



The Truth About “Pace of Play”

Recent *National Golf Foundation* research shows that “Pace of Play” is one of the greatest concerns of golfers in the United States. With what feels like less time for leisure, there is a more pressing need to ensure that groups maintain a “reasonable” pace on the golf course. We wanted to share how the Fossil Trace staff manages pace of play on and dispel several common beliefs and comments.

How is Pace of Play Determined

You will hear our 1st Tee Host share that our “maximum pace allowed on the front is 2hrs 15min with 5 minutes at the turn and 2hrs 17min on the back”. Where did we come up with these numbers and are they realistic and reasonable? With the use of the GPS system, we can determine to the second how long it takes for guests to play each hole at Fossil Trace. We have used the rounds during the summer season from the last 3 years, over 100,000+ rounds in fact. For example, we know that hole #2 averages 13 minutes and 47 seconds so pace for that hole is realistically set for 14 minutes. Our set “maximum” pace for the front and back nines are then determined to be 2hrs 15min and 2hrs 17min respectively. We realistically figure a 5 minute “turn break” into the equation so total “maximum pace” for Fossil Trace is 4 hrs 37min based on 100,000+ rounds.

Please know that we are concerned for all our guests and hope each has an enjoyable round. We are charged with the responsibility of keeping things moving and as we often say, “if we are going to anger guests today, we will anger 4 – NOT 204” – we hope that you would agree. **An important note:** Due to the popularity of Fossil Trace and unlike most courses, our tee sheets remain full each day. Therefore, 3.5 hour rounds are not often an option.

Common Comments

”No one is pushing us.”

Golf is a one lane road. You can only travel as fast and the car (group) ahead of you. As we all know from Denver traffic, whether giving the car (group) a little space or tailgating – they seldom change their speed and as they cannot simply pull over, we give them a little room. It would be simply inappropriate to chat with the 2nd car when the lead car is “right there”. The other option would be to “push” the slow group or hit into them a few times. This is anti productive and adds to the issue therefore we chat with the lead, slow group, THEN those in pursuit to keep pace.

”I’m not very good a higher handicapper.”

Score has little or far less to do with pace than you may think. We have guests who shoot 130-150 for 18 holes and finish around 4 hours. How? The players and group are aware of pace and use techniques which allow them to play in a reasonable pace. Pace has far more to do with a player’s and a group’s game management and not the number of strokes taken.



“We are only a few minutes behind.”

Correct, a few minutes behind “maximum pace allowed”. If I recall, when taking a test in college, being a few percentage points off what allowed is called failing. Also, being 2 minutes ahead of “maximum pace allowed” at the end of 18 holes is similar to receiving a 62% on a test. Yes, you may have passed but certainly wouldn’t write home about it. An important note, a few groups that are only “a few minutes behind” during the day quickly turns into a 5 hour round for all our other guests. Therefore each group is responsible for its pace and a few minutes behind requires a chat from our player assistants.

“We paid our money and will do what we want.”

WOW and yes, surprisingly this statement is actually made every week. Our response is simply “yes, as did the 200 guests behind you, therefore we ask that you work to catch the group ahead of you for everyone’s benefit.” Please don’t be “that guy”!

How Pace of Play Works at Fossil Trace

We have a green, yellow and red stoplight solution. When a group falls off pace slightly, we have a simple “green” conversation that is a very non threatening chat leaving the group the ability to solve it on their own.

If the group makes no effort or falls further behind, we have the “yellow” chat which is a bit more aggressive for obvious reasons but still leaves it up to the group to solve what is now a pace problem. It is shared with them that failure to improve will result in the golf shop moving their group.

If a group falls further back or makes no effort to pick up the pace, conversation # 3 “red” involves a golf staff member coming out who moves the group up a hole or more. We have moved all types of players including multiple tournament groups as well as VIP/Celebrity groups. In each case, the groups immediately behind are notified and all are very grateful that we “actually did something about it”.

Ways to Keep the Pace or “Catch Up”

It all starts on the tee. With everyone together, conversation is natural, but often it lasts far past the time when the fairway ahead is open. Upon arriving at the tee, whoever is hitting first should tee his ball up immediately and be ready to go when the fairway clears. A player may intend to “go for it” by attempting to drive a par 4 once the green is clear. No problem but he/she should be the last to hit after all others have hit layup shots regardless of the tees being played by the other members of the group.

Play ready golf. Much time is wasted because golfers aren't preparing to hit while others are up. Proceed directly to your ball and study the shot while others are hitting so you are ready to pull the trigger when it is your turn. For those in carts, the tendency is to ride to one ball



and wait for it to be hit before proceeding to the second. Let the first golfer take a club or clubs and have the second drive to his or her own ball to prepare to hit. Driving ahead is NOT bad etiquette, just good sense and will save a tremendous amount of time.

Watch your shot. When you hit a shot that is headed for deep rough, don't turn your head in disgust as is somewhat natural, watch it and try to line it up with something to improve your chances of finding the ball quickly.

Limit ball searches. No one likes losing balls, but there are some spots where a long search is likely to be fruitless. If you hit it in the deep native grass, give it two minutes or three minutes and move on. We'd also prefer golfers to hit a provisional if they think they may have lost a ball as opposed to him or her returning to the tee, thus slowing down the entire course.

Prepare for a quick departure. Much time is wasted because golfers leave bags or carts in spots that increase the time it takes to clear the green for the following group. The carts should be left on the cart path behind the green, making for a quick exit, while walkers should leave their clubs on the side of the green where the quickest departure is possible.

No nonsense on the greens. Like in the fairway, far too many of us don't study our shot until it is our turn. You are not on tour, playing for \$1,000,000 this weekend. Look over your putt and prepare while the others are putting so you are ready reasonably quickly when it is your turn. Also, if one player misses the green with his chip, the putting can begin while he proceeds to his next shot.