

# GOLF ODYSSEY

February 2014 – Our 23rd Year

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE BEST IN GOLF TRAVEL

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## The Dye Preserve

Another Private You Can Play



The Dye Preserve in Jupiter, Florida, has become a magnet for touring professionals

**G**OLF ODYSSEY is pleased to announce another special arrangement with an elite private club. Throughout 2014, subscribers will have an exclusive opportunity to play The Dye Preserve on a one-time preview basis. Located in Jupiter, Florida, just a 30-minute drive from Palm Beach and Stuart, this club, whose membership is by invitation only, has set aside a few mid-morning and early afternoon tee times for you to test your game on its immaculately groomed Pete Dye-designed eighteen. “The Dye,” as members call the club, is looking for a few new members to max out its roll sheet at 300.

Unlike so many courses in the Palm Beach realm, The Dye is not part of a gated housing community. Instead, it is set on 172 acres enveloped by cypress hammocks and live oaks in the western reaches of Jupiter.

With frequent sightings of hawks, ospreys, eagles, and alligators, The Dye can seem like an old-Florida nature preserve. Like-minded members come here to play Pete Dye's gem and to work on their game at the world-class practice facility. Besides the golf course and practice ground, the only other on-site member amenity is the clubhouse. This low-relief building is neither large nor imposing. Adorned with rich Costa Rican wood interiors, the clubhouse has the feel of a private hunting lodge and features a golf shop, a library filled with an impressive collection of golf books, well-equipped men's and women's locker rooms, and a dining room that serves breakfast, lunch, and cocktails. It all makes for a warm and comfortable ambiance. Coupled with the club's emphasis on service, The Dye Preserve is a place where members and guests feel at home.



Dye Preserve's wide fairways and superb turf conditions make for a very playable layout

The current routing is actually Pete Dye's second eighteen on the site. When the club's current leadership purchased the land in the late 1980s, a rather dilapidated course was already there. Pete Dye was commissioned to bulldoze that playing field and construct "Cypress Links." In 2002, he was called back for a redesign as part of a comprehensive club upgrade. Dye remained onsite for all the work. The most arduous part of the project was clearing out the thick jungle and underbrush that infringed on the holes. While the par of each hole remained the same, Dye significantly altered the playing corridors and angles of attack. He shifted the tee boxes and added a completely new set of forward markers, reconfigured the bunkering, widened the fairways by cutting back much of the crabgrass-like rough, opened up the green fronts, and replaced the thick rough around the putting surfaces with closely-mowed Bermuda to increase playability and shot-making options. In the process, the layout, redubbed The Dye Preserve, became much more strategic for skilled players and much more enjoyable for women and players of all abilities.

Dye Preserve is not one of Pete Dye's diabolical designs. Fairways are wide and forced carries are few, at least for those who play from the proper tees. Balls sit up beautifully in the Celebration Bermuda fairways. When wayward shots veer into the trees, the pine straw floor makes balls easy to find. Trees, as well as the darker-hued St. Augustine rough and grass-faced bunkers, frame the holes and guide your eye. From a strategic standpoint, you have a clear view of what the designer wants you to do. The Dye calls upon players to hit a wide variety of shots and work the ball to fit each hole. It is perfectly balanced, too, as seven tee shots call for draws and seven for fades. Most greens are open in front and welcome run-up approach shots played along the ground.

One of the distinguishing features of Dye Preserve is its abundant and diversified bunkering. Over 100 bunkers and sandy waste areas inundate the routing. No two are alike. The sand hazards come in all different sizes, shapes, and depths. While a few are

barely large enough for someone to sit in, the bunker on the 4th, by contrast, extends more than 100 yards.

The most intimidating aspect of Dye Preserve may be the crabgrass-like St. Augustine rough that Dye likes to use on his Florida courses. The good news is the rough beautifully defines and frames the layout's more-than-ample fairways. The bad news is that if you miss the short grass, the St. Augustine is as penal a rough as there is. The Dye Preserve's Director of Golf, Matt Doyle, advises that if you find the rough, you will need to take more club and use a steep angle of attack when executing your recovery shot.

The round features a nice collection of holes that provide wonderful rhythm. On the front nine, the short par-four 5th may tempt long hitters to go for the green off the tee. Next up

is a long par five that lets you air out your driver and, given the absence of water by the large green, try to get home in two.

We especially like Dye Preserve's quartet of par threes. All four play in different directions. You'll be hard pressed to find a tougher pair of one-shotters than the two on the back nine. Thirteen, Pete's take on a redan, is the round's only truly "Dyeabolical" hole. The angled putting surface is elevated about 20 feet and slips away from right to left. Chips are absolutely brutal. The Dye's signature 17th is all carry over a pond for those who take dead aim at the pin. From the tips, it is 240 yards of sheer terror. If the direct route to the massive peninsula green proves too intimidating, there is plenty of bailout room to the left.

A common refrain at Dye Preserve is that the TifEagle greens are full of subtle movement and are very tough to read. While only one putting surface sports a severe ridge (the reachable par-five 10th), all the others are full of little pockets, spines, and mounds. Many putts will have double and even triple breaks, but almost invariably they don't break as much as you think. Our best advice on these greens is to trust your caddie.

