

La Quinta Resort Mountain Course La Quinta, California

Designer: Pete Dye (1985)

Tees	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Black	72	6732	72.9	135
White	72	6300	70.9	129
Gold	72	5330	71.4	126

Overview:

The Mountain Course at La Quinta is a challenging and visual creation from Pete Dye's TPC Sawgrass period. It bears similarities to the stadium course in Ponte Vedra in that there is plenty of visual intimidation, especially in the green complexes, yet Pete gives you a fair line of play on every hole as long as you have the discipline to follow it. This is a positional driving course, you must plan carefully from each tee to pick specific lines that will give you advantage angles into the green arrangements and the pin of the day.

The course is carved into the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains in Palm Desert and looks like the Hollywood set for MASH. You fully expect to see Hawkeye and Trapper John standing next to you on the practice ground. There are many Kodak moments of the holes set against the breathtaking mountains so you have to make sure you don't let your mind wander to often from the task at hand.

As you see at Sawgrass the bunkers are ever present, over 100 bunkers and waste areas, with a large splash of water as well, confine the driving areas throughout that make finding your proper drive position a challenge. The truth is the sand is very playable and it is more about intimidating the player while they are choosing their flight lines than punishing them terribly for missing them. The water is the punitive element to mind and is actually in play every time it presents itself.

Like most Pete Dye courses, the green complexes are what separates this course from the ordinary. Every green seems to pop up from the fairway with carve outs of grassy hollows and bunkers that make elevated approaches with spin the shot of the day. When you miss a green it takes real pitching imagination and agility to deal with the abrupt elevation change to the surface as well as the swoops and swerves you ball engages once it gets on the green.

At 6300 yards from the White Tees there is plenty of challenge for the average bear. Only two par fours are over 400 yards from these tees, but the elevation changes into the greens make many shots a club or so more on the approach. Even with a mid-iron or hybrid in hand the tight green targets give you plenty of opportunity to show off your recovery game.

The front side has a very cool sequence. It begins with a neat finesse hole that sets the tone for day-controlled driver and precise approach play into a kitchy green complex. Your heart rate quickens on the second hole, a testing par 3 with a harrowing water feature that can wreck your scorecard early in the round. Plenty of scoring opportunity from 4 through 7 with a couple of imaginative par fives in this stretch. The

finishing holes on the outward nine are very gamey, especially the 9th which wears the #1 Handicap Hole moniker with great pride.

The inward nine starts with a series of holes right out of TPC Sawgrass-three turning Par 4s with waste area containment on one side and some nastiness on the other. These are the only holes that make you feel like this course is in a gated community.....a very high end gated community at that. There are some jaw dropping second homes that look more like villas than vacation condos. After an innocuous three par 13th you turn the corner to the 14th tee and voila you are in Tolkein Hobbit Land for the next four holes.

This is by far and away the coolest part of the course with the imaginative holes routing in a tranquil valley between the majestic mountains. You just expect a large booming Yul Brynner voice to emanate from between the peaks warning you that you are entering a region of peril. These four Dye holes bear out such a warning but they are eminently playable if you keep your wits about you and do not try anything outside of your skill set.

It is worth taking a moment when you get to the Par 3 sixteenth and hike up to the perch which holds the back tee. You could swear you can see all the way to the Joshua Tree Forest from there, it is a grand view of the vast expanse of the desert and the Santa Rosa Mountain Range beyond. A more detailed account of this creation is provided in the Hole-By-Hole description below.

When you are done tallying the score take time to schmooze around the clubhouse on the hill. The interior architecture is on a grand scale with high exposed wooden rafters giving it a homey feeling of a lodge-it makes you want to set a spell. While enjoying some good food and libation in the grill room the tall glass windows afford you a stunning view of the practice area and the course.

This place is a must stop on any visit to Palm Desert. Pete did a marvelous job putting together a tactical course that will tease and please you every time you play it.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis (Black/White)

#1 Par 4 368/352 yards

Interesting opening hole in the Pete 1980's tradition. Relatively short par 4 with a cordoning waste bunker on the left below the fairway. Drive just left of the right bunker for best look at this green which is a plateau complex across a wavy transition of grassy moguls. Make sure you have enough club on your approach to clear the front edge. Left is no good.

#2 Par 3 205/190

Leave it to Pete to bust your chops early-this long par three looks like the second shot at 18 at TPC Sawgrass without the grandstands. Water dominates the left and the long narrow green is set right to the edge of the wall. The shape of shot for this hole is a soft right to left draw with a bail out option right toward the two bunkers. The green banks slightly to the water. A pitch and a putt from dry land may be your best chance for par.

#3 Par 4 395/336

A short playable one from the white tee that is a slight leaner left. Drive to center and your second is a traverse carry across a pair of layered bunkers that stand between you and the green. Shallow green with a short steep face above the front bunker. Two eyeball pots behind the green mostly for direction. Green is severely sloped back to front so don't go long or you have a ridiculous up and down to make.

#4 Par 5 508/494

A stunning par 5 that hugs the foot of the mountain rocks on the left with some cordoning waste bunkers in between. There is nothing good down the left side of this hole so aim safely right from tee to green. Drive down the right-aim at the center of three palm trees through the fairway. Lay up is to a piece of fairway on the right just off the sandy stuff as the hole turns left into a mountain foyer. Green sits on a 4 to 10 diagonal framed by a single spread tree and the crevice in the mountain behind. Because of the diagonal set this green is without much depth and is banked sharply from 1 to 7 toward the front bunker. He is challenging you to leave your approach between the front edge and the day's flag.

