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MARCH 2013 \$4.99

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# The Best of the Private Clubs 2013





## Best Overall Country Club The Vaquero Club

Commuters around the State Highway 114 and Precinct Line Road/Trophy Club Drive area have been dealing with road construction for months. Some would even argue years. And during rush-hour traffic, driving through these areas can be mind numbing and absolutely frustrating. Parts of it have been finished, while it seems like there is no end in sight in other areas.

Just south of 114 down the newly-widened Precinct Line Road sits the hallowed Vaquero Club, where throughout the year, inside those sturdy wooden gates, a slew of new construction has occurred. We're not just talking about those stately manors that are so massive it seems there's no end in sight to their construction. No, The Vaquero Club did an extensive \$2.8 million renovation project to its golf course that altered several holes, made it more visually appealing and, more importantly, enhanced the golf experience.

Because of that (plus so many other reasons), The Vaquero Club is our choice once again as the Best Overall Country Club for 2013.

Back in 2011 when the club successfully passed a \$4.5 million capital improvement plan, they made it known that big changes were planned for the golf course. The Tom Fazio layout was already considered a top-five track in the state, but as course architects will tell you, a layout is not perfect the first time around. There's always going to be some tweaks and other renovations done over time.

When \$2.8 million is involved, there's going to be a lot more than just some tweaks. Construction commenced soon after the plan was passed, and this past October all 18 holes reopened. The consensus so far: Two very big thumbs up from the members and those fortunate enough to tee it up here.

Visually, the most striking change is the new Premier White Sand in all the bunker complexes. In addition, several bunkers were added and several were eliminated.

Another striking change: several holes were moved in order to "get golf off of the residential" as General Manager Casey Paulson puts it. Perhaps that's most evident at the drivable par-4 fourth hole. New tee boxes were added here and nine other holes, and all the teeing areas were re-surfaced with Diamond Zoysia.

For the most part, the greens were untouched, except for the ninth and 17th holes. These putting surfaces were reconstructed and re-grassed with 007 Bentgrass. The 17th green, in particular, turned a benign hole into a solid one.

Other remarkable changes around the course include the planting of 150 trees in strategic spots, adding stones on the lake's edge by the second green and cleaning the areas around that lake, and removing the cross bunkering that fronted the green at the par-5 16th. This made that great hole even better.

In fact, you can say that about the entire golf course. A great golf course just got better, and brought the golf experience to the same level as the impeccable service and amenities that Vaquero is famous for. Although the course plays longer from the tips, it's more playable for those pegging it from the four other sets of tees.

During the course reconstruction, the rest of the club remained open and provided its excellent services such as valet parking, Fish Camp, wine programs and more to its members. Still, the changes at Vaquero haven't stopped yet. Future plans call for a clubhouse expansion that primarily will increase dining space.

Yes, some things have changed at Vaquero. Yet, even with all the construction in and around the club, some things have remained the same – the country club experience here is still the best in the area.



