



1 QUIVIRA GOLF CLUB

Photo courtesy of Nicklaus Design

The 10 Best Publicly Playable Golf Courses in Los Cabos



BY CHRIS SANDS
CABO SAN LUCAS LOCAL EXPERT

From the moment Jack Nicklaus arrived on the scene in the early 1990s, Los Cabos has been in the midst of an unprecedented golfing boom. Four of its 15 courses are now ranked among the World's 100 Best Courses (U.S. excluded) by *Golf Digest*: Querencia, Quivira, The Dunes at Diamante, and the Ocean Course at Cabo del Sol. That's a mind-blowing 27 percent of the municipality's currently operating layouts. The word currently is important, as five more high-profile courses are in the developmental stage, with designs from major champions Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, Greg Norman and Fred Couples expected to open in coming years.

The courses fall into three basic categories: public, private, and playable with some restrictions or strings attached. The Tom Fazio designed Chileno Bay Golf Club, for example, is playable for guests at Chileno Bay Resort. Quivira, Nicklaus' spectacular cliffside masterpiece, is accessible to guests at Pueblo Bonito's four area resorts, and to owners at several neighboring developments. Diamante's courses from both Davis Love III (The Dunes) and Tiger Woods (El Cardonal and the 12-hole Oasis Short Course) are playable for residents and resort guests, and in some cases as a bonus to those who've attended Diamante relevant time share presentations. Less complicated are Cabo del Sol's Ocean and Desert Courses, Cabo Real, [Cabo San Lucas](#) Country Club, Campestre, Palmilla, Puerto Los Cabos, and Vidanta. They're all open to the public. El Dorado and Querencia, by contrast, are private, members-only clubs.

What all the local courses have in common is a stunning mix of terrains and Pacific Ocean or Sea of Cortés views. Some holes hug the sandy coastline, some meander through cactus-strewn desert, others climb into the foothills of the mountain range – the Sierra de la Laguna – that forms the spine of Baja California Sur between Los Cabos and La Paz. Most of the newer layouts also boast luxe amenities like golf carts outfitted with GPS yardage displays, and mid-course comfort stations offering cocktails and snacks. Out top pick, Quivira Golf Club, has even opened a steakhouse adjacent its pro shop, taking the traditional 19th hole concept to an entirely new level.

10 VIDANTA GOLF COURSE

SAN JOSE DEL CABO



Photo courtesy of Vidanta Golf Los Cabos

The Vidanta Course in San José del Cabo is the oldest in Los Cabos; the granddaddy of them all. It's modest in comparison to the championship-level layouts that followed, a 9-hole municipal course designed in 1987 by Mario Shedjanan. Originally known as Punta Sur, it was later taken over by the Mayan Palace resorts group and is currently managed by Mexican hospitality brand Vidanta. The service is a bit uninspiring, but plenty of locals and seasonal players swear by the place, in large part because it's the only budget-friendly course in the area. The 3,153-yard layout is generally flat, with narrow fairways, moderate bunkering and one major water hazard. The views are nice but not spectacular, with glimpses of the Sea of Cortés and the Sierra de la Laguna mountain range. Rentals and golf gear are available at the pro shop, and there is a small practice area.



CABO SAN LUCAS COUNTRY CLUB

CABO SAN LUCAS



Photo courtesy of Cabo San Lucas Country Club

The Cabo San Lucas Country Club was part of the first wave of the Los Cabos golf boom, although it was called Campo de Carlos when it opened back in 1994. This Roy and Matt Dye design winds elegantly through both desert and mountain terrain, and is often bordered by bougainvillea, palo blanco trees and towering cardón, the largest species of cactus in the world. Spectacular views of Land's End and El Arco are also visible from several vantage points, and to date this remains the only course with views of the area's signature granite monuments. The driving range is a popular attraction in its own right. It's open in the evenings and serves up buckets of beer and tasty Mexican specialties as well as bags of practice balls.



CLUB CAMPESTRE

SAN JOSE DEL CABO



Photo courtesy of Club Campestre

Yet another great Los Cabos course by Jack Nicklaus, Club Campestre opened in 2007 with a 6,966-yard layout tucked into the foothills of the Sierra de la Laguna. The sculpted fairways are covered with seashore pappalum, a tropical grass common in Los Cabos because it is disease resistant and requires a fraction of the upkeep (including fertilizers and herbicides) needed for more typical golf course grasses. Like most local Nicklaus designs the course features abundant bunkering, plus plenty of uneven stances and dramatic elevation changes, and of course diabolical greens. Three putts are the enemy at Club Campestre, as the fairways are rather forgiving, at least by Los Cabos standards. Aside from the challenging conditions, the best part about the course is its rugged beauty. As at almost all the top local links, there are some beautiful Sea of Cortés views.



CABO REAL

SAN JOSE DEL CABO



Photo courtesy of Questro Golf

Cabo Real is one of a trio of layouts managed by Questro Golf (Campestre and Puerto Los Cabos are the other two), meaning visitors can buy multiple-round passes good at any of the three area golf courses. Cabo Real was the first of the group to open, premiering in 1994 with a design from Robert Trent Jones Jr., the man who's currently designing the Costa Palmas Golf Club for Four Seasons on the Los Cabos municipality's lightly developed East Cape. Cabo Real has plenty of pedigree: it's the only local course, for example, to host two PGA Senior Grand Slam events. In fact, the site of whales breaching near a green during the 1996 tournament helped to catapult Los Cabos into the consciousness of golfers around the U.S. The original design layout has been flipped recently, reversing the front and back nines.

