



## A NEW WAY OF THINKING

### Stone Eagle Golf Club's progressive membership model allows greater flexibility.

PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA: Many of America's most admired companies have experienced a seismic shift in their business models over the past decade.

The private golf club industry has been an exception. The vast majority of country clubs still charge initiation fees with strict stipulations on how and when you can resign your membership. The end result? The club is financially protected and you are locked into paying dues for months, and in some cases years, until you are released from your financial obligation.

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Stone Eagle Golf Club, located in the foothills overlooking Palm Desert, has been a leader in developing a new private club business model.

"I have been in the industry for more than two decades," said Rob Blackburn, general manager at Stone Eagle. "It is true some members belong to the same club for 40-plus years. But, in reality, tenure for most is closer to eight years.

"At Stone Eagle, we have simplified the membership process. There is no initiation and you pay a flat fee per year to maintain your membership. Our annual dues are competitive with those clubs offering a similar golfing experience in the Low Desert of California, but since your membership renews annually, you aren't locked in for an indeterminate amount of time."

The onus is on Stone Eagle's management to earn renewals each year. "We have to earn our keep. To ensure a pure golf experience, we have a 225 person membership cap," continued Blackburn.

**"OUR MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM** is transparent and straightforward. You pay dues on a yearly basis with no long term commitment. It provides peace of mind and allows greater flexibility. There is no real estate purchase required, no initiation fee, no monthly dues, no assessments, and no food and beverage minimum." – ROB BLACKBURN, GENERAL MANAGER

**"STONE EAGLE** is set against the red-hued mountains. Your tee shot ball flight on the first two holes profiles against jagged rock outcroppings. It's a beautiful effect that I've never seen anywhere else." –TOM DOAK

"I believe our private club lifestyle is working. While we lose a couple of members each year for health or relocation issues, rarely does someone leave because they were dissatisfied. This year we are on track for a renewal percentage in the mid-90s," said Blackburn.

#### LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

Stone Eagle was named "Best New Private Course" in 2006 by *Golf Digest*. It features a Tom Doak design built into a hillside cleft within the San Jacinto National Monument. Its new mountain top restaurant, The Aerie, will debut this fall. The club is open seven days per week, hosts few tournaments, and has a no tee time policy.

"Access is one of our biggest selling points. As a member, you can show up almost any time and walk right onto the course," said Nick Coussoulis, Chairman of the Board at Stone Eagle.

"We are not a typical desert golf community with homes lining the fairways. Here, it's just earth, sky, and you. Everyone joins for one common reason—to play golf," said Coussoulis.

After golf, The Aerie will be the social hub of the club. "The restaurant sits in the saddle of the Santa Rosa Mountains," said Coussoulis. "The 4,600 square-foot building is a stunner. We utilized the best of green architecture and its design is open and flexible. To take advantage of the views, the restaurant's windows retract into surrounding basalt rock walls. I suspect within a year, The Aerie will be known as *the* dining hot spot in the desert. It will not be open to the public but will be exclusive for Stone Eagle member use only." ■

For more information, visit [StoneEagleClub.com](http://StoneEagleClub.com).

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