## THE BEST OF THE PRIVATE CLUBS

	Country Clubs	Initiation Fee	Monthly Dues	What Makes It Great	One Thing That Could Be Improved
1	The Vaquero Club	\$195,000	\$1,346	The golf course now matches the awesome amenities	It's expensive, but that's the cost of having the best
2	The Sports Club	\$55,000	\$670	Being tied to the Four Seasons Resort, everything is five-star	It will be nice once it is no longer for sale
3	Royal Oaks Country Club	\$85,000	\$800	Club is spending money like crazy, improving all facets	Although they have minimized it, flooding is always a risk
4	Shady Oaks Country Club	\$60,000	\$711	The nine-hole course is a special treat	Yellow range balls? Really?
5	Brook Hollow Golf Club	est. \$125,000	est. \$660	Continuous improvements to the course keeps it among the best	Like Augusta National – solid club, less than stellar location
6	The Northwood Club	\$85,000	\$545	Best golf course the North Dallas area has to offer	Can't wait for the first hole to be improved
7	Colonial Country Club	\$60,000	\$500	Still a revered PGA Tour facility	If you go to an event there, go early if you want a parking spot
8	Stonebriar Country Club	\$28,000	\$653	Club has consistently improved in all facets the last few years	Next on the docket for major renovations from ClubCorp
9	Gleneagles Country Club	\$28,000	\$675	Lower initiation makes this a great value for a lot of prestige	There are holes on each course that need to be redone
10	Lakewood Country Club	\$45,000	\$545	Course rebounded remarkably fast after hail damage	Practice area is still very small
T11	Bent Tree Country Club	\$45,000	\$738	Chicken fried steak Wednesdays are the bomb	No snacks in the halfway house
T11	Dallas Athletic Club	\$21,000	\$445	For the money, the golf is great, as is the practice facility	Looking forward to the cart path renovation
13	River Crest Country Club	\$60,000	\$517	Fantastic history and a wonderful social scene at the club	Golf course is considered very short by today's standards
14	Timarron Country Club	\$15,000	\$520	Clubhouse renovations were very welcome	Locker rooms need to be next
15	Las Colinas Country Club	\$10,000	\$580	Dining is so great, it's hard to get a table on weekends	Pro shop doesn't match the rest of the renovations
16	Stonebridge Ranch Country Club – Dye	\$8,000	\$502	If you want a challenging golf course, this is your place	Can't wait for renovations to be finished
17	Stonebridge Ranch Country Club – Hills	\$3,500	\$440	Excellent bang for the buck, especially with new updates	Locker room is painfully small
18	Ridglea Country Club	\$15,000	\$437	Although it's short, Family Course is a great challenge	Family side needs an update to the practice facility
19	Mira Vista Country Club	\$10,000	\$550	Golf course is fun, challenging and worthy to play everyday	Still waiting for complete bunker renovation
20	Trophy Club Country Club	\$3,500	\$485	New practice facility is unprecedented in this price range	Half the clubhouse still needs to be renovated
21	Prestonwood Country Club	\$5,000	\$485	Two distinct golf courses, Hills Course is underrated	Both clubhouses need an update
22	Brookhaven Country Club	\$4,000	\$435	Pool area makes you feel like you are at a resort	Canadian geese are everywhere. So are their droppings.
23	Hackberry Creek Country Club	\$3,500	\$493	Has almost everything a neighborhood club should have	Only thing missing is a good fitness area
24	Denton Country Club	\$2,500	\$365	Conditions were stellar this year	It's really under the radar and needs to be promoted
25	Canyon Creek Country Club	\$2,500	\$425	The only good private club option in the Richardson area	No bag drop, and no easy way to transport clubs to the golf carts
26	Walnut Creek Country Club	\$2,000	\$300	Two solid golf courses make this a great value	Clubhouse is sorely in need of a renovation
27	Eldorado Country Club	\$2,250	\$294	New bar area is a great place to hang out	Pro shop needs to be expanded and redone
28	Oakmont Country Club	\$1,000	\$360	Only option for a private club in Corinth	The "ClubCorp" clubhouse renovations are needed
29	Hurricane Creek Country Club	\$500	\$193	Best value if you don't have a grand to spend	The biggest enigma on this list
30	Thorn tree Country Club	\$1,500	\$301	Best option south of Dallas that's under \$100,000	Needs a renovation to create a buzz
31	Diamond Oaks Country Club	\$1,750	\$270	Golf course is very playable and fun to play	Better curb appeal
32	Woodhaven Country Club	\$1,500	\$220	Offers everything a country club should offer	We are still waiting for the promised renovations
33	Eastern Hills Country Club	\$1,200	\$289	Quality golf course has new Mini-Verde greens	Clubhouse still needs some TLC
	<b>Golf Clubs</b>				
1	Dallas National Golf Club	\$150,000	\$1,100	Clearly the best golf course in town	Drive-up appeal at entrance could be improved
2	Preston Trail Golf Club	est. \$175,000	est. \$1,300	The course renovations are maturing nicely	Not much, unless you are a female
3	TPC Craig Ranch	\$55,000	\$680	Course is always in great shape, even with the increase in play	Seems the halfway house is rarely open
T4	Gentle Creek Golf Club	\$10,000	\$495	Clubhouse improvements were a big plus	Cumbersome to get a snack at the turn
T4	Lantana Golf Club	\$6,500	\$375	Offers much more than just golf (fitness, kids club, etc.)	Driving range needs more distinction
6	The Honors Golf Club Dallas	\$17,500	\$575	New clubhouse and entry are big plusses	Need a wall or hedge around the course on the back nine
7	The Retreat Golf Club	\$5,000	\$225	Nice elevation changes make this a fun track	Development needs to grow in. Very little around it.
8	Shady Valley Golf Club	\$1,000	\$295	Fun course that's easy to walk and score	Drive-up appeal does not do it justice
9	Great Southwest Golf Club	\$1,000	\$305	It's easy to find a worthy game, on the course or the card room	Once a must-play, it has fallen off the radar

