

QUIVIRA

Jack Nicklaus designed seaside sensation in Los Cabos

By [Anita Draycott](#) Jan 21, 2015

21 JAN 2015: 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," Los Cabos has also become one of the world's top golf destinations.

Several top-notch facilities presently dot the strip with more on the way by acclaimed designers who happily compete for the opportunity to ply their art on such a stirring canvas, where the desert coastline meets the Sea of Cortez.

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

Nicklaus has become a most prolific architect. A case can be made that the Golden Bear's accomplishments as a designer may one day rival or surpass his achievements as a player: To date, he has been involved in the design of 290 courses open for play worldwide (his firm has built another 90). Quivira, Jack's sixth course in Los Cabos, is Nicklaus Design's 23rd in Mexico. Golf Magazine named him "architect of the year" for 2015.

Nicklaus recalls his early days in Los Cabos, "We used to come here in the '60s with a tee shirt, swimming suit, a pair of sandals and 20 bucks and stay for a week. Then all of a sudden we started doing golf down here and it just exploded—the real estate values, the golf courses and the developments. When we came in '86 to do Palmilla, there was nothing here. My friends say I'm the guy who ruined Cabo. But what we really did was introduce the game of golf to Cabo."

Judging from his handiwork at Quivira, Nicklaus is not afraid, at age 74, to let his creative juices flow. This may be the most daring, eclectic course he has ever built.

Certainly 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.

Because the terrain is so dramatic, the course looks tough, but Nicklaus deliberately designed it to be user-friendly and pleasurable for the higher handicapper, yet still challenging from the tips for the pros. The layout with four tee placements, ranging from 7,139 to 4,326 yards (par 72), starts at sea level, scales cliffs more than 275 feet above the surf, spans canyons and arroyos, meanders through dunes and desert, and returns to the sea at the finish. When the wind howls it will greatly increase the difficulty factor.

The first three holes head away from the sea before reversing direction at the 4th, an S-shaped par-five bounded by a dry creek bed and a vast sandy wasteland.

The ten-minute drive to the 5th hole—which crosses arroyo-spanning bridges and traces a switchback route up the side of a mountain— requires a sure hand at the wheel.

The fairway, slanted below a shouldering 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. The putting surface is defended to the left by a huge deep bunker. Long hitters can attempt to drive it, but it's adios if you miss the rock-walled, cliff-hanging green.

Carved into the base of a massive dune, Quivira's par-three 6th, faced into the prevailing wind, is a gem. The long narrow green, propped on bluffs high above the roiling sea and a deserted beach, drops off to a cavernous bunker and oblivion on the left.

The tee boxes at the par-four 7th are set near the historic lighthouse at Land's End, the oldest standing structure in Cabo San Lucas. Behind the bunkerless green of the colossal, double-dogleg par-five 12th, is a sharpened pole fence, a remnant from the movie set of Troy, a swords-and-sandals epic.

The petite par-three 13th has its own stage set to die for. Atop a massive pinnacle of fissured granite rising 150 feet from sand and surf sits a tiny, waferlike green. There's a bailout area to the left, but the hole, 144 yards from the tips, commands a do-or-die shot over a yawning abyss. Bring your camera.

Quivira's last three holes, all par-fours, are magnificent. Sixteen and 17 plunge down a mountain while 18 returns to the sea, its sizable green, bisected by a deep trough, set on the beach.

In order to play Quivira you must be a resident or guest of one of 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 (both located on El Médano beach). Stay and play packages are available.

The All-Inclusive Experience

For residents and guests alike, a golf day at Quivira Golf Club starts with a complimentary shuttle service to the club from the Pueblo Bonito resorts and communities.

Warm up on one of the most fantastic practice facilities in the world, a spacious double-sided range set directly on the beach. Players can hit full shots with or against the prevailing wind, practice on an 18-hole putting course, or spend time chipping, pitching or honing their sand play. A full array of beverages is available at the practice facility. Perhaps you'd like to start your day with a spicy Bloody Mary or tequila-based Bloody Maria? Light bites such as tuna sliders, fish tacos and regional specialties are also served.

After the first four holes, golfers will experience the "Greatest Drive in Golf" as they drive their carts to the first comfort station perched 200 feet above the ocean, where more snacks and drinks are offered.

The Oasis, which serves as a halfway house for golfers transiting from the 8th and 11th holes, showcases the culinary talents of the resort's chefs, such as ceviche, barbecued shrimp, and 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.

At the conclusion of the round, you'll be handed a chilled scented towel. The outdoor seating area at the clubhouse's spectacular bar and restaurant, the Quivira Steakhouse, serves as the 19th hole. (Note: the Quivira Steakhouse is not part of the all inclusive package.) With a magnificent view of the 18th green, the breaking waves and Baja's Land's End in the backdrop, it's an ideal spot to settle wagers.

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. From start to finish, I'd say Quivira has as much pace, variety and spectacular beauty as any course I've ever designed."

I can't argue with you Jack.

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