

Welcome to THE RANCH in Crystal Beach



#1 - 350 yards - Par 4

Long knockers can carry the 35 yard wide lake which crosses the fairway 225 yards from the tee box. If you can't hit it 260 yards in the air, a two hundred yard shot will leave you short of the water, 150 yards from a large sloping green. There is out of bounds left, but you can slice it into the adjacent fairway safely, leaving a slightly longer approach. Don't be long with your second shot or you'll have to take a drop from the dense grass 15 yards behind the putting surface. You normally will be playing into a 15+ mph breeze so club yourself accordingly.

#2 - 309 yards - Par 4

Head to the west after the wind fooled you on the first hole and you'll have it at your back on the second. You only need a 215 yard drive to leave a hundred yard pitch to the green, but you can't see anything but the top of the flag from the fairway. Hit it 250 and you're in the creek.

#3 - 145 yards - Par 3

Cross behind the gated entrance to Rancho Carribe and show your form to the honking tourists driving by on Highway 87. The first of two Par 3's at the Ranch. Features out of bounds left, a deep pond short, and a larger pond to the right. Do not hit your \$4 Pro V-1 left or you'll be hitting your third shot from beside the lateral hazard that runs alongside the green.

#4 - 390 yards - Par 5

Behind the #3 green, you'll tee off on the shortest Par 5 around. Your blind tee shot will need to be aimed right to avoid the creek that runs down the entire east side of the Course. You only need a 150 yard shot to clear the creek that runs across the fairway. Hit a two hundred yard shot, once again into the wind, and you'll only have two hundred yards to the green found in the southeast corner of the course. If you make higher than a four here, you'll be buying someone dinner after the round.

#5 - 336 yards - Par 4

Hit your ball a wind aided 260 yards and you're in the 20-yard-wide creek that crosses the fairway. Please do not disturb the water moccasins in the lateral creek searching for your ball. Don't miss left or you're OB. The Ranch likes slices and hates hooks. The fifth green will not hold your approach shot unless it drops to the green from the sky like a Bubba Watson wedge. Play a running shot short of the green and watch it roll happily onto the generous putting surface.

#6 - 300 yards - Par 4

Head back to the clubhouse, cross Ranch Road and meander across the creek to the 6th tee. Here, you're hitting into the wind again with out of bounds left for the first 160 yards. Flat bellies can draw the ball into the wind and maybe putt for eagle but trouble awaits you left, right, and long. By local rule, feel free to move your ball to the closest grass burr if you find yourself on the sand in what otherwise should be fairway.

#7 - 272 Yards - Par 4

The 7th is another birdie hole for the big hitters and even the not so big hitters. All you need is a 125 yard whack to carry the lake but few can resist the temptation let it all out and go for the green. The problem here is the green itself, a slightly elevated flat surface that slopes down in the back to prime snake habitat. Be just a little bit long and you'll be taking a penalty stroke because the wildlife preserve is only a few feet behind the putting surface.

#8 - 145 yards - Par 3

After your nifty pitch earned you a birdie on 7, or not, you head toward the beach to the tricky 8th hole. The green is shaped like a crispy taco shell, reached after carrying 130 yards of sand, where even the grass burrs won't grow. The green sits 3 feet from Alligator Creek, which eagerly awaits your yanked tee shot. You should bail out long and right on this hole. Because of the tricky pin positions on the sloping putting surface, a par here will give you warm fuzzies all over.

#9 - 465 yards - Par 5

The signature hole at the Ranch runs down the western property line for the entire length of the course. The generous fairway favors a slight fade to the right hand corner. A 235 yard drive and you have to decide whether to go for the green in two or play it down the middle for a relatively easy 100 yard pitch. If you need to win the 9th (and who doesn't), you'll have to hit over the lake that protects the green. Too long though and you're in the slough behind the hole. If you're going to cut the corner and try to make 3 or 4, it's best to be long, because hitting it in the slough long will let you take a stroke penalty and still leave you a short chip and a chance to make par. Hit in short and you've still got to pitch it over the lake which up until recently housed a 9 foot alligator protecting thousands of golf balls. Apparently looking for love, our largest resident gator met his maker crossing Hwy 87 a few weeks ago.

(by Mike VanZandt, avid golfer and local wit)