Note: Dallas Country Club and Rolling Hills Country Club were not ranked.



## BEST OF PRIVATE GOLF

# The List

- Best Milkshake:** Mira Vista Country Club
- Best Chicken Fried Steak:** Bent Tree Country Club
- Best Lunch Buffet • Dallas:** Preston Trail Golf Club
- Best Lunch Buffet • Fort Worth:** Ridglea Country Club
- Best Cookies:** Dallas National Golf Club
- Best On-Course Food:** The Vaquero Club
- Best Halfway House:** Royal Oaks Country Club
- Best Lunch Menu:** Las Colinas Country Club
- Best Event Spread:** Lantana Golf Club
- Best Homemade Ice Cream:** Preston Trail Golf Club
- Best Hot Dog at the Turn:** The Northwood Club
- Best Fitness Facility:** The Sports Club
- Best Outlying Club:** Rock Creek Golf Club
- Now Public:** The Golf Club of Dallas
- Soon to be Private:** The Lakes at Castle Hills
- Biggest Enigma:** Trinity Forest Golf Course
- Best Practice Facility:** Dallas National Golf Club
- Most Underrated Golf Course:** Prestonwood Country Club, Hills Course
- Most Improved Practice Facility:** Trophy Club Country Club
- Best Overall Service:** The Vaquero Club
- Best Emergency Nine:** Par-3 Course at Shady Oaks Country Club
- Best Overall Family Club • Dallas:** Brookhaven Country Club
- Best Overall Family Club • Fort Worth:** Ridglea Country Club
- Most Grand Clubhouse:** Gleneagles Country Club
- Most Improved Entry:** The Honors Golf Club Dallas
- New Entry Needed:** Dallas National Golf Club
- Most Difficult Golf Course:** Stonebridge Ranch Country Club, Dye Course
- Most Difficult Opening Hole:** Cottonwood Valley
- Opening Hole We Would Like to Change:** The Northwood Club
- Best Finishing Hole:** TPC Craig Ranch
- Best Pool:** The Sports Club
- Best New Trend:** New outdoor living areas
- No Clubs Do It Anymore:** Overseeding in winter
- Best Caddies:** Dallas National Golf Club
- Fastest Players:** Preston Trail Golf Club
- Most Improved Conditions:** Colonial Country Club
- Best New Renovation:** The Vaquero Club
- Biggest Gamblers:** Great Southwest Golf Club
- Most Female Friendly • Dallas:** Gleneagles Country Club
- Most Female Friendly • Fort Worth:** Mira Vista Country Club
- Best Indoor Teaching Facility:** Shady Oaks Country Club
- Best Option in Denton:** Denton Country Club
- Best Affordable Option South of Dallas:** Thorntree Country Club
- Best Place to See an Ex-President:** Brook Hollow Golf Club
- Best Place to See a Texas Ranger:** The Vaquero Club
- Best Place to see an Ex-Professional Athlete:** Dallas National Golf Club
- Best Place to See an Aspiring Tour Player:** TPC Craig Ranch
- Best Place to See a PGA Tour Player:** Royal Oaks Country Club
- Bet You'll Get Lost Going there:** Timarron Country Club
- Club Most in Need of a New Name:** Las Colinas Country Club
- Best Place to Film a Commercial:** Colonial Country Club
- Best place to Play a Fast Round:** Shady Oaks Country Club



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