We could happily play this strategic test every day and never get tired of the layout. The Dye, which stretches from 5,154 yards to 7,316 yards, is an excellent walking course. It is flat, and holes flow nicely one to the next. There is only one extended walk from green and tee (between the 6th green and 7th tee). In season, walkers outnumber riders by more than two to one. Those who elect to drive will find coquina pathways around the tees and greens. After that, you ride the fairways or the rough. Games are normally brisk, as members play at their own pace. Rounds are usually completed in four hours or less.

The Dye has phenomenal practice facilities. The more undulating of the club's two putting greens mimics the greens out on the course. At the dedicated short game area, which features a green



The Dye Preserve offers pure golf in a natural realm

wrapped in a bunker, you can practice any type of shot from 50 yards in. When you get to the driving range, you will find Pro V1xs set out on a majestic swathe of paspalum grass with a teeing area that is about 100 yards long and 60 yards wide. Three target greens are set up and maintained to the same standards as The Dye Preserve's actual putting surfaces. They really make you focus. If you can hit these targets during your warm-up, you should be in for a good day.

The combination of outstanding facilities and a pure golf ambiance have made The Dye Preserve a magnet for professional golfers. As more and more pros from all the tours shift their home base from the Orlando area to the Palm Beach-Jupiter realm, The Dye has proven to be a favorite practice base. Currently, 25 or so pros from the various tours are fixtures at the club between Q-School and early January. Among the notable names on the member roster are Will MacKenzie, Russ Cochran, and Azahara Muñoz.

Our visits to The Dye Preserve have been delightful. The service is top notch. From the moment the staff members first greet you and escort you to the locker room, the personal service makes you feel welcome. It is also worth lingering for lunch and a round of drinks. The clubhouse food is very good, especially the clam chowder and the Kobe burger. For something lighter, try the crab mango salad.

If you and your buddies (you are welcome to fill out a foursome) would like to take The Dye Preserve for a test run, simply contact us at [travel@golfodyssey.com](mailto:travel@golfodyssey.com). We will be delighted to make an introduction on your behalf.

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 Web: [thedyepreserve.com](http://thedyepreserve.com)

# The Boulders

## Fun Among the Rocks

Phoenix-Scottsdale, Arizona's most prolific golf mecca, is home to golf resorts of all shapes and sizes and, over the years, we have been to most of them. On our most recent visit to the Valley of the Sun, we spent a weekend at The Boulders, which now flies the Waldorf Astoria flag. Located in Carefree, on the fringes of Scottsdale, The Boulders was an early pioneer in environmentally sensitive desert hospitality. The effort to use and preserve the desert is evident in The Boulders' two stunningly attractive Jay Morrish-designed golf courses as well as the resort's main lodge and casita accommodations. An architectural paean to the desert, the entire resort was built unobtrusively amidst the desert flora and the property's iconic rock formations. Large portions of the buildings blend in so well with the surroundings that they are barely visible. If you are not paying attention, you could easily drive past the main entrance on Scottsdale Road.

Though the property no longer seems so novel since its mid-80s debut, not a lot has changed. This service-oriented, boutique-style luxury retreat continues to be a breathtakingly beautiful hideaway. The golf experience is all about stunning desert scenery, lush conditions, and a fun, challenging game for players of all abilities. Phoenix-Scottsdale's sprawling development may have worked its way to Carefree and beyond, but the resort's northern location still provides a sense of seclusion from Scottsdale's bustle and congestion. The resort's smaller scale lends itself to a more personalized stay than competitors such as the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess and The Phoenician, where leisure guests sometimes get lost amidst group traffic. The overall ambiance is rather quiet and best suited for those who revel in the desert surroundings. There is plenty to do onsite and nearby, but if you are looking for nightlife and fancy dining, you've probably come to the wrong place. Now that the resort boasts a Waldorf Astoria affiliation, guests can use their Hilton HHonors points.

The Boulders is at least 40 minutes from the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and a good half hour from the heart of Scottsdale's dining and entertainment venues. Upon arrival, most guests turn over their keys to the valets to happily relax and play onsite. Those who leave this hideaway during their stay tend to partake in desert adventures such as jeep tours, horseback riding, and hot-air ballooning. Troon North and Grayhawk, both of which boast two eighteens, are about 20 minutes away. It's also just a simple and quick 31-mile jaunt on the Carefree Highway to Quintero Golf Club. This spectacular Rees Jones layout is worth checking out whether you are at The Boulders or anywhere else in the Phoenix-Scottsdale area. For our review of Quintero, see page 7.



The South Course delivers The Boulders' signature golf experience

**Editor's Note:** The Boulders' playing experience, like other desert clubs, varies considerably throughout the year. We love March and April because the desert blooms and the turf conditions are especially lush. During the hot summer months, The Boulders closes one nine on a rotating basis and performs most of its annual course maintenance. Guests always enjoy access to eighteen holes, but the nines are mixed and matched. Bermuda grass takes over fairways in the summer and the greens roll at about 8 or 9 on the stimp meter instead of their customary 11 or 12 in-season. Not surprisingly, green fees drop dramatically during the infernally hot summer. Fall is a nice time to play, but it's complicated because of the overseeding schedule that begins in early September. One course closes for three weeks, then the other one. When the courses reopen, they are cart path-only until mid-November.



