

Land's End—It's Nearer Than You Think



PHOTO COURTESY OF LINKS AT LAND'S END.

HERE IN TEXAS, IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE A TRIP TO THE GULF COAST IS the quickest way to reach land's end. But if you know where to look, you'll find it even closer, slightly hidden among the Piney Woods of East Texas.

Land's End is a community tucked into a spit of land on Lake Fork near the tiny town of Yantis. If you go there, you'll find a world-class golf course, fine dining and comfortable lodging in a pastoral enclave. First-time explorers journeying to Land's End will wonder if they're on the right path as they motor past pastures of grazing cattle. But once they've conquered the winding country route and entered the gates, they may never want to leave.

A semiprivate golf course, the Links at Land's End, is the centerpiece of an 82-house community. Situated right on the tip of a peninsula, the course is surrounded on three sides by one of the most notable bass fishing lakes in Texas, Lake Fork. Thirteen of the 18 holes play out at water's edge, offering sparkling views that bounce off snow-white sand bunkers.

Initially developed with the housing subdivision in late 1990, the course is now owned by a private 23-member investment group, the Sporting Club at Land's End. As Tom Keenan,

board president of the group, explained, hundreds of golf courses across the U.S. have been shuttered in the last decade. One reason for the closures, he said, was the market's self-correction to the oversupply of courses built during the housing boom of the 1990s and early 2000s. To ensure their golf course didn't suffer the same fate and to maintain strong property values, some Land's End residents and several other investors purchased the course when it went up for sale in 2016.

The investor group is composed of some highly qualified experts in their fields, including a CEO, chief financial officer, marketing executive, hedge fund manager and various others. Since purchasing the Links at Land's End, the group has transformed a good course into a property that's been named one of the top 10 property courses in Texas. And that's out of more than 800 clubs in the Lone Star State.

The Links at Land's End golf resort has become known as a refreshing weekend getaway for the Dallas-weary. "It's a very great traditional East Texas course with lots of trees," said golfer Ronney Pruitt. "It being close to a really nice lake and fishing, you can do several relaxing things at once. I've known the owners of the course for a long time and I think they've



OPPOSITE: Long, lean and pristine, the Links at Land's End extends into the world-renowned Lake Fork.

ABOVE: With views of the water and a plush carpet of green, this golfer enjoys her day on the Links.

RIGHT: Angela Dayton, restaurant manager, enjoys making each customer feel at home at Jacky's Pub, which is open to the public.



done a good job with the clubhouse, and they're trying to make the experience memorable."

A challenging course, the Links at Land's End has five par-3 and four par-5 holes; the rest are par 4. Designed by architects Williams, Gill & Associates, the green is dappled with a mix of hazards, towering mature trees and water features that enhance the beauty while adding the right amount of sport. The Links has been listed as a "No. 1 Hidden Gem" by *Avid Golfer* magazine and "Best Golf Course" in the upper east side of Texas by *County Line Magazine*.

"When you're out there playing, even us members, you're in one of the most beautiful settings you can think about in Texas," Keenan said. "Being with good friends, having a great time, you just feel like the most blessed person to be doing what you are doing."

While the property's success is in part the result of the owners' commitment, credit also goes to club manager Hunter Smith, course superintendent Nathan Kinsley and their staff.

Kinsley, the superintendent for the past three years, maintains the pristine TifEagle bermuda green year-round, providing putting conditions like those of championship courses.

Smith practically grew up on the Links and knows just about every blade of grass and grain of sand. His first job at the club was as a general laborer. Since then, he's worked in every department, and his attitude sets the tone. "It's an experience," he said. "When you come in the front gate, it's not just about a round of golf. You are going to have an experience from the moment the staff greets you." He proudly added, "Once you get out on the golf course, that speaks for itself!"

As with any great course, the Links at Land's End is chock-full of amenities. The pro shop is well stocked with equipment any golfer could want, including clubs, shoes, bags, balls, headcovers and the latest trends in golf fashion for men, women and youths.

The course has three staff instructors to help golfers with their game: Jacky Cupit, a PGA lifetime member and golf pro emeritus at the Links; Susan Johnson, a seasoned instructor of more than 25 years; and Huy Nguyen, director of golf operations and a onetime collegiate player.

Inside the clubhouse is Jacky's Pub, named after Cupit. It's semiprivate, and the public is welcome. The restaurant offers a full lunch and dinner menu and has a well-stocked bar and



LEFT: From left, Tom Keenan, board president of the Sporting Club at Land's End; Hunter Smith, club manager; and Huy Nguyen, director of golf operations, share a sense of pride in the Land's End experience they've helped create.

BELOW: According to Tom Keenan, any day on the course at Land's End is a good day.



