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ROUNDS ARE LONG, SCENIC AT LOS CABOS' QUIVIRA GOLF CLUB

Ocean views, rest stations are stunners at tip of Baja

BY DAVE MCKIBBEN

Rounds at Quivira Golf Club in Los Cabos, Mexico, aren't setting speed records. In fact, it's rare anyone finishes 18 holes in less than five hours at this stunning Jack Nicklaus designed course on the tip of the Baja Peninsula.

Sam Miller, an 18-year-old competitive golfer from Seattle, understands why some might linger for up to six hours on Quivira.

"Quivira is more than a golf course; it's an experience," he said. "You're playing 18 holes, stopping every four or five holes, and you're looking at these breathtaking views over the Pacific Ocean, seeing waves crashing into these huge rocks. It's just beautiful."

Offering to-die-for ocean views on every hole, Quivira starts at sea level, scales cliffs, spans canyons and arroyos and meanders through dunes and desert. With four "comfort stations" strategically sprinkled around the course, Quivira gives players a compelling reason to pause or reset their round several times.



QUIVIRA GOLF CLUB

The sixth hole at Quivira Golf Club. All 18 have an ocean view.

The most remote, and striking, comfort station is perched atop a cliff, overlooking the Pacific Ocean and the fifth tee. The nearly one-mile, 10-minute climb from the fourth green winds up the side of a mountain along a narrow cart path.

"You're driving up this huge hill, a mile or so in a golf cart and you're wondering, 'Am I going to the right hole?'" Miller said. "And then you get there, and it's just incredible. Even the bathroom is amazing; it's like a bathroom inside a cave."

What awaits golfers who need a break from the Cabo heat is a small restaurant packed with croissant sandwiches, fresh fruit and brownies. The bar is stocked with high-end Tequila, an assortment of Mexican beers and bottled waters. And while sipping an ice-cold cerveza, golfers can check out the jumping manta rays show in the Pacific, some 300 feet below.

"The comfort stations allow you to step back and appreciate what you're doing," said Stephen Rivera, who was visiting the resort from Chicago with his wife. "I've never experienced stopping so many times and then refocusing again, but it was a lot of fun."

The tight fairways, tricky greens and blind approach shots can dampen the mood, but only for a split second.

"I knew I probably wasn't going to play my best round, but I also realized I was playing one of the nicest courses in the world," Miller said. "You just gotta kind of take it in and notice where you're at. You're playing golf in one of the most tropical places in the world."

While caddies aren't part of the overall experience at Quivira, the course graciously supplies one on the fifth hole for golfers needing distance and direction tips

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on the dogleg oceanfront par 4. The caddy doubles as a cameraman for those wishing to capture the moment on the green, which looks back onto a secluded beach and the Pueblo Bonito Sunset Beach Resort, one of several excellent lodging options for Quivira players.

The semi-private Quivira course, available only to Pueblo Bonito resort guests and homeowners in the Quivira Los Cabos Community, opened in 2014 and quickly established itself as one of the elite courses in Mexico and the world. Golf Digest recently included Quivira in its list of the "World's 100 Greatest Golf Courses," three other Los Cabos courses also made the list.

It wasn't long ago that San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas were known more for sport fishing than golf. But thanks to an abundance of prime real estate along the Sea of Cortez and Pacific Ocean, and imaginative layouts by legendary golfers-turned architects such as Nicklaus, Davis Love III, Greg Norman and Tiger Woods, Cabo is now clearly a golfer's paradise.

It won't be long before Quivira golfers will have another place to stay — a St. Regis Resort hotel is scheduled to break ground next year.

"There's a boom in construction around here," said Luis Tucker, a real estate sales adviser at Quivira. "We're like Cancun about 15 years ago."

McKibben is a freelance travel writer.