Golf at **The Boulders** not only showcases some of the most rousing scenery in the entire Scottsdale/Phoenix area, it also exhibits designer Jay Morrish's environmental consciousness and playful artistic spirit. In an era before tight water restrictions,

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► The Boulders' courses are part of a private club. Each day one eighteen is reserved for members and the other is available for resort and daily-fee play.

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when traditional courses with lavishly irrigated uninterrupted swathes of green grass still ruled the day, Jay Morrish took a somewhat more minimalistic approach by fully incorporating the natural desert terrain and iconic rock formations into his designs. He made

forced carries over the saguaro-filled desert floor an essential part of the game. While homes have been built beyond the fairways, you barely notice them.

The **South Course (Rating: B+)** is the more spectacular and target-oriented test. This is the course you should play for the resort's signature golf experience. The routing weaves around jaw-dropping rock formations and giant boulders. Have your camera ready—this is a gorgeous setting. Meanwhile, the game itself is fun and challenging for players of all skill levels. Placement, rather than power, is the key to success, as the inhospitable, unpredictable, and penal desert (a mix of hardpan, rocks, and prickly vegetation dotted by tall saguaros) frames the lush landing areas and greens. Numerous desert washes also cross the playing field. The intimidation is palpable, for the South's fairways are tight and golf balls quickly slip away from the irrigated turf. You will want to keep your driver in the bag on many holes here. Players who are prone to wayward shots

can go through a lot of balls. The good news for those using the two forward sets of tee markers is that you need not worry about forced carries off the tee.

Five sets of tee markers stretch this par-71 routing from 4,684 to 6,726 yards. From the tips (blue markers), it boasts a formidable 140 slope rating. The South Course grabs your attention immediately with a very tough start comprising the 5-13-3-1 handicap holes. The opener, a dogleg-right par four, is a great driving hole. Use the left-center rock formation as your aiming point. About 280 yards out the fairway takes a plunge. The 3rd presents a difficult drive and approach (the churning fairway can leave you with an uneven stance) en route to a green that is more undulating than most at the resort.

The opening holes whet your appetite for the exhilarating tests and vistas that follow. On the signature par-five 5th, a split fairway presents a tough decision from the tee boxes en route to a smallish green sheltered by a massive boulder formation. This hole can play very long in the wind. Next, the cart path climbs through the rocks to the summit-top tee boxes of the par-four 6th. An invitingly wide fairway with a lake to the right beckons as more boulders stand sentry behind the green. At the teeing area on the one-shot 7th, the most famous boulder at the resort, *Rosie's Rock*, looks like it is about to topple over. It is an obligatory photo op. The hole itself, a downhill that culminates at a green fronted by a desert wash, plays tricks with your depth perception—objects are closer than they appear.

The South's back nine is not as mesmerizing, but there is little drop-off from a strategic standpoint. Highlights include a couple of very good par fives (11 and 14) as well as back-to-back one-shotters (15 and 16). We especially like the scenic, straightaway, par-four 17th. Since the fairway narrows before running out into a desert wash, the tee shot is likely a layup. This leaves a downhill approach to a green surrounded by mounds and hollows.



Tight fairways and desert vegetation lend added intimidation to the South Course

The **North Course (Rating: B+)** is more straightforward and traditional than the South. Though it does not hug the boulders like its more seductive sister, the North features wider playing corridors that give players many more opportunities to hit driver. You can count on challenging approach shots to the stoutly defended greens; an aerial entry is required on many holes.

The back nine presents the toughest stretch at the resort. Those playing from the 6,836-yard tips must negotiate five par fours in excess of 400 yards. The uphill dogleg-left 10th is a monstrous, 451-yard par four. Bunkers and the desert lurk for

► The Boulders is an enjoyable place for women golfers. Most of the forward tee boxes are placed ahead of the desert carries.

those who dare to cut the corner. There's no sand at the green, but a miss to the right can lead to a lost ball. The par-five 12th presents the widest landing area of the round and yet still rates as the North's no. 2 handicap test. Water is

a threat on a couple of the incoming holes. Fourteen, a one-shotter that plays between 81 and 181 yards, is all carry over a lake from the back markers. Another lake and a bunker protect the left side of the green on the dogleg-right, par-four finisher.

The North and South courses are well marked. Players receive a pocket-sized card that provides a basic look at the holes and some distances. You can also purchase a yardage guide (\$8) that shows both courses in more detail—a good investment as the carts are not equipped with GPS.

The Boulders has excellent practice facilities. There is a full driving range, a short game area with a bunker, and a nice putting green. Before starting the round, all players are invited to take a cup of water and ice. A beverage cart circulates throughout the courses.

