is segmented with countering slopes so it takes a really articulate short club to leave a birdie putt.

As you step on the tee of the Par 3 8th your jaw will drop as you try to take in the parameters of the 45-yard long wildly contoured putting surface that sits at the bottom of the hill in front of you. If the wind is blowing all bets are off picking the right wrench. There is a line drawing of this green above the urinal in the MacKenzie men's room in the clubhouse that depicts all the slopes and counter slopes he designed into this one. You might wish they handed them out on the tee for reference. Once your shot alights on the green it will work up the slope and feed toward the back left. This makes any front pin or back right pin extremely difficult to negotiate.

As you approach the ninth tee make sure to order a sandwich from the call box for the back nine.....the barrancas are coming and you will need the protein shot in short order to cope.

Undoubtedly you have played courses where the front nine and the back nine look like brothers from a different mother, like Tralee where you go from banal flat seaside links to the vertical turbulent land of trolls once you step on the 11th tee. The stark transition here is similar but the distinguishing characteristic is not the topography itself but instead the use of nature's singular feature, the barrancas which were intended to capture and move surface water during heavy rains but in their dryer form provide inherent surface movement and magnetic attraction to a ball struck with insufficient intent. What makes MacKenzie's work so unique is that he fashioned countless iterations of this design element to influence your perception of strategic choices in subtle and not so subtle ways.

Stepping on to the 10th tee the gaping rocky gorge at your feet is actually the simplest of the three interactions you will have with the barrancas on this hole alone. Once you drive it to the top the hill you feel the pull of the barranca well off the fairway to the left but then MacKenzie ingeniously integrates it into a cleaved array of bunkers and grass you must deal with the last sixty yards to the green.

The most in your face barranca experience of the day is on the bifurcated fairway arrangement on the shortish par 4 11th. The rocky gorge haunts the left of the driving area forcing you to lay up at the end of the driving area just off the entrance to the steel bridge that traverses the chasm. The hole is now truncated to the left leaving the barranca on the right as you try to carry your approach up a significant incline to a green

complex set into the back part of the abyss. Another narrow, stepped green awaits a long iron or hybrid approach earning this the 3rd handicap designation of the day.

The switchback downhill par 4 that follows has the wooded barranca haunting a bad hook off the tee. From the center of the fairway the approach is into a triangular green wedged between bunkers and a fronting dry grassed shallow version of the barranca that will gather a ball with insufficient carry. You have already experienced six different iterations of the barranca effect in just three holes.

White knuckle time over the next three holes begins on the par 4 14th as MacKenzie ups the barranca effect another notch by presenting it as fairway the left half of driving area. It is playable from down there but there is a good chance the depression is so deep you will not be able to see the flagstick from your approach position. A drive in the right half of the fairway at about 140 yards out puts you on a flat stance but the diagonal setting of this long and narrow green means you have to carry the fronting bunkers to get to the flag.

The short pitch 15th is a dry bed version of the 12th at Augusta. The shallow green sits on the diagonal requiring a delicate forced carry with a series of deep bunkers and grass emanating out of the barranca. The entire back side of the green is cordoned by a bunker that will contain a long shot but the recovery shot from there is tricky as the green slopes away. Three here gains a shot on the field.

MacKenzie was particularly pleased with the challenge he presents on the #1 handicap hole in the next one. You drive from a low tee up a steep hill with a large mound dominating the right side of the landing area. The barranca flanks the driving area on the left so anything with too much draw can end up in the hazard. The conundrum is that the best drive is at the left edge of the large mound which feeds the ball left to a flat area with a good look up the green. This is the craziest green out of a collection of truly crazy greens in that it is a full 50 yards long with three distinct tiers, the first of which is impossible to keep your ball on. A humongous bunker will that covers the entire right side of the green will collect any approach with a hint of wandering fade and an up and down from there is highly unlikely. Good news is the green fans out in the second and third tier which gives a bit of wiggle room for an approach on the long side.

One of the most memorable things about Pasatiempo is that it ends on a par 3 that is fully engaged with the deep gorge you had to traverse off the tee on #10. It is no more than a short to middle iron across but the green is a three clove shape that straddles the abyss and each section has drastic ground movement that makes keeping the ball in the desired section a task. Getting it on the green is half the battle...putting out in 3 putts or less is equally challenging.

A bit of an author's disclaimer, this course is every bit as wonderful as I have described but it is in dire need of a total facelift. Tom Doak and Jim Urbina did a restoration of the course in 2007 and brought back a number of the MacKenzie parameters that had been dulled over the years. Urbina will be back starting in the Spring of 2023 to redo all the greens, bunkers, and fairways in an effort to bring this course's condition and related golf amenities in line with it's historical expectation.

One last thought is that the Pasatiempo logo may be the coolest golf logo ever....it looks fabulous on everything. Make sure to give the golf shop a visit and find something cool to take home to savor your Pasa memories.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis (White/Green):

#1 Par 4/5 440/458 yards

Straight away tree lined opening hole with fairway leaning right-to-left. Green leans back-to-front set diagonal left-to-right is saddled by big bunker on the right.

