

Quivira Golf Club – a wild ride on the Pacific side of Baja

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Your round at Quivira starts with this wide, inviting fairway at the 365-yard par-four 1st hole.

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Clinging to the cliffs and winding through the desert on the Pacific side of Cabo San Lucas, the Jack Nicklaus-designed [Quivira Golf Club](#) is a study in contrasts. Just as the scenic beauty of the Baja California peninsula derives from the profound contrast between the blue ocean waters and the sere desert landscape, so too is the attraction of Quivira's 18 holes rooted in the variety of the holes which comprise the course.

Lying close by the [Pueblo Bonito Pacifica Resort & Spa](#), 10 minutes from downtown Cabo San Lucas, Quivira is one of the latest designs to come out of the Jack Nicklaus Design Group. It is Jack's sixth course in Baja, and his 23rd in Mexico.

Quivira opened to the public on December 4, 2014, but between a soft opening in September 2014 and December 4, the course was, like much of the region, seriously affected by a devastating storm. Hurricane Odile, a Category 4 Eastern Pacific cyclone, ravaged the area, causing significant damage to the course and the nearby resort, delaying the planned October opening.

Visitors to Quivira won't see any evidence of the damage caused by Odile – instead they will see a pristine [golf](#) course spread out across some 250 acres, through Baja scrub-desert hinterlands and along cliffs overlooking the crashing Pacific surf. The fine condition of the course is partially due to grey-water irrigation facilitated by the on-site water treatment plant, which converts effluent from the city's water system into water that is suitable for on-course use.

Given its location and layout, the word most commonly used to describe Quivira is probably “dramatic”. Cliff-hugging (and in one case, dangling) par-3 and par-4 holes, elevated tees overlooking distant fairways, blind tee shots, blind second shots and one breath-taking carry to a dramatically situated green – this course has all the drama you could ask for.

Quivira starts out on a comfortable note. The first hole is an innocuous par-4 of 365 yards (from the blues), with a generous fairway and a welcoming green. The second hole is similarly benign – an uphill par-3 of 178 yards, with a deep, but subtly contoured green.

Holes 3 and 4 introduce some elements which you will see repeated later in your round – blind carries, choices off the tee box, and doglegs that dare you to cut the corner - but after #4 the gloves really come off. A .7-mile drive from the 4th green to the 5th tee ascends to nearly 280 feet above the beach, to what is probably the scariest-looking par-4 you have ever seen.

You will want to stop and fortify yourself with a snack and a drink at the aptly named “Cliff” comfort station before taking on the 5th hole. Over 250 yards of thin air separate the black tees from the putting surface – though this route is not to be taken seriously, or at least by anyone who isn't comfortable with the prospect of landing a shot of 260 yards plus on a medium-sized green dangling off a cliff.

A slender bit of fairway is visible above and to the right of the black tees, and though more easily seen from the other teeing grounds, the first shot at this hole is no picnic whatever tee box you are standing on, as any shot that lands where you can see it will result in a blind approach to the green which lies nearly 100 feet below.

The 6th hole is another dramatic cliffhanger, but it doesn't play as hard as it looks. At 135 yards from the blues, the two-tiered green requires precise distance control to catch whichever level the hole is cut in, but unless the wind is really up (and it can be) the shot from the elevated tee boxes is fairly straightforward.

The middle reaches of the course offer more adventure. After passing the old light house which overlooks the 6th green the course is exposed to the prevailing winds, and you will be challenged by undulating fairways, elevated greens, blind carries and approaches – you name it, Jack has put it out there for you. Several holes in the further reaches of the course offer options off the tee, but care must be taken with your decision as to which way to go.

The 12th hole takes you back to the brink of the cliffs, where you will see sharpened stakes lining the dunes where Brad Pitt and a cast of thousands stormed the beaches for the filming of the 2004 motion picture "Troy". Another cliff-hanging par-3 awaits at #13, and #14 is a picturesque uphill dogleg-right with a green tucked handsomely into a sheltered hollow.

After cresting the high point of the course at #15, the final three holes return to the theme of wide views and inviting fairways while dropping precipitously back to sea level. Sixteen and seventeen present dramatic views from elevated tee boxes, and the 18th hole is a level run to a green which is just steps from the beach and the crashing Pacific surf.

Quivira's contrasts lie in the uptick in difficulty in the middle of the course over the opening and closing holes, and the dichotomy of the vistas offered by the desert and the ocean views. The manner in which the layout eases you into and back out of the round, with a tough mid-run, is perfectly suited to golfers looking for a little more adventure than is usually offered by a resort course. It is a fun, challenging course that stands up to repeat rounds; there is always something new to learn about how to get around the tougher holes in the middle portion of the course.

Some of the holes are quite extreme – notably the cliff-hanging 5th hole and the par-4 eleventh, where a marker pole *and* a spotter are required to show you the way to the fairway – and the expanse of territory the course covers is far from the pastoral ideal, but the dramatic views of grey-green desert and deep azure sea are stunning.

It has been hinted that expansion is in the course's future, with the existing 18 holes to be split up and new holes added to create a pair of 18-hole layouts on the property. Those changes, and perhaps some dialing back on holes 5 and 11 (at least) will elevate Quivira – already a must-play property for the Baja-visiting golfer – to an even higher level of distinction.