## LODGING

Upon entering **The Boulders (Rating: A-)**, you drive up to the main lodge where you will be greeted by the valets and ushered inside for a personalized check-in. The lodge, which blends in harmoniously with the impressive rock formations and desert vegetation, has no accommodations. It houses the registration and concierge desks, a special events room, and Palo Verde restaurant and terrace. The main pool is also located here.

Once registration is complete, the valets whisk guests to their suites in oversized golf carts. The Boulders calls its primary adobe-style accommodations *casitas*. They are arranged on little cul-de-sacs a short distance from the main lodge.

*Signature* units are on ground level while *Sonoran* casitas command the second level. The stand-alone *Boulders* casitas offer more privacy. All of the accommodations, which had gotten a bit stale over the years, have been revitalized thanks to a thorough renovation performed when Waldorf Astoria assumed management of the property. The interiors were repainted, all the bedding was replaced, and the bathrooms were completely retro-fitted. The casitas, which are decorated in the relaxing color scheme of the surrounding desert, are identical on the inside and include a king-size bed, sitting area, flat-screen television, fireplace, ceiling fan, and patio. The bathroom features a separate closet, a vanity area, twin basins, soaking tub, glassed-in shower, and separate commode room. In addition to the casitas, the resort also has more luxurious *Pueblo Villas* and two and three-bedroom *Haciendas*.

You can walk to just about anywhere you would want to go on the resort in 10 to 12 minutes. Most casitas are no more than five minutes from the main lodge. There's no need to walk unless you want to, however, as staff members are at your service to transport you throughout the property and to the El Pedregal shopping center.

The Boulders imposes a \$30 resort fee per room, per night. The fee includes local calls and Wi-Fi, use of the fitness room, day access to the spa and the spa pool, and all gratuities except for food and beverage personnel. Given the reliance on shuttles to get around the resort, the no tipping policy is a great convenience. We have been to many places where the resort fee included gratuities but where staff members were only too happy to take tips. Here, whenever we offered a gratuity, it was politely declined.



## RESTAURANTS

Dining is not a strong suit of **The Boulders (Dining Rating: B-)**. The emphasis tilts decidedly to casual and comfortable rather than memorable culinary experiences. The former marquee dining room in the main lodge, Latilla, which was notable for its round interior and tree-trunk columns, is now only used for special functions. **Palo Verde**, also in the lodge, is open daily for breakfast and Thursday through Monday for dinner. When we dined there this summer, the Southwestern chicken breast main course was served without a vegetable accompaniment. The apple crisp is a house favorite dessert. Service was friendly but spotty. Although we were seated on the patio on a very warm night, we had to ask for water refills repeatedly. The other irritant came from the grasshoppers that bombarded us a few times with surprising force.

We had satisfying lunches poolside at the spa, where salads and healthy choices dominate the menu, and at the golf club's **Grill Restaurant and Bar**, where you won't go wrong with the Cobb Salad. The Grill is also a good choice for breakfast.

The resort's most enjoyable dining venue is the colorful **Spotted Donkey Cantina** in the El Pedregal Shopping Center. This can be a lively place at Happy Hour. Start with an exotic frozen margarita and the nachos. We recommend the *Chimayo Chile Rubbed Pork Tenderloin* with bourbon-ancho chili sauce and green chili mac and cheese.



## NON-GOLF ACTIVITIES

Golf may be the primary attraction at The Boulders, but guests have plenty of other alternatives. The resort's tennis garden features eight partially sunken clay, plexi-cushion, and hard courts. The Waldorf Astoria Spa (formerly the Golden Door Spa) is about a 10-minute walk or short shuttle ride from the casitas and offers a full range of treatments and services. The resort's well-equipped fitness center occupies the same building. The nicer of the resort's two pools is also located at the spa. The other pool, at the main lodge, is rather small. Be advised that there is no specific children's area, so you may not be able to escape toddlers and kids.

If you enjoy desert walks, The Boulders has a number of trails and pathways that weave their way around the saguaros and rock

formations. The surrounding foothills present more rigorous hiking opportunities. Those who wish to go horseback riding, hot-air ballooning, or take desert jeep tours can make arrangements through the concierge. Finally, shoppers will find some shops and galleries at the El Pedregal center at the edge of the resort; for more serious shopping, downtown Scottsdale remains one of the West's retail meccas.

### The Boulders, A Waldorf Astoria Resort 34631 North Tom Darlington Drive, Carefree, AZ 85377

Tel: 800-553-1717 or 480-488-9009

Web: theboulders.com

160 rooms and suites from \$169.

Green fee: mid-January to late April, \$175 to \$225.

Course maintenance: June through September, when one nine closes on a rotating basis. Overseeding: October to early November: each course closes for three weeks.

COURTESY OF THE BOULDERS RESORT



The desert still reigns supreme at The Boulders

### Planning A Golf Trip?

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 800.550.2286 x85

# Quintero Golf Club

Remote but Worthy in the Valley of the Sun

With all due respect to the South Course, the most exhilarating round we played during our most recent stay at The Boulders was **Quintero Golf Club (Rating: A-)** in Peoria. This formerly all-private club was built with the expectation that the westward development of the valley would continue. It commands the last attractive (and developable) spot in the valley about 20 miles from the cowboy town of Wickenburg. As it did for so many nascent real estate developments and golf clubs, the Great Recession dealt Quintero a blow. The good news is that the club has come out of receivership and is now a semi-private facility. Troon Golf manages Quintero, which is one of the most spectacular courses in all of Arizona.