#2 Par 4 403/382

Drive to left center to get the best approach at the wavy green that sits below. Green has a dip middle left and is set 5 to 11 sits to the approach spot.

#3 Par 3 200/157

First of the long par 3's. Raised green open on the left set on angle to right. Cross bunker about 50 yards short of the green has questionable purpose for modern play.

#4 Par 4 360/316

Drive left of the two fairway bunkers-fairway widens beyond them. Green on 7 to 1 diagonal behind deep face bunkers. This one has the visual look of an LACC or Cal Club par 4.

#5 Par 3 172/158

Uphill middle length par 3 plays a solid 15 yards longer. Green is a question mark shape around the front left bunker which leads to a very truncated target.

#6 Par 5 510/490

Sort of a tweener five par. Fairway moves right to left off the tee and then straightens out on the way to the green. Layup is left of a bunker spread on the right at 100. Another oddly shaped green with doodle ribbon bunkers up both sides. Take note, MacKenzie's house is over the fence to the left.

#7 Par 4 335/325

Super cool short uphill par 4. Drive is center of the alcove landing area. From there it twists to the right into the green complex set at 8 to 2 to the approach line. .

#8 Par 3 158/146

The third one-shotter on this side is drop dead gorgeous. Short downhill shot to a sprawling green tilted left to right that wraps around a right greenside bunker.

#9 Par 5 471/407

Outward half ends with a short par 5 that wanders up a hill making it effectively play much longer. This has a long narrow green set to the left sitting on a 5 to 11 angle with serpentine bunkers bordering both flanks. There is bail out room on the right if the carry to the flag looks too intimidating. Routine cross pitch and putt from there.

#10 Par 4/5 437/437

Gateway to the barranca zone!. Drive over a deep gouge in the terrain to a wide fairway landing area. The hole turns to the left as it goes toward the green and the fairway has the right-to-left tilt to accentuate that. The approach to the green continues to narrow from the influence of the barranca on the left. The last 100 yards he cleaved a nest of bunkers into a grassed tributary of the barranca which leads to a square green set up behind it.

#11 Par 4 377/316

This is one of the truly unique holes on the course and once again the barranca plays into the strategy a number of times between the tee and the green. You don't realize it until you get to this green that the hole drops a good 100 feet from tee to green complex. Drive straight away off this tee to the right end of the bridge that crosses the hazard. Definitely a left-to-right curve on the approach to the green to delimit hang time across the abyss. The long and skinny green hugs the top of the hazard all the way to the back edge.

#12 Par 4 371/343

A downhill medium length four par, drive to center to set up a view of the rest of the hole. The fairway drops down the hill and ends just before where a grass and sandy barranca crosses in front of the green. Triangular shaped green provides plenty of pinable lobes.

#13 Par 5 484/447

Ascending back up the hill drive to right center. For the second the fairway leans left as the hole turns in that direction. Your layup is to the center, not the right, just off fairway bunker on the left. Approach shot is a full carry over a school of bunkers swimming in a grassy low. Green with Mickey Mouse ears awaits.

#14 Par 4 382/330

This is one of the more unusual challenges of the day. The fairway is very open but he integrated the barranca into the left side of the fairway as a tempest of waves of short grass. You really need to carry it past that area to the right to reach a level stance otherwise your view of the green is totally blind. The green is set 7 to 1 and has open access on the left. With a big eyebrow bunker flanking the right side of the green the approach favors a left-to-right shape.

#15 Par 3 120/94

The shortest of the Par 3 holes this one more than kind of reminds me of the 12th at Augusta. Short pitch across a scrubby barranca with a couple of bunkers thrown into it for effect. The shallow green set on a diagonal is

collared by bunkering across the back. This is no where to miss since the recovery bunker shot is going to land on the down slope and can put you in the barranca for your third. Lots of ways to tally a high score on such a short hole.

#16 Par 4 367/345

Like the 14th this hole presents requires great strategic precision for success. Drive over the gorge to a wide crowned fairway as the hole leans to the left. Best line is just left of the crown or else your ball is moving away from the green and you are presented with a difficult approach angle from the right. Second is a carry over a barranca to a triangular 3-tier green with deep face bunkering along on the right. This is a massive green with enormous internal movement. One nest bunker set into the left middle of the green just to keep you honest.

#17 Par 4 361/355

Drive uphill to left center off the fairway bunker on the right. Fairway leans right past the bunker. The approach is up into a long slender stepped green with no bunkering. There are grass falloffs on both sides but missing to the right is into the oblivion.

#18 Par 3 145/87

A remarkable finishing hole, the likes of which you have never seen before. Shortish pitch from a bluff overlooking the rocky gorge to a sprawling segmented green made up of an array of humps and nooks.