

## Nicklaus's Work at Las Campanas Departure from the Norm

By: [Steve Habel](#)

The two spectacular golf courses at the Club at Las Campanas in a suburb of Santa Fe, N.M., offer members and fortunate guests strategic thought-provoking routing by Jack Nicklaus. The setting - the high desert at the foothills of the usually snow-capped Sangre de Christos, Ortiz and Sandias Mountains - is also special.



**First Hole on Sunrise Course**

The Nicklaus Signature tracks, called Sunrise and Sunset, showcase a détente of sorts between Nicklaus and Mother Nature as the Golden Bear veered from some past design concepts in favor of a kindler, gentler approach that's coupled with a growing sensitivity for preserving the character of the land.

The courses are picturesque and at times riveting, but are infinitely playable and fun. Built on the sides of hills at an elevation of nearly 7,000 feet, the tracks contain water hazards and three cuts of rough. The rolling fairways are bordered by pinon pines, juniper trees and nearby desert. From spring through fall, fields of yellow, blue and purple wildflowers carpet the landscape, making a pretty locale even more so.



**Sunset's 7th Hole**

Las Campanas's five sets of tees allow players of all levels to enjoy Nicklaus's work and smooth, but the wavy putting surfaces will test one's putting prowess.

Opened in 1991, the Club at Las Campanas is the only exclusive country club in the "Land of Enchantment." The courses are the centerpiece of a private, 4,700-acre residential development just 10 minutes from downtown Santa Fe, considered the country's third-largest art market; hundreds of galleries line the village's streets.

With 36 holes at their disposal, Las Campanas members enjoy considerable variety on two courses that are both consistently rated among the top in New Mexico by Golf Digest. Golfers can hone their games at the club's 19-acre practice facility, which sports a large driving range, expansive putting area, bunker facility and chipping greens.



**No. 9 at Sunrise**

### **Sunrise Features Doglegs Galore & Some Tough Par-4s**

When the par-72 Sunrise Course at Las Campanas debuted in 1993 it was the 100th layout designed by Nicklaus. Playing a whopping 7,626 yards from the tips, where it carries a rating of 73.9 and a 132 slope, Sunrise features tough doglegs in each direction, five par-4s of at least 446 yards and the 654-yard par-5 15th hole.

One of the aforementioned two-shotters (the 446-yard third) is perhaps the toughest hole at Sunset. The slight left-curler requires a long and straight drive that must avoid bunkers both sides of the fairway at the turn. The approach is all carry as the front of the slightly elevated green is protected by two large bunkers.

Just the length of the 492-yard, par-4 fifth will grab your attention. This dogleg-right offering asks for a long tee shot to skirt bunkers on the right side of the fairway. A mid- to long-iron approach is then played to a large green with plenty of undulations.

No. 11 is a downhill par-4 of 426 yards with a generous landing area off the tee. Avoiding the fairway bunker left is a must as the second shot is almost all carry over a lake that protects the front and the entire right edge of the putting surface. This lake meets the green with a beautiful stone wall. The shorter the iron the better on this hole as the green tends to reject shots.

A par-4 of 458 yards, 13th is a dynamite hole where a little course knowledge is a real advantage. There's more room to the right for the drive than it appears from the elevated tee. A safe shot to the left side of the fairway and away from a stand of trees right will leave a medium to long-iron to a green protected by a natural arroyo in front and bunkers left and right. Anything less than a good drive requires most players to lay up short of the arroyo for the third.

You might be able to get back a stroke at the 382-yard par-4 14th, but accuracy is at a premium. Longer hitters will use something less than a driver, but the second shot is uphill to a rolling green protected by bunkers short and left.

At 654 yards, the par-5 15th winds downhill hole along a route that has a little of everything, including spectacular views, trees, bunkers and water. A good drive should set you up for par, but the green is guarded with bunkers front-right and back. The water-impinged 18th provides a bit of final drama to the round. A bunker about 50 yards short and right of the green is a good target from the tee, while the putting surface is protected by a pond.



**No. 5 on Sunset Course**

### **Elevation Changes & Big Fairways at Sunset**

Opened in 2000, the Sunset Course at Las Campanas, a fitting partner in crime for its slightly older brother, stretches 7,517 yards from the tips. There are few, if any breathers at Sunset which, with five par-4s playing at least 460 yards and elevation changes galore, requires your full attention.

Your hands are pretty full on the opening four-hole stretch - three long par-4s (460, 486 and 471 yards, respectively) interspersed with a one-shooter that boasts perhaps the toughest green to find on the course. The par-3 third, carded at just 172 yards, has a wide but very shallow green. The tee shot must carry an arroyo to reach the green fronted by a small but deep bunker.



**No. 16 at Sunset**

The 471-yard fourth is one of the toughest holes on the front nine, playing straightaway and protected by an arroyo on the entire left side. The green is bunkered to the left and back right. The wow factor is off the charts on the 432-yard seventh, thanks to its elevated and a portside water hazard. The drive falls some 90 feet to the fairway and must be placed short of the water that runs up to the green.

The back side at the Sunset course at Las Campanas is a 3-3-3 configuration of par-3s, -4s and -5s. No. 10 is a 603-yard par-5 that demands a straight and long tee shot to a landing area protected along the right by another arroyo. That land form reenters play on the approach to the green; this hole requires three great shots to find the putting surface in regulation.

The 342-yard par-4 14th is a very good short hole that produces excitement. It plays downhill and shorter than its distance to allow an aggressive driver to reach the green, but both the tee shot and approach are squeezed by water.



**Las Campanas Clubhouse**

Sunset's par-4 closer can be a heart-stopper as a reverse-mirror image of No. 18 on the Sunrise course. But it plays a little longer at 462 yards. The tee shot must miss a big fairway bunker on the right, while water lurks on the starboard side the entire length of the hole. The green is fronted by water and a stone wall, so anything can happen here.

Las Campanas's Sunset course, which carries a rating of 74.6 and a slope of 133, was the site of a Shell's Wonderful World of Golf telecast match between Nicklaus and Ben Crenshaw in 2000.

Living at Las Campanas is special. The club contains a world-class equestrian center, a spa and tennis center and the grand hacienda-style clubhouse, where members can dine or enjoy a cocktail.

Las Campanas was developed by the Lyle Anderson Company, the same firm that fostered Desert Highlands, Desert Mountain and Superstition Mountain, all high-end Arizona neighborhoods with Nicklaus Signature golf courses.

For more information about this Santa Fe gem, visit <http://www.theclubatlascampanas.com>.

*Steve Habel* is one of Cybergolf's national correspondents, contributing news stories, features, equipment and book reviews and personality profiles from his base in Central Texas. He is also the managing editor for Texas CEO Magazine and works as a contributing editor for Horns Illustrated magazine, a publication focusing on University of Texas sports. He also writes a blog ([www.shotoverthegreen.blogspot.com](http://www.shotoverthegreen.blogspot.com)), which features news on golf and the Longhorns, and another ([www.checkinginandplayingthrough.blogspot.com](http://www.checkinginandplayingthrough.blogspot.com)) on his many travels, which took him across the nation and to 105 different golf courses in 2009. Habel is a member of the Golf Writers Association of America and the Texas Golf Writers Association.