

Cliffhanging Golf, Baja Cuisine and Butler Service in Los Cabos, Mexico

By Anita Draycott

Hollywood stars such as Bing Crosby and John Wayne, lured by the legendary sport fishing, initially put Los Cabos (nicknamed Cabo) on the tourist map back in the 1950s. And while fishing still draws avid anglers to what's called "marlin alley" on Mexico's Baja Peninsula, Los Cabos has also become one of the world's top golf, fun and sun destinations.

Certainly, the most spectacular new course is Quivira. I was there when Jack Nicklaus cut the ribbon on Dec. 4, 2014 and officially opened his epic, long-awaited layout 10 minutes from downtown Cabo San Lucas.

Quivira may be the most daring, eclectic course Nicklaus has ever built. It has the fewest bunkers and the smallest green (number 13) of any course on his resume. The heart-stopping front nine is par-34; the equally dramatic back nine is par 38 —another departure from the usual.

With a view of the sea from every hole, Quivira has more oceanfront exposure

than any other course in Los Cabos. All 18 fairways feature panoramic views of the Pacific. From December to March, you are likely to spot whales leaping in the wild blue yonder. The track starts at sea level, scales cliffs more than 275 feet above the Pacific, spans canyons and arroyos, meanders through dunes and desert, and returns to the sea at the finish.

There's never a dull moment at Quivira. For example, the 10-minute drive to the fifth follows a switchback route up the side of a mountain. The fairway, slanted below a dune on the right, traces the edge of sheer granite cliffs to the left as it tumbles downhill to a transition zone before dropping to a rock-walled, cliff-hanging green 106 feet below the tee.

After the first four holes, golfers will experience the "greatest drive in golf" as they manoeuvre their carts to the first comfort station perched 200 feet above the ocean, where complementary snacks and drinks are offered. Perhaps a breakfast burrito and a Bloody Margarita?



When asked to predict how Quivira will impact his legacy, Nicklaus says, “I think some people will say it’s the most spectacular and best golf course they have ever seen, and others will say, ‘You have got to be kidding.’ I don’t think there will be a lot of middle ground.” If you look at the game of golf as having a fun experience, and playing in an exciting and beautiful place, you will absolutely love it.”

I can’t argue with you, Jack.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE GOLF EXPERIENCE

In order to play Quivira, you must be a resident or guest of one four Pueblo Bonito Oceanfront Resorts and Spas in Los Cabos: the adults-only Pueblo Bonito Pacifica; the family-friendly Pueblo Bonito Sunset (both share property with Quivira); Pueblo Bonito Rosé; or Pueblo Bonito Los Cabos. Stay and play packages are available.

Your golf day at Quivira starts with a complimentary shuttle service. Warm up on the double-sided range set directly on the beach.

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The Oasis, which serves as a halfway house for golfers transiting from the 8th

and 11th holes, serves inventive takes on classic Baja cuisine. A deluxe bar features *blanco*, *reposado* and *anejo* tequilas. Players may refresh themselves again at the 16th tee, which sits high above the course and marks the layout’s return to home. All food and drinks are included in your round.



BRITISH BUTLER SERVICE

Pueblo Bonito Pacifica Towers, the newest addition to the all-inclusive resort neighbouring Quivira golf course, offers 24-hour British butler service.

My butler, Abel, e-mailed a Guest Preference Form to me a few days before my arrival, introducing himself and asking about my arrival and departure times, snack preferences (sweet, salty, healthy), selections from the pillow



and soap menus and suggesting dinner reservations at the resort’s various restaurants.

Escorting me to my room, overlooking the pool and ocean, Abel and I exchanged mobile numbers and he invited me to text or call him with any requests. Would I like my bag unpacked? My linen shirt pressed? Could he bring me anything to drink? No, that bottle of Veuve Clicquot chilling in the ice bucket will do nicely, thanks.

Butler service is just the “tip of the iceberg” when it comes to pampering and indulging at Pueblo Bonito Pacifica

Towers. Hook & Cook is an interactive culinary experience. Guests and chef cast their fishing poles into the sea from the shoreline. Chef then demonstrates how to turn the “catch of the day” into an extravaganza of ceviches. His signature ceviche bar includes an array of seafood with house-made add-ons such as smoked salsas, beet ink, infused oils and emulsions.

A TALE OF TWO TOWNS

When it’s finally time to tear yourself away from the resort, you’ll want to explore Los Cabos and the region’s two dramatically distinct personas.



iconic landmark of Cabos. Forget the pricey sunset cruise. Instead, go for a glass-bottom boat tour from the marina. You might want to make a day of it by taking a picnic and snorkeling gear and arranging for your captain to pick you up at a designated time.

Happy hour is the best time to hit the local watering holes around the marina. Sample a Cabo Waborita and dance 'til the wee hours at Cabo Wabo. Try to avoid being strung upside down at the Giggling Marlin where the motto is, "If our food, drinks and service are not up to your standards... please lower your standards."

From December to March, seven different kinds of whales, including grays and killer orcas come to these waters to feed and give birth before heading back up to Alaska. Take a Zodiac Whale Watching Adventure with Cabo Expeditions. On my trip, the captain brought the Zodiac so close to a mother and her two babies we could smell their breath. The interaction between the mom and her young was so fascinating, we didn't mind getting drenched by their tail splashes.

There's no place on earth quite like Los Cabos, where craggy mountains, desert landscapes, the Sea of Cortez and Pacific Ocean all meet. It's no wonder that Cabos claimed the honour of "Mexico's Leading Destination" at the 2019 World Travel Awards. ■

San José del Cabo has retained the look and vibe of an authentic Mexican town. Cobblestone streets, intimate restaurants and boutiques radiate from the central main square and mission church. The town celebrates Art Walk on Thursday nights from November to June. Studios and galleries around Alvaro Obregon stay open until 9 p.m. They encourage guests to browse and buy by handing out free libations and snacks. You'll discover a high quality of paintings, sculpture, jewellery and local handicrafts.

When you've worked up at appetite, drop into La Lupita Taco & Mezcal in San Jose for a tasty variety of tacos and Mexican spirits. You can eat inside or out on the patio. The décor is Mexican shabby chic, the waiters are friendly, and the food is cheap and authentic. Along with tacos they serve great tortilla soup and fresh salads.

For finer dining, head to La Revolucion where the passionate mixologists, under the guidance of Osvaldo Vazquez, will concoct just the right cocktail to go with your meal. Yes, they also sell

wine, but they encourage the cocktail pairings. I found that the Mezcal-based La Revolucion, spiked with chili poblano liqueur, sesame oil and citrus juices, was *perfecto* with my tuna *tiradito*.

Cabo San Lucas, on the other end of the highway (called the corridor), is party central with funky bars and the slick Luxury Avenue Mall near the marina.

While in Cabo San Lucas, you must take a boat ride past Lover's Beach, basking sea lions and El Arche, the remarkable rock formation that has become the

