

stone cold winner

"I used to say that if I had one course to play for the rest of my life, it would be Cypress Point. Now I'd have to mention Stone Eagle, too." – Al Geiberger



One seasoned golf writer describes it as Ireland-meets-Maui, Fred Couples calls it phenomenal, and Peter Jacobsen claims he was speechless when he saw it completed.

Nearly five years in the making and Tom Doak’s first venture into California, Stone Eagle is the centrepiece of a 283-hectare golf and residential development in the heart of Palm Desert in the Coachella Valley.

Hidden from homes and properties in the area and with no homes on or around it, the course provides views of the entire Coachella Valley. Elevation changes add interest to the design, but the course is more open and forgiving than it appears from the tee.

“There are not many flat lies on the fairways, but there is a nice funnel effect,” says Rick Downes, Head Golf Professional. “The ball will often creep off the side of the elevated parts of the fairway into a more playable area.”

Stone Eagle has five sets of tees ranging from 4,674 metres to 6,254 metres, proving the theory that a course doesn’t have to be over 6,400 metres to be challenging. Golfers depart from the 43-home residential enclave, taking a cart ride through the canyons into the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountains. Here, the par-71 course rises to more than 300-metres

at its highest point, the tee at the 369-metre, par-four 11th.

“The course is certainly fair, though. We have men and women of all different ages and skill levels who, depending on what sets of tees they play, determine whether they are going to be challenged or if they are going to play leisurely,” adds Downes.

In a somewhat unusual twist, Doak even added a 19th hole, a 138-metre par-three adjacent to the mountaintop Aerie Restaurant with a slightly downhill carry to a large, crowned green surrounded by boulders. In his course notes, Doak describes this 138-metre par-three thus: “Too tough for an opening par-three; too heartbreaking for the 18th, but a perfect 19th to settle tied matches or to play for drinks.”

Seven families purchased Stone Eagle early in 2010, retaining it as an exclusive and private golf experience. The club has attracted a dedicated group of members, drawn by the spectacular course, friendly and attentive staff and some of the most memorable dining venues in the Coachella Valley.

“It’s such a fun course, that’s the bottom line,” says Justin Amelung, Membership Director. “This place is not just about the good golfer. It’s about the players that love golf.” 🌸

Pictures by Evan Schiller.

Previous page: The 12th at Stone Eagle

Left: The downhill par-three seventh

at a glance

Getting there: Delta fly from Sydney to Los Angeles with connections available to Palm Springs. 1800-144-917; delta.com

Green fees: Stone Eagle is a private club but guests are allowed to play with a member. stoneeagleclub.com

Accommodation: The Mojave Resort is one of the newest luxury boutique Palm Desert hotels and is just a 10-minute drive from Stone Eagle Golf Club. It has 24 Deluxe Guestrooms and Suites, some with kitchenettes and fireplaces. resortmojave.com

What else to do: Shopping at El Paseo, the ‘Rodeo Drive of the Desert’, with designer fashions and local crafts; dining alfresco in one of the many restaurants; swimming; hiking; or visiting one of Palm Desert’s many spas and wellness centres.

When to go: With an average of 350 days of sunshine a year, a Palm Desert offers the perfect climate. July and August tend to be the hottest months and temperatures can reach 37 degrees. December and January are the coolest months but with peaks still around 21°C.

For more information on Palm Desert, visit palm-desert.org

