



9th hole, 402 yards
Opposite: 13th hole, 573 yards



COUNTRY CLUB OF THE ROCKIES

AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF A MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN RANGE,
JACK NICKLAUS ROUTED A CLEVER, STRATEGIC LAYOUT
AT THE CORE OF A WARM, ENGAGING CLUB THAT
HAS HELPED TRANSFORM THE VAIL VALLEY
INTO A YEAR-ROUND DESTINATION



JACK NICKLAUS GREW UP IN OHIO and has lived in Florida for decades. But his numerous visits to Colorado have played a big role in his playing career, his design business and his recreational activities. “There are very few places I can think of that represent a confluence of so many things important to my life,” says Nicklaus, “from my first U.S. Amateur to my last [U.S. Senior] Open title to the golf courses I have designed to the wonderful memories I have of family trips to ski or fish.”



In 1959 Nicklaus won his first U.S. Golf Association championship, the U.S. Amateur, at the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs. Thirty-four years later, Nicklaus won the last of his eight USGA titles, the 1993 U.S. Senior Open, at Cherry Hills Country Club, near Denver. (Cherry Hills was also where Nicklaus nearly won the 1960 U.S. Open as an amateur while being paired with Ben Hogan on the final day.)

As a course designer, Nicklaus has created some of the best layouts in the state, always relishing a chance to work with the landscape. "Few settings and canvases are as spectacular as those you find in Colorado," Nicklaus once wrote. "Whether it is the trees, streams, foliage or the rugged terrain of the mountains, nature always seems to determine what type of course I create. I have always kidded that Mother Nature is my co-designer, but in Colorado, she takes the lead."

Nicklaus used a bounty of natural resources when he designed the memorable Country Club of the Rockies, which opened in 1984. Sitting along the Eagle River, which winds through the

The layout provides the views of a mountain course without any of the awkward elevation changes.

Vail Valley, the layout provides tremendous views of a mountain course without the awkward elevation changes.

Considering the elevation of 7,200 feet, the 7,402-yard layout that is among Colorado's best never played excessively long, even when it first opened. Instead of relying on pure distance to challenge players, Nicklaus focused on the greensites.

"Jack's philosophy was that you'd have to make the course 8,000 yards to be resistant to par for

scratch players," says Tom Apple, the club's first and only head professional. "He did not want to take the driver out of players' hands so he made the greens, surrounds and the bunkering more difficult. You need to hit good iron shots on the right side of the pin to score."

At first, many greens had large tiers, but Nicklaus softened most during a mid-1990s renovation that included the planting of Penn A-4 bentgrass, which allows for faster greens. Some slopes remain, most notably on the 402-yard 9th, where two-putting is a challenge when the ball is on the front and the hole is atop the high ledge on the back of the green.





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said Nicklaus. ‘The trees, streams, foliage or the
rugged mountains always determine what I create.’



12th hole, 477 yards

JIM MARQUELLE/NICKLAUS DESIGN



One of the most enjoyable holes is the 389-yard 2nd, which has a split fairway. Players can hit driver left to the upper fairway, challenging a line of grass bunkers for a better angle into the green. Or they can play safely to the right side, from where the second shot must carry a cluster of small but menacing bunkers to reach the putting surface.

Other risk-reward holes are the 566-yard 3rd, which plays around a lake, and the 571-yard 7th, where a 100-yard-long bunker guards the lay-up area. Although they seem long, these holes actually work perfectly with the elevation, at which shots typically travel 10 percent longer than at sea level.

The Eagle first comes into play on the 477-yard 12th, where the approach must cross a wide section of the river. Fortunately, shots landing short of the green find a large chipping area that provides a margin for error.

The next three holes play over and along the river, while a smaller stream influences strategy on

the 586-yard 17th and 415-yard 18th, which plays slightly uphill to the 27,000-square-foot lodge-style clubhouse, which underwent a \$4 million renovation in 2005.

"It's an extremely fair course," says Dr. Bill Loughridge, a member since 1989, "but if you hit it where you shouldn't, you're penalized—and rightfully so."

Whether competing in matches or relaxing after the round, the members, who own the club, enjoy the easy banter, close bonds and shared spirit that make for long-lasting memories. And the club's success has helped transform the area, a skiing mecca, into a summer destination as well.

"It opened to a lot of fanfare," says Apple. "A lot of the affluent people who came for the winter discovered how great it was in the summer. There really wasn't a private club that they could call their own."

The club currently boasts 350 members, many of whom own homes in the private community

of Arrowhead at Vail, where the course is located. The idyllic enclave offers year-round outdoor activities: tennis, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing and alpine skiing. (The clubhouse is just a 7-iron away from the bases of the slopes at Arrowhead, Beaver Creek and Bachelor Gulch.)

An avid sportsman, Nicklaus took advantage of the Vail lifestyle when he owned a home overlooking the river near the 175-yard 14th. He was a frequent visitor, and once teed it up in a memorable round with Bill Clinton and Gerald Ford, who was a member as well as resident.