#5 Par 3 162/151

What follows is a simply elegant looking short par 3 nesting on the doorstep of the mountain on the left. Plays a little downhill with bunkers in front and right so it will take an accurate fade to find the putting surface. The green has plenty of depth so land it front left and let it feed back. Misses on either side will make for a difficult up and down.

#6 Par 4 400/352

Appears to be a straightaway four par but there are a series of herks and jerks along the way. Drive hard to center left of the encumbering water on the right. The second is uphill to a ledged green complex shoved right into the foot of the mountain so take an extra club. If you have a high shot in your quiver use it here because this green is not very deep. There is one pot bunker in the face of the hill to help you judge the required carry.

#7 Par 5 492/471

Pete is at it again with a short par 5 replete with danger. Drive needs to be left at the palms through the fairway to avoid the water on the right. The lay up is across the end of the water to a fat area with a series of sand traps on the right the last 200 yards. The green is steeply above the fairway so reaching in 2 could be problematic. Wonderful wavy plateau green complex without a whole lot of depth.

#8 Par 4 400/367

Clever dogleg-bit of a hide and seek fairway as it wraps around another large waste bunker that dominates the right of the driving area. Aim a fade at the third of four palm trees left of the fairway. The second is all carry into the raised green with some serious deep bunkers shadowing the front and right on the approach. This green has a huge step transition in the center to the back pin position.

#9 Par 4 433/403

The number 1 handicap hole is pure Pete with a small pot bunker in the center of the driving area. The tee shot is to the right of the pot bunker to give you the best angle to the green. Water on the left should not be in play if you can avoid the swinging big hook on your second shot. Green is well protected with bunkers and grassy sloped heel print short left and bunkers on the right. Long green set on a 4 to 10 angle with lots of undulations. Once again the only par may be with a pitch and a putt.

#10 Par 4 372/361

This now gets very interesting both visually and tactically. Drive to center off the large waste bunker on the right. Given the diagonal set of the green the best approach line is as close to the fairway waste bunker as you can be. Grass transition to a raised green across a massive cross bunker that covers the entire green frontage. This green has a huge slope in the center so there are two distinct areas to this green front and back.

#11 Par 4 398/357

Another truncated par 4 with a driving area flanked by a railroad tie accented waste bunker left. Drive to center and then you have a carry across a grass transition to a flat green with a huge horseshoe bunker bracketing the right and two pots on the left. This is a scoring opportunity hole with a short club in your hand on the approach.

#12 Par 4 373/343

More psychedelic bunking throughout this hole Drive is a right to left slinger working around the waste bunkering on the left and feeding on the down slope toward the green. Water feature on the right is mostly cosmetic. Palatial residences surround this green reminding you of who lives on this property. Second shot plays down to a green sloping from back to front. Lots of trouble behind this green so don't be long. As you are standing on the green take a look to the right and check out the canals the neighbor's put in for the Venetian ambiance.

#13 Par 3 183/162

Other than the oversized sand features this is a straightforward hole with an accessible large green. This is all carry so take enough club. The green is 36 yards deep with a mini Biarritz channel across the back third so three putts can be an issue.

#14 Par 4 389/377

The next four holes are pure majesty playing on the valley floor between the mountains. This is a very technical zig-zag par 4 where your tee shot needs to be to the right of the bunkers down the left hand side to stay on top of the plateau fairway. The approach plays uphill to a 8 to 2 diagonal set table top green behind a couple of pot bunkers and a piece of nasty desert scrub on the right. Plenty of bail out room behind the green so take enough club to clear the face of the hill. There are more pars chipping back then trying to up and down from short of the green.

#15 Par 5 517/502

A beautiful double dog ear right hole alongside the foot of the mountains. The best tee shot is down the left hand side of the fairway to get a look up the left to the lay up area. There is a very large bunker that protects the approach on the right side of the fairway up to and around the green. From the lay up area on the left the green is ledged into the mountain side on the right. This is the flattest green on the course so do not over read your putt.

#16 Par 3 167/157

This is the one where they take all the pictures. Take a walk to the top of the back tee just to experience some vertigo and take in an incredible view of La Quinta and beyond. This par 3 plays slightly downhill across the rocky tundra to a pear shaped green. Do get frisky trying to get at a back pin placement - the middle of the green is the best play. A putt down to the front left is like a vending machine all putts will end up at the green's edge.

#17 Par 4 446/412

A bear of a hole this long par 4 is Trump International-esque playing along the mountains. Long tee shot required to reach the plateau fairway. Hit it down the right avoiding the large waste bunker on the left to have a look back at the unusual green set to the left. Second is a long right to left play across a wavy fairway to a raised green where you must avoid more sand on the left to a long green. There is a bit of a Biarritz channel across the center of the green that is almost 40 yards long.

#18 Par 5 524/495

The finishing hole reminds me of half the courses in Florida with condos lining the left side of the hole the entire way. It is a dog-leg left par 5 with some strange sloping to the left. There is out-of-bounds on both sides: to the left where the homes are and to the right is the driving range. Aim at the center of the three bunkers through the fairway to end up right just off the bunkers on the left. Your second shot is a lay up down a funnel of a fairway to around 100 yards. The green is angled back to the left and is stepped so be aggressive with the approach.