



# *The Ultimate* **Hideaway**

A master architect provides an insider's view  
of The Hideaway Club golf courses



By Clive Clark

Nestling peacefully near the base of the majestic Santa Rosa Mountains is the ultimate hideaway. Aptly named, The Hideaway Club is a place in which to rejuvenate, unwind from personal and

business stress, and be pampered in unabashed luxury. This year The Hideaway celebrates its 10th anniversary.

The Hideaway is a Discovery Land Company project. Discovery Land specializes in the development of exceptional, high-end private club communities, and has developed over a dozen in locations from Kukio in Hawaii to Baker's Bay in the Bahamas.

Michael Meldman, CEO and founder of Discovery Land, says, "We created The Hideaway to fit the traditions of La Quinta, a place where our members and their families can escape and enjoy the luxuries and amenities of a club in a great location."

The Hideaway is entered via a pair of massive Castilla-style wooden gates, which open onto a private courtyard containing a charming old-Hacienda-style security house. The Hideaway has all the facilities of an elite country club, including an Olympic-size swimming pool,



Michael Meldman



The Hideaway clubhouse

tennis courts, a spa and a fitness center, and a level of service that is phenomenal.

At the heart of the community is the 45,000-square-foot Spanish-revival-style clubhouse, the setting for numerous well-attended functions. The club is extremely active, offering a roster of events from twilight golf and fireside chats with touring professionals to master cooking classes with the club's executive chef—and much more. The clubhouse also offers views of two golf courses: "The Pete," designed by legendary architect Pete Dye, and "The Clive," designed by the author of this article, Clive Clark. The beauty of the



The Clive Hole No. 18

two courses is that they perfectly complement one another.

**“The Pete”**

This course is true to the Dye philosophy, well designed with challenge and risk-and-reward elements. Although it’s not the easiest golf course in the world, aggressive play can reap great dividends. That said, if you’re attacking the course and your shot making is less than anticipated, it’s easy to spin off the track.

The fairways are generally wide and provide an attractive target. The trouble typically begins with the second shots and approaches. There are several holes where water creeps devilishly close to the green, making the margin between success and failure extremely slim. There is, however, a good balance between ease and difficulty. For example, take the short par-4 15th hole. For a scratch player, it’s almost drivable, and it should offer a comfortable par for the mid-handicap or even higher-handicap golfer. Two holes later, at the 17th, the ‘tips’ offer players a par 3 of 235 yards with an expansive stretch of lake in front and to the left edge of the green, with only a small ‘bale-out’ area on the right. Even off the 195-yard members’ tee, it has an intimidating effect.



The Clive Hole No. 1

**“The Clive”**

When I was asked to design a course at The Hideaway, it was a very exciting prospect. At that time, a lot of my work was done in the UK and on the European Continent. Not only was this to be my first design in the desert, I lived a mere five minutes from the site, and I knew that designing a course surrounded by custom home lots in the Californian Desert would be an entirely new challenge for me.

My plan—and I believe it succeeded—was to design a golf course that would inspire club members to play well, give

them a moderate degree of challenge but ensure that they would have fun. Although 15 of the holes contain water, I didn’t want The Clive to be either penal or intimidating. It was designed very much as a course for members to play and enjoy, not as a course to be a test for major professional championships. That doesn’t mean professional golfers will not enjoy playing the golf course, but the focus was on members.

Most of the greens are open-fronted and allow players to run the ball onto the green. Many of the greens have a tendency

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The Clive Hole No. 11

to collect the golf ball rather than reject it, and most of the fairways are some 50 yards wide, a generous target.

Various strategies were employed within the design. For instance, the 1st and 10th holes have particularly wide fairways—nothing like getting a round off to a good start! Hole #12 employs what I call “the St. Andrews theory.” Those of you who have played The Old Course at St. Andrews know that the trouble from the tee is on the right. To the left is half of five. However, playing toward the trouble on the right provides a much better angle for the approach to the green. By contrast, the abundance of ground on the left may be safe, but it usually leaves a shot that is forced to go over trouble and is therefore more difficult. On the 12th at The Hideaway, the right side of the fairway is a perfect line, but you risk going into a couple of nasty bunkers. To the left is half of California where you are safe, but vision to the green is obscured by substantial mounds and the blind shot creates a greater degree of difficulty.

The 13th hole is an unusual par 5 in that the second shot can be played two entirely different ways. Off a good drive, the longer hitter may go for the green in two; it’s all carry over a lake and two mounds with a valley in between, which gives a great sighting line to the pin. The

alternative is to go down a separate piece of fairway some 30 degrees left of the aforementioned line, which then leaves a shot of around 100 yards to the green. The 13th is a classic risk-and-reward par 5.

To increase the enjoyable factor, I avoided making the par 4s very long. Many championship courses today have par-4 holes of 500 yards or more, which for most club golfers is unreachable in two shots and therefore in practical terms adds another par 5 to the golf course. At The Hideaway, I kept the par 4s shortish to medium in length. The 18th is the longest par 4 on the course, measuring 452 yards from the tips, and also the most difficult. It makes for a challenging finish even off the members’ tee at 420 yards. The landing area for the drive is generous, but the second shot skirts a lake and then traverses up a gentle hill to a green protected by bunkers that stagger up the right-hand approach. In other words, the first bunker you see on the right approach is 30 yards short of the green. This creates ‘dead ground,’ the effect of which is that the pin seems closer than it really is. Skillful golfers who understand course management will quickly realize that they may have to add a club-and-a-half to allow for playing uphill and the effect of the ‘dead ground.’ Less skilled golfers will no doubt find themselves working on their bunker play!

One of the most outstanding holes on “The Clive” course is far from the most difficult. Off the members’ tee, which generally plays 130 to 140 yards (the ladies play it at just over 100 yards), the 7th hole is one for everyone to enjoy. This short par 3 has oodles of visual appeal and is laced with babbling brooks, split-level lakes, several waterfalls and masses of colorful shrubs and flowers, all set against the magnificent backdrop of the Santa Rosa Mountains. Although it is a forced carry over these lakes and waterfalls, it is a short carry and the target is large. It’s a hole where one might enjoy the scenery as much as the par that most players comfortably achieve.

Don Sutton, the famed pitcher, was one of the first members at The Hideaway. He once said, “My perfect day starts with a morning whirlpool in the locker room, a cup of coffee, playing with three of my best buddies, winning all of my bets and then enjoying a glass of Chardonnay on the patio while watching the sunset over the Santa Rosa Mountains. I’m enamored by Clive’s floral concept; it’s like playing golf in the middle of the Rose Parade!”

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Clive Clark is a staff writer with *Desert Golf Magazine* and former Ryder Cup player and World-Class Golf Course Architect