A good friend of Ford's, Nicklaus even won the first Jerry Ford Invitational, an annual charity pro-am hosted by the former President that was held at the Country Club of the Rockies for much of the event's 20-year history. "Tour players coveted an invitation to the Ford event," says Peter Jacobsen. "It was an honor to be there with the President. All the greats were there—top entertainers, athletes, business leaders—and we all knew it was a very special time and special event."

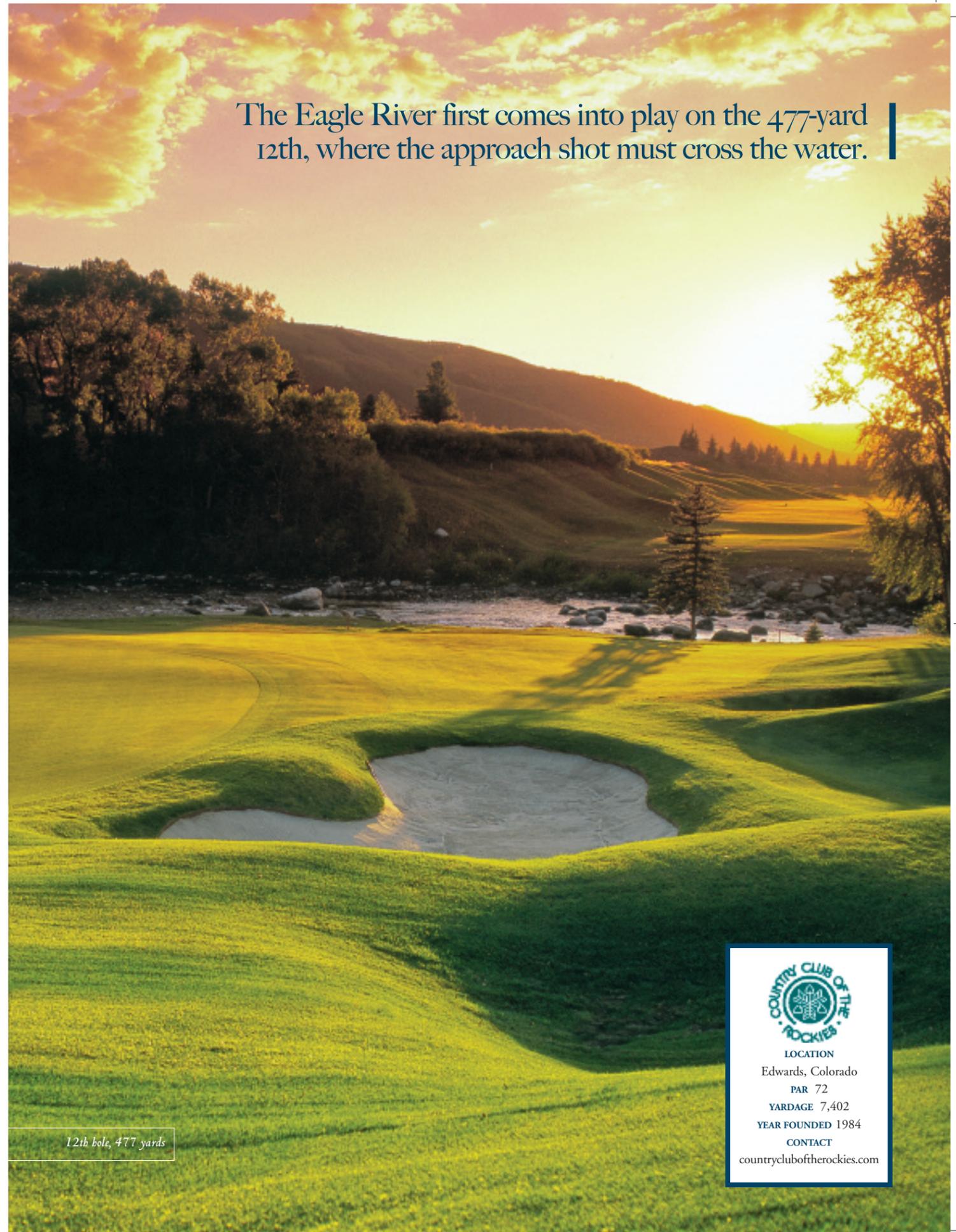
Ford, who passed away in 2006, was a passionate golfer and one of the sport's leading ambassadors. Despite his stature, he didn't take himself too seriously on the course, even participating in jokes about his wayward drives perpetuated by long-time friend Bob Hope. In reality, Ford was a pretty good player who truly loved the sport's enduring challenges as well as the lifelong friendships that the game fostered.

In that respect, he was the ideal member of the Country Club of the Rockies, a special golf club that has fulfilled Nicklaus' vision for a great Colorado golf experience.



17th hole, 586 yards

The Eagle River first comes into play on the 477-yard 12th, where the approach shot must cross the water.



12th hole, 477 yards



LOCATION
Edwards, Colorado
PAR 72
YARDAGE 7,402
YEAR FOUNDED 1984
CONTACT
countrycluboftherockies.com