Quintero is golf on a big scale. This broad-shouldered layout commands rugged terrain. Rees Jones's thoughtful design occupies a massive site and features dramatic elevation changes, majestic plunging tee shots played from promontories, and wonderful variety. Several holes present grand panoramas. Some houses have been built, but nothing like the original developers thought. For the most part, you play in a rousing, Sonoran desert landscape free from distractions.

Quintero's practice range, putting greens, and 1st hole are more than a five-minute drive in your golf cart from the parking lot and "temporary" clubhouse. The par-72 layout extends from 5,307 yards to 7,208 yards from five judiciously spaced sets of tee markers. Quintero may be a bear from the tips and the 6,845 gold markers (147 and 143 slope, respectively), but it is much more manageable at 6,401 yards (128) and 5,984 yards (127).

Rees Jones gives players a good chance to score on the front nine, thanks to generous corridors and benign containment mounds and contours. The 1st hole is as straightforward as it gets: a downhill tee shot to a very wide fairway followed by an approach to a green guarded only by a large trap on the left. Here, as on most holes, you can run the ball onto the putting surface. The 6th and 9th, both of which feature big-drop tee shots, comprise half of Quintero's fabulous quartet of par threes. Nine is the signature test, with a rushing stream emptying into a wide pool in front and to the right of the putting surface.

By the time you reach the back nine, Jones is no longer in such a friendly mood. There's more elevation change, more ominous desert at the margins, and more strategically placed bunkers. Most members consider the back nine at least three shots tougher than the front. While it is not hard to play the front



Quintero, a dramatic Rees Jones design, is well situated for guests of The Boulders

nine with the same ball, it would serve you well to have a sleeve in reserve for the back side.

Each hole at Quintero leaves you full of anticipation for the next. We especially like the contours and movement of the brawny golfing grounds. Several fairways are full of ripples, and the terrain often tilts, though not uncomfortably. Quintero's large greens roll fast and true and are not overly undulating.

For the most part, the course is well marked, and Jones gives you good looks with clearly defined safe areas. There are a couple of notable exceptions (the no. 1 handicap 8th, for instance), so consult the yardage guide and pay attention when the amiable starter points out a couple of spots where what you see isn't necessarily what you get. A rudimentary GPS system in the carts provides basic distance readings but no hole depictions.

Quintero is still operating out of temporary facilities. There is a small dining area which serves up burgers, wraps, and salads. Quintero's rack rate green fee maxes out at \$260 and drops well below \$100 in the summer. The club website generally offers better green fee rates than you can get by phoning the club, though a call may turn up more attractive tee time slots.

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## Quintero Golf Club

16752 West State Route 74, Peoria, AZ 85383

Tel: 928-501-1500

Web: [quinterogolf.com](http://quinterogolf.com)

Green fee: mid-January through March, \$260; April and May, \$199 to \$209; June through September, \$50 to \$90.

Aerification: May. Overseeding: late September to mid-October.

# Los Cabos Round Up

## The Best of Baja

Ever since the publication of our November issue featuring Diamante, we've been overwhelmed not only by the number of inquiries we've received about playing this spectacular David Love III design, but also by the deluge of questions about Los Cabos in general. We probably should not have been surprised. Located at the tip of the Baja Peninsula and encompassing the 20-mile "corridor" between (and now beyond) the towns of Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo, Los Cabos has long been a *GOLF ODYSSEY* favorite, and it just keeps getting better as development continues. The Dunes Course at Diamante is Cabo's latest and greatest jewel, but other highly anticipated eighteens are due to come on board shortly. These include a long awaited Tom Fazio creation at Chileno Bay; Quivera, which has two Jack Nicklaus eighteens under construction; and Diamante's second eighteen, the first finished design from Tiger Woods.

This bouquet of courses enriches a gorgeous destination that boasts great weather year round and yet didn't even rate a blip on the golf traveler's radar screen until 1992. That was the year Jack Nicklaus built Cabo's first eighteen for the Palmilla Resort. Not long after, Nicklaus added oceanfront courses at Cabo del Sol and El Dorado (now private).

Those seeking luxury accommodations can pick from any number of high-end hotels. More recently, Puerto Los Cabos, a 2,000-acre development bordering a nature preserve, has become the poster child for the region's boldest and most controversial construction. This mega-resort has taken the standard blueprint

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► Renting a car will give you freedom and save you from relying on expensive taxis. Driving is not bad, but beware of getting ripped off on car insurance!

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for golf, luxury homes, hotels, and a marina and put it on steroids. Here one can find 18 holes of golf and two new hotels—the artsy Hotel El Ganzo and the all-inclusive Secrets.

