

# Simplicity of Pure Golf

“Stone Eagle is set right up against the red-hued mountains. During construction, walking the course required hopping from boulder to boulder.”  
— TOM DOAK, GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT



PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA: The origin of private golf clubs came from English university coffeehouses in the mid-seventeenth century. Oxford University's coffeehouse was the first to be called a club.

These English social clubs and St. Andrews Golf Club in Scotland are considered to be forerunners of country clubs in America. The Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts, founded in 1882, is generally credited as the oldest country club in America.

Private clubs in the United States, with few exceptions, are owned in one of two ways: they are member-owned equity clubs or non-member-owned, non-equity clubs. At equity clubs, members are not just customers, but also shareholders.

Stone Eagle has broken away from the traditional private golf club model. Instead of charging an upfront initiation fee with set monthly dues, it

charges an *annual* membership fee with no monthly dues or assessments.

## PUSHING THE EASY BUTTON

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 is under construction and scheduled to open next January.

“Joining a private golf club is a *want* not a *need*,” stated Rob Blackburn, general manager. “Our membership program is transparent and straightforward. You are not forced to be a member because you can’t resell your membership. We are not a golf community. Homes do not line the fairways. Here, it’s just earth, sky, and you.”



Stone Eagle has redefined a private club experience in other ways. 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. You know you can show up almost at any time and walk right onto the golf course,” proudly said Blackburn.

## EVALUATING THE BUSINESS MODEL

The club is now in its fourth year of charging members only an annual fee to renew their membership.

“There are probably 100 private golf clubs in the greater Palm Desert/La Quinta area,” estimated Justin Amelung, membership director. “No other club has a similar membership program. I’m convinced this is the future private club model.

“Our first season was a phenomenal success. A simple membership plan resonated with golfers. Internally though, I worried if we picked the ‘low hanging fruit.’ The proof in the pudding was our second year performance.”

Stone Eagle Golf Club

## The Aerie



In year two, Stone Eagle added 63 net new members and produced an impressive 92 percent membership renewal rate.

“We are sprinting with the treadmill on high every day to meet our members’ expectations. If we don’t perform, we know they may opt to join another club,” said Amelung. “If our momentum continues, we will hit our cap of 225 members by the end of this year.” ■

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

For membership information, please contact the membership director at [StoneEagle@StoneEagleGolf.com](mailto:StoneEagle@StoneEagleGolf.com), or you may phone (760) 773-6165.

**“EVERYONE JOINS FOR ONE COMMON INTEREST—TO PLAY GOLF!”**

— NICK COUSSOULIS — CEO, STONE EAGLE

