

Pete Dye Golf Courses Fifty Years of Visionary Design



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**Joel Zuckerman**

*With appreciations by JACK NICKLAUS, ARNOLD PALMER, and GREG NORMAN*

Abrams

# La Estancia Golf Resort

P.B. Dye

What would inspire a developer to build a smaller-scale golf resort practically in the shadow of the iconic Casa de Campo? For decades, the Dominican Republic's southeastern city of La Romana has been home to what's widely acknowledged as the Caribbean's finest golf experience. But the developers built La Estancia just a ten-minute drive from the gates of Casa de Campo, with its world-renowned trio of Pete Dye-designed courses.

The developer explains that La Estancia is a project that dovetails very nicely with its neighbor. P.B. Dye has a built-in flair for the dramatic anyway, and the raw canvas he worked with here afforded ample opportunity to make a brash statement. La Estancia is located across the Chavon River and somewhat upstream from the über-scaled Dye Fore course at Casa de Campo and offers much the same sense of grandeur. The second hole is a thrill-fest of the highest order. At the precipice tee box, the golfer is perched several hundred feet above the riverbed. But expansive stands of trees reach up from the river, their thick canopies spreading out below the level of the fairway. One is faced with the exhilarating task of arching the tee shot over all of this deciduous danger, and finding safe purchase on the short grass beyond. The "canyada," as it's referred to locally, winds through the right side of the opening nine and the left side of the inward nine.

Consider the seemingly mile-long par-5 12th, with the forebodingly deep ravine delineating the left side of the playing corridor. Any of the three shots required to reach the elevated, well-bunkered green that is hooked, or pulled left, will never be seen again. The 14th is another beast, one that will have golfers shaking in their spikes. Play safely to the right on this dogleg left par-4, and you have practically zero chance of reaching the green in regulation. Attempt the tight line, over the corner of the ravine, and hope to carry the ball to the short grass, because the alternative is a hard rebound off the steep slope to the inside of the dogleg, and down into the same dark

ravine. Even on the holes where the fear factor is reduced, there is plenty of movement in mostly large greens, deep swales, and flag-obscuring drop-offs for those who can't find the putting surfaces with the approach.

Several of the game's best-known architects were interviewed for the job, but P.B. Dye was ultimately selected because of his knowledge of the area, the terrain, and the Dominican people. Both architect and developer also credit longtime design associate Mike O'Conner, who spent years working extensively on numerous Pete Dye projects, including luminaries such as Old Marsh, PGA West, and the quartet of courses in Kohler, Wisconsin.

Asked about the potentially daunting prospect of designing in such close proximity to one of golf's best-loved venues, P.B. says, "I don't feel like I compete with my dad, and I don't feel like I'm in his shadow. I believe we walk side by side." Dye the Elder can't help but be impressed with his younger son's stupendous achievement on the nether side of the Chavon River.



10th hole