While no longer a quaint and quiet fishing hideaway, Cabo is hard to beat for its



LARRY LAMBRECHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Cabo Real, a formidable test designed by Robert Trent Jones II, boasts a notable front nine

hours. From the eastern US you can fly in the morning and still take to the tee or hit the pool in the afternoon. Once on the ground, you will find an excellent highway linking the corridor and lots of conveniences from home, including a Costco. Within the corridor, we generally situate ourselves a little closer to Cabo San Lucas for the most convenient access to the top golf courses.

One caveat about playing in Los Cabos is the expense. The top rack rate at Cabo del Sol's Ocean Course is \$365. Greens fees run at least \$200 at most courses. Be sure to check the course websites and various tee time services for discounts. The website [loscabosguide.com](http://loscabosguide.com) sometimes has golf discounts in the form of prepaid vouchers, but none were being offered at press time.



It's hard to go wrong when it comes to golf in Los Cabos. While we clearly have our favorites, there is something for just about everyone depending on what you are looking for and how much you are willing to spend.

## THE GOOD

**Cabo San Lucas Country Club** This club, formerly known as The Raven, is our least favorite course in the Baja. This inland routing rambles over relatively flat terrain, although the back



Worthy golf courses and stunning resorts dot “The Corridor” from Cabo San Lucas to San José del Cabo

nine is somewhat more interesting than the front. If you are looking for a less expensive option, or a place to shake off the rust before tackling Cabo’s better offerings, you may want to consider Cabo San Lucas Country Club. **Rating: C.**

**Cabo Real** The front side of this Robert Trent Jones, Jr. layout has fine moments, as it plays high up in the hills and provides gorgeous Baja panoramas. Sadly, the back nine is not as intriguing. Hotels and the Transpeninsular Highway intrude on an otherwise beautiful landscape. Between the elevation changes, forced carries, and numerous optical illusions, Cabo Real can be quite challenging for first-time players. **Rating: B-**

**Club Campestre** Set in the foothills at the edge of San José Del Cabo, this circa-2008 Jack Nicklaus creation can make for a fun round. The course has no shortage of risk-reward shots and typically provides a “safer” route from tee to green. Be advised that the large, undulating greens may befuddle even those who are skilled with the flat stick. Like Cabo Real, the views are somewhat tarnished by the high-rise developments along this stretch of “the corridor.” **Rating: B.**

**Puerto Los Cabos Golf Club** Another worthy, relative newcomer to the Cabo golf scene, Puerto Los Cabos is part of a massive real estate development near San José del Cabo that

includes a marina, private homes, hotels, and a golf club. The golf course currently comprises nine holes by Greg Norman and nine holes by Jack Nicklaus. Ultimately, the plan is to have both designers return and expand the complex to 36 holes. In the meantime, players enjoy an interesting opportunity to compare and contrast their styles. Although we tend not to be big fans of Norman courses, here we prefer The Shark’s work to the Golden Bear’s. The combination of desert and ocean on Norman’s front or “Mission” nine, still pristine in its isolation, makes for a spectacular setting. Bring your camera to the tee of the par-three 6th, one of the most breathtaking views in all of Los Cabos. Gazing out on 10 miles of coastline, one is easily distracted from making the proper club selection for the 105-foot drop to the green. Nicklaus’s “Marina” nine features rippling fairways (even the best of tee shots often result in uneven lies) and meandering greens. Our favorite hole on this side is the no. 1 handicap 14th, a dogleg-right that requires two carries over arroyos. Images of Ireland come to mind as one approaches the green set in seaside dunes. **Rating: B+.**

**Note:** Cabo Real, Club Campestre, and Puerto Los Cabos are all managed by Questro Golf. This alliance means golfers who play at least two of the courses can often save substantially. Check the course websites for special promotions.

LARRY LAMBRECHT PHOTOGRAPHY



Puerto Los Cabos features nines by Greg Norman and Jack Nicklaus

## THE BETTER

**Palmilla Golf Club** This pioneering, circa-1992 Jack Nicklaus creation inaugurated the golf craze in Los Cabos. The original eighteen comprised the Mountain and Arroyo nines. The Ocean nine was added later. Still today, Palmilla remains a fair, challenging, intriguing, and beautiful desert test. Stern par fours and a couple reachable par fives combine to make the Mountain nine the club’s jewel. The most memorable hole is the par-four 5th, a cape-style dogleg-right over a deep canyon. After biting off as much as you dare, the approach plays downhill over the same arroyo to an amphitheater green. The Arroyo is Palmilla’s shortest and most player-friendly nine. A notable exception is the 243-yard, big-drop par-three 8th. The green, which appears tiny from the tee,



The Mountain and Arroyo nines provide the best combination at Palmilla

is actually quite ample, and there's also a generous but largely concealed bailout area to the right. Jack carved the Ocean nine into the desert mountain terrain that runs down to the sea. By the 6th green, players have already traversed six hundred feet of elevation change. Alas, the Ocean nine is Palmilla's least interesting layout, as only one hole actually plays by the sea. Houses, rather than the sea, dominate the vistas. Service is excellent at this Troon-managed facility. **Rating: B+.**