6

CABO DEL SOL DESERT COURSE

CORRIDOR



Jack Nicklaus' Ocean Course gets all the plaudits, but Tom Weiskopf's superb Desert Course also deserves its share of praise. The inland layout, which opened in 2001, plays from five sets of tees (ranging from 4,919 to 7,049-yards in length) and provides a challenging test for players of all skill levels. Weiskopf's design takes advantage of the existing terrain, and the course snakes through canyons, washes and arroyos, with water in play from lakes and waterfalls, and plenty of uneven stances due to frequent elevation changes. Best of all, there are lovely views of the Sea of Cortés throughout the course.

5

PALMILLA GOLF CLUB

CORRIDOR



Photo courtesy of Palmilla Golf Club

Palmilla was Jack Nicklaus' first course design in Los Cabos, and his first of many in Latin America. Brought down at the behest of then prominent developer Don Koll, Nicklaus unveiled his 9-hole Mountain and Arroyo Courses in 1992, returning later in the decade to add another 9-hole Ocean Course. Thus, visiting golfers can now pick and choose their favorite 18 from the 27 available holes. The Ocean Course is the most singularly spectacular, with 600-feet in elevation changes within the first 6-holes and picturesque palm tree framed views of the Sea of Cortés. There are five sets of tee boxes at the courses, catering to low and high handicappers alike.

4

PUERTO LOS CABOS GOLF COURSE

SAN JOSE DEL CABO



Photo courtesy of Puerto Los Cabos Golf Course

Puerto Los Cabos opened in 2008 with an irresistible twist: the world's only composite course from Jack "The Golden Bear" Nicklaus and Greg "The Great White Shark" Norman. Norman designed the front-nine Mission Course, highlighted by the 213-yard 6th, one of the region's most memorable par-3s. The elevated tee box looks down from the equivalent of a 10-story building to a bunker fringed green set against a backdrop of nearly 10 miles of jaw-droppingly beautiful coastline. Nicklaus' designed the challenging back-nine Ocean Course. The plan has always been for each nine to be expanded into its own 18-hole course. Nicklaus' second nine will open in time for summer 2018, but since Norman's next nine is still years away, Puerto Los Cabos will operate in the near-term as a 27-hole layout, much like Palmilla.



Photo courtesy of Nicklaus Design

Los Cabos has drawn a host of legendary names to design the ever-increasing number of championship-level loops in the region, but 18-time major champion Jack Nicklaus was the one who put the area on the map. The Ocean Course at Cabo del Sol was his first local masterpiece. When it premiered in 1994, he called it "the best golf property I've ever seen." Nicklaus, not a man prone to hyperbole, added "I firmly believe that these (17 and 18) are the two best finishing holes of any course in the world." Plenty of others have agreed on both counts. The Ocean Course has been ranked one of the 100 best courses in the world for 15 consecutive years and counting. It's a world-class layout in every respect, with dramatic vistas of desert, mountain and sea, and seven holes bordering the Sea of Cortés. For those who like to play from the tips, the Ocean Course measures out at 7,111-yards.

2

DIAMANTE - THE DUNES COURSE

OUTSIDE THE CITY



Photo courtesy of Diamante Cabo San Lucas

Davis Love III's links style Dunes Course at Diamante was a revelation when it opened in 2009. It's currently rated as the best course in México by Golf Digest, and the 38th best course in the world by Golf Magazine. To play this challenging and lavishly-praised 7,300-yard loop, you must be staying at a Diamante hosted resort (The Resort at Diamante, or soon-to-open properties from Hard Rock and Nobu), or express interest in ownership options at Diamante. Fractional ownerships are available here and are a great opportunity for those who would like to spend a month or two every year with access to one of the world's best courses. In addition to Love's masterful links course, Diamante also hosts two Tiger Woods designed courses, with another on the way.

1

QUIVIRA GOLF CLUB

CABO SAN LUCAS



Quivira is legendary golfer and designer Jack Nicklaus' sixth Los Cabos layout, and his second local masterpiece. "Our team worked with the canvas Mother Nature provided," Nicklaus said, "to create one of the most spectacular courses in the world." Set on the Pacific Coast north of Cabo San Lucas, this 7,085-yard course is breathtaking in every respect, with 18 holes winding magnificently along sheer cliffs, and through desert foothills and windswept dunes. Seven holes hug the coast, and ocean views are available from all 18 fairways (keep your eyes peeled for seasonal glimpses of migrating whales). In addition to stunning scenery, there are four mid-course comfort stations serving up cocktails and tasty treats (burritos, anyone?), while more filling fare is available pre or post-round at the onsite steakhouse. The course is accessible to guests at all four local Pueblo Bonito resorts - Blanco, Rosé, Pacifica and Sunset Beach - as well as the luxury residential developments Quivira, Copala, Montecristo Estates and Novaispania. A second Quivira course from Nicklaus is currently in development.