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extensive wine list. The pub has themed buffet nights on the first and third Mondays of each month, such as Mexican, Italian or American favorites like barbecue or fried catfish and shrimp. And on Friday nights, patrons flock to the pub for prime rib night.

"We recommend anybody try our prime rib," says Angela Dayton, restaurant manager. "We've won awards on our prime rib, and it's very popular. Because of this, while Friday night reservations aren't needed, I'd sure recommend them."

Pub hours are 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Sunday–Thursday and 11 a.m.–9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. On Wednesdays, there's a happy hour 3–6 p.m.

Travelers can take advantage of lodging and "stay and play" packages. The Lodges at Land's End can house up to 24 people, with six bedrooms that can accommodate up to four guests each. A large common room is attached to the housing lodges and can be rented for gatherings.

The Pavilion at Land's End can also be rented for private gatherings and is an elegant setting for larger groups that seats 150 guests. Designed for weddings and other special events, the pavilion is outfitted with an audiovisual system, so it's also well suited for corporate retreats. It's also reasonably priced, especially if guests choose to bring their own food. However, those who desire a more extensive service can choose from a range of catering options offered by Jacky's Pub, from a full sit-down meal to a buffet or hors d'oeuvres.

Whether you arrive at Land's End to play or stay—or both—you'll likely be reluctant to leave. You'll also see it's not so hard to find after all, and it's as fine a place as any to be.

A member of Wood County Electric Cooperative, Land's End is a major destination and contributor to the region's economy. It also serves as a committed public steward, hosting and sponsoring several meaningful nonprofit fundraisers each year.

Blast Winter Energy Hogs

WITH HARSH WINTER WEATHER ON THE horizon, now is the time to send your home's energy hogs out the door and rid your home of these common winter culprits:

Dirty air filters. They make your heating system work harder to keep the air comfortable. Change the filter every month.

Leaky ducts. A contractor can test your ductwork for leaks and repair any problems.

Chilly water heater. If your water heater is in the garage, it's spending some of its energy trying to keep itself warm instead of devoting all its energy to heating water. Pick up an insulating jacket at a hardware or home improvement store and wrap it up.

Wood fireplace. Traditional fireplaces suck heated air into the chimney and release it outdoors. Retire yours, close off the damper and add an electric fireplace insert, which doesn't add much heat to a room but looks nice in the hearth.

Drafty doors and windows. Caulk and weatherstripping are easy to apply around windows and doors. And you'll see a difference in your energy bill.



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Co-ops Support Volunteer Firefighters in Shared Mission



A NOTE FROM CEO/GENERAL MANAGER DEBBIE ROBINSON

WE'RE PROUD OF OUR FIRST RESPONDERS HERE AT WOOD COUNTY Electric Cooperative. I'm talking about our lineworkers, who

charge into potentially deadly storms to restore power.

We also appreciate all of the first responders who make our communities better by providing critical emergency services, including those who serve as volunteer firefighters.

Most small communities across the state are served by volunteer fire departments, staffed by civilians who undergo special training so they can fight fires, respond to vehicular collisions and tend to medical emergencies. Some 65% of the more than 1 million firefighters in the United States are volunteers, according to the National Fire Protection Association. And 95% of volunteer firefighters work in departments that protect fewer than 25,000 people, which describes many of the communities in Co-op Country.

Needless to say, these firefighters bolster the well-being of our members, and they can do so only with the support of the community. Most VFDs are nonprofits with budgets that typically don't benefit from tax dollars, so they rely on donations, community fundraising and grants like those that come from WCEC's Operation Round Up. The VFD fish fries, barbecues and raffles you hear about are largely these departments' only means to raise money for new equipment.

October is National Cooperative Month, when we celebrate the many ways co-ops serve our communities. Following the cooperative principle of Concern for Community, electric cooperatives go above and beyond providing safe and reliable electricity. Indeed, we often work behind the scenes to help volunteer fire departments thrive. Read *Putting Others First* on Page 12 to learn more about the close connection between co-ops and VFDs.

We're proud that we've provided electricity to our part of the state for more than 75 years and of the many ways we have improved quality of life in our communities. Volunteer fire departments in this country go back even further in history.

The first VFD was established by Benjamin Franklin in 1736 in Philadelphia. He also helped prove that lightning—a cause of many fires in colonial America—and electricity were the same phenomenon. Franklin thought the lightning rod, which deflects lightning away from buildings to prevent fires, to be his greatest invention.

As we celebrate National Cooperative Month, we also salute volunteer firefighters. Their dedication and selflessness make our communities safer. We're thankful to contribute to their success.



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Tuesday, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*
Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
Thursday, Brookshire's, *Winnboro*
Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*