**Desert Course, Cabo del Sol** While not as famous as Cabo del Sol's marquee Ocean Course, Tom Weiskopf's first design south of the border follows a golden desert formula that made hits out of layouts such as the Troon North's Monument and Pinnacle courses in Scottsdale. This user-friendly, target-style layout features generous landing areas and few significant forced carries. Although the highway bisects the course, the exposed terrain permits views of the Sea of Cortez from almost every hole. While the rugged, arid desert beyond the irrigated turf poses a constant threat, water on the two memorable closing holes can easily blow up your scorecard. Seventeen is a 435-yard dogleg whose green is defended by a bunker to the right and water to the left. On 18, a dramatic, downhill, 427-yard par four, players must clear a winding creek twice en route to a green guarded stoutly by bunkers in front and back and water to the right. **Rating: B+.**

## THE BEST

**Ocean Course, Cabo del Sol** This Jack Nicklaus eighteen tops all other public access courses in Los Cabos for its exhilarating desert golf by the sea. Back in the days before paspalum grass opened the world's most dramatic seaside venues to golf, Jack

Nicklaus called the Ocean Course his "chance to design Pebble Beach" on the most spectacular site he had ever seen. Nearly twenty years later, the Ocean Course has passed the test of time. The round opens with four target-style tests in the high desert before transitioning into a three-hole stretch along the sea. Thanks to upgrades a few years back on these holes, the "wow" factor is even greater. On the back nine, Nicklaus sends us into the highlands again before bringing us home along the sea with three sublime holes that provide one of golf's great finishes. The famed 17th, with its carry over desert rocks, a sandy cove, and, if playing the tips, the fateful ocean, is one of the finest par threes on the planet. Eighteen, a dogleg right, clings to the sea before culminating at a sloping green set literally on the beach. As an added treat, you can savor some excellent fish tacos when making the turn. **Rating: A-.**

**Diamante** The best place to play in the entire region is private, but thanks to an exclusive arrangement, as a *GOLF ODYSSEY* subscriber, you can test your game on this majestic, Davis Love III-designed links that debuted at no. 52 on *Golf Magazine's* World Top-100 List. Routed primarily through soaring, wind-battered dunes, this minimalistic layout is full of thrills that players of all abilities can appreciate. The varied holes play toward, away from, and alongside the sea. An utterly unique, world-class practice area (complete with a slider bar), excellent, English-speaking caddies, and complimentary snacks and drinks at the comfort stations make a round at Diamante an unforgettable experience. **Rating: A.**

**Note:** Diamante's second course, which is Tiger Woods' first fully-realized design, is due to open later this year. For in-depth information on Diamante, see *GOLF ODYSSEY*, November 2013.



Los Cabos may have a wider and greater collection of luxury resorts than any golf destination in the world. We have listed our favorites below (all "A+/A" properties), but other options, such as the low-key boutique Casa Natalia right in the heart of San José del Cabo, abound. Alas, expect some sticker shock when staying at these wonderfully memorable retreats. Those hoping to keep within a budget will find almost every major chain, in addition to lower priced options, along "the corridor." A number of all-inclusive properties can be found as well as a multitude of condominiums and homes for rent. Given our golf preferences, we prefer to stay closer to Cabo del Sol, which also provides relatively good access to Diamante.

**Esperanza**, an Auberge resort, enjoys an idyllic location outside of Cabo San Lucas. The centerpiece of this adult-oriented retreat is a spectacular infinity-edge pool. Standard casitas at the Hotel at Esperanza are 925-square feet of tastefully decorated, blissful opulence. Adjacent to the hotel are the Residences at Esperanza. These three- and four-bedroom villas are open to all ages. Although the hotel pool is off limits to guests of the Residences, they do enjoy access to three dedicated pools as well as almost all of the other resort facilities and amenities of the Esperanza property. Residences can be booked directly through Esperanza or, in some cases, directly from the owners or real estate brokers.



Capella Pedregal, yet another ultra-luxury Cabo retreat, is an architectural marvel

**Las Ventanas al Paraíso**, a Rosewood Resort, adjoins Cabo Real Golf Club on the Sea of Cortez. This spectacular Mediterranean/Mexican-styled property delivers privacy and pampering amidst a realm of desert gardens, cascading water, and an infinity-edge pool. The dreamlike suites are housed in sun-bleached white buildings and feature generous living areas with wood-burning fireplaces, limestone mosaic floors, and sumptuous, tiled bathrooms with two-person soaking tubs. All but two of the suites look out on the sea. The most exquisite panoramas are reserved for the split-level *Oceanfront Rooftop Terrace Suites*, which feature very private, romantic terraces. Every detail is exquisite and service is an art form. If one desires even more pampering, the expanded spa offers the ultimate treatments in relaxation and revitalization

At **One & Only Palmilla**, the enchanting nostalgia of Old Mexico still pervades this converted fishing lodge that once attracted Hollywood celebrities and the world's top sport fishermen. Luxuriant vegetation and fountains engulf the hacienda-style architecture of the resort, which is located about three miles from San José del Cabo. A major renovation a few years back revitalized this dramatically situated paradise. Palmilla is the most family-friendly of Los Cabos' luxury hideaways. It is also one of the few places with a swimmable beach in Los Cabos. Resort facilities include a marina, a fishing fleet, tennis courts, and yet another infinity-edge pool. We've always been impressed by the staff members, who greatly outnumber the guests.

**Capella Pedregal**, the latest addition to Cabo's top-shelf offerings, is an architectural marvel. Carved into a mountain that slopes down to the beach, this boutique resort sits on the Pacific side of Cabo San Lucas. The town and resort are linked by Capella Pedregal's private tunnel through the mountain.

Each suite and casita features custom-made furniture, premium bedding, a rainfall shower, a fireplace, and a private terrace and plunge pool overlooking the ocean. Both before and during your stay, one of the resort's "Personal Assistants" will help plan the details of your trip. Even if you do not stay here, it's worth coming to see the property and dine cliff-side at Capella's seafood restaurant, El Farallon, or, for an authentic Mexican fine dining experience, Don Manuel's.

## RESTAURANTS

Los Cabos continues to add more and more exciting dining options. The restaurants at our recommended hotels and resorts tend to be quite good, if rather expensive bets, and typically feature stunning views. Here are some of our favorite restaurants from our years of frequenting the region.

**Bar Esquina**, located in the heart of Cabo San Lucas, has a great atmosphere. The bar scene is quite lively, especially later in the evening. Some of our favorite dishes are the shortrib, blue cheese, and arugula pizza, the wild mushroom gnocchi with goat cheese, and the mouth-watering cheeseburger. We are fans of **The Office** and **Edith's**, sister restaurants in Cabo San Lucas, even though they cater to the tourist crowd. No trip to Los Cabos is complete without lunch on the beach at The Office, although Edith's is a better dinner choice. Highlights include killer margaritas and one of the best Caesar salads you will find anywhere. **La Fonda**, a more intimate restaurant located in a quiet portion of Cabo San Lucas away from the tourist drag, is an excellent choice for creative Mexican fare prepared with fresh and often unusual ingredients.

## COMING IN THE MONTHS AHEAD...

Santa Barbara Beach & Golf Resort in Curaçao; Kauai, Hawaii; Pawley's Island, the jewel of Myrtle Beach; and Castiglion del Bosco

**Nick-San** is great for sushi. The owner has a fleet of fishing boats that ply the local waters for the freshest seafood. The variety is astounding and the Mexican chefs are dexterous and lightning quick with their knives. Nick-San has two locations: one in downtown Cabo San Lucas and the other at the Shoppes at Palmilla. For a special occasion or romantic diner, try **El Farallon** at the stunning Capella Pedregal resort. This is an excellent seafood restaurant. You can select your dinner from the market-style arrangement of the day's fresh offerings. We highly recommend arriving before sunset to take in the views. El Farallon is rather pricey, but well worth it. A relative newcomer is **Marejada**. Don't be misled by its unassuming small storefront. Here, Chef Miquel Luna serves up outstanding and reasonably priced fare. Share your favorite tastes and he will put together a tasting menu for you, complete with wines.

Over on the San José del Cabo side of the corridor, the Casa Natalia's **Ma Cusina** is a very romantic restaurant in the center of town. The ambiance has the patina of Old Mexico and provides an ideal setting for the chef's Mediterranean-influenced Mexican cuisine. Ma Cusina has an extremely well-conceived wine list. If you are into the farm-to-table movement, you should visit **Flora Farm**. This working 10-acre organic farm also features a restaurant component and serves handmade dishes prepared from the crops in production. Be sure to use a GPS or get detailed directions if you are driving, as the restaurant is quite remote and can be very tough to find.



LARRY LAMBRECHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Cabo del Sol's Ocean Course tops all the other public-access layouts in Los Cabos

many other deep sea fishing destinations, you don't have to travel far out to sea to reel in a trophy catch. For a charter, call Lori at Cabo Magic (619-819-8634, [cabomagic.com](http://cabomagic.com)). Other favorite activities include whale-watching expeditions (in the winter months), boat rides to see the stunning El Arco rock formations, windsurfing, sea kayaking, snorkeling, and scuba diving. The waters of Los Cabos are a diver's paradise filled with large schools of colorful fish as well as hammerhead sharks and giant sea turtles. On terra firma, favorite activities include horseback riding, desert jeep tours, and zip lining. For those who enjoy nightlife, Cabo San Lucas is always good for a party. Be advised that you are sure to encounter hordes of sloppy spring breakers on the main drag in March.

## NON-GOLF ACTIVITIES

Most of the choice hotels and resorts of Los Cabos feature a range of activities, glorious pools, and fabulous spas. Otherwise, few playgrounds are the equal of the tip of Baja California. The eternal attraction of Los Cabos is the sea. Sport fishing—for dorado, marlin, sailfish, yellowfin tuna, and more—is world-class at the confluence of the Pacific Ocean and Sea of Cortez, and unlike so

## A GUIDE TO OUR RATINGS

As a rule of thumb, establishments in the "A" range are among the world's finest and are not to be missed. Those in the "B" range still offer merit, but fall short of "must-go" status. Lower ratings may not meet the standards of our discerning readers.

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