

THE SOURCE FOR EXCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES AND THE LUXURY LIFESTYLE™

L U X U R Y L I V I N G

BOLD & BEAUTIFUL:
VERSACE

AT THE
PLAZA

JUNE/JULY 2007

\$6.99US \$8.99CAN

07>



PLUS: AMERICA'S FAVORITE VACATION-HOME DESTINATIONS
MEXICO'S MUST-PLAY GOLF COURSES • THE ULTIMATE AUTO CLUB

MILLION AIR



ICELAND'S MIDNIGHT GOLF • ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH: SUMMER SANCTUARIES
FRACTIONAL SUPERCARS • TOURBILLONS: WATCHES • HILL COUNTRY HEAVEN
EQUESTRIAN RETREATS • MEXICO'S ULTIMATE GOLF

M E X I C O

Beachfront greens, sand in your toes and tropical ocean breezes. Spice up your golf experiences with Mexico's bonanza of must-play golf

C A L L I N G

BY SKIP KNOWLES

These days, it's not just intrepid Mexicans heading across the Tex-Mex border in search of a better quality of life. Tropics-minded U.S. citizens are heading south of the border for the same reason.

Sure, it's about elite golf, better bang for their investment and tee-time dollars, better weather and oceanfront property.

But it's also...Mexico. Mexico sells Mexico golf because of the mystique and cultural adventures that come with being in a foreign land doing something you love, particularly a comfortable country in which you can relax and let down your guard.

It's the tequila sunsets and the incredible experiences that call the adventurous golfer to the oldest south. Like the chance to be distracted by a breaching humpback whale while trying to tee off, which happens quite often in Cabo these days. Mexico golf has arrived, and Cabo is the vanguard.

The Pacific side of Cabo was protected for a long time for environmental reasons, and now with careful development comes the chance to play in a pristine environment that is pretty close to golf heaven.

"With oceanside courses, the resort atmosphere, the amount of coastal water available and the climate, you can't



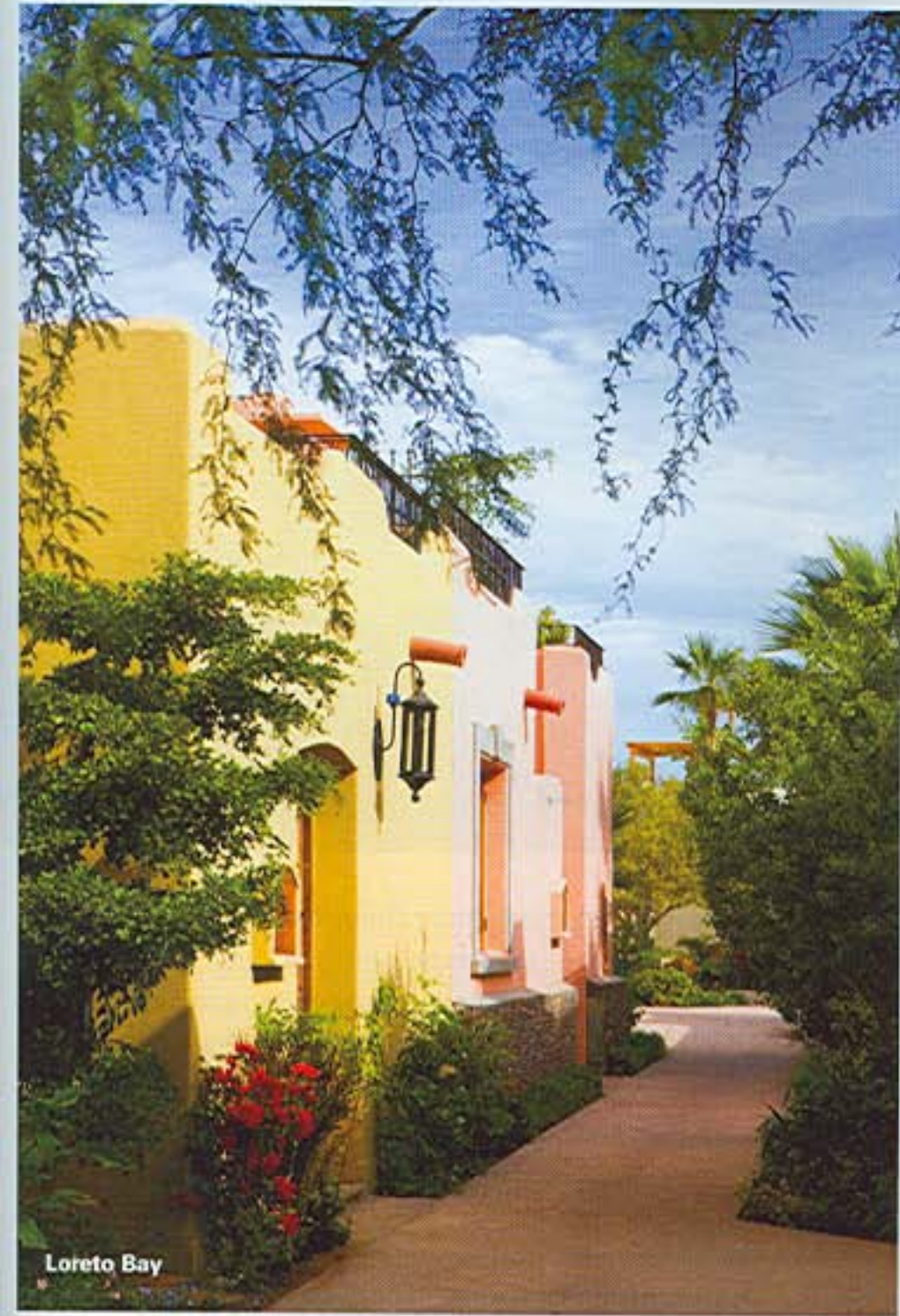
even compare us to most places. Baja is driveable, boatable, flyable, a unique element for a destination," says Bob Gaudet, Director of Golf at Diamante, a golf resort community on the west side of Baja investing in a Davis Love III links style course as well as a desert style course designed by Phil Mickelson's team.

"What does a golfer want when traveling? Good weather," he says. "There's no rain checks here. Our climate is parallel to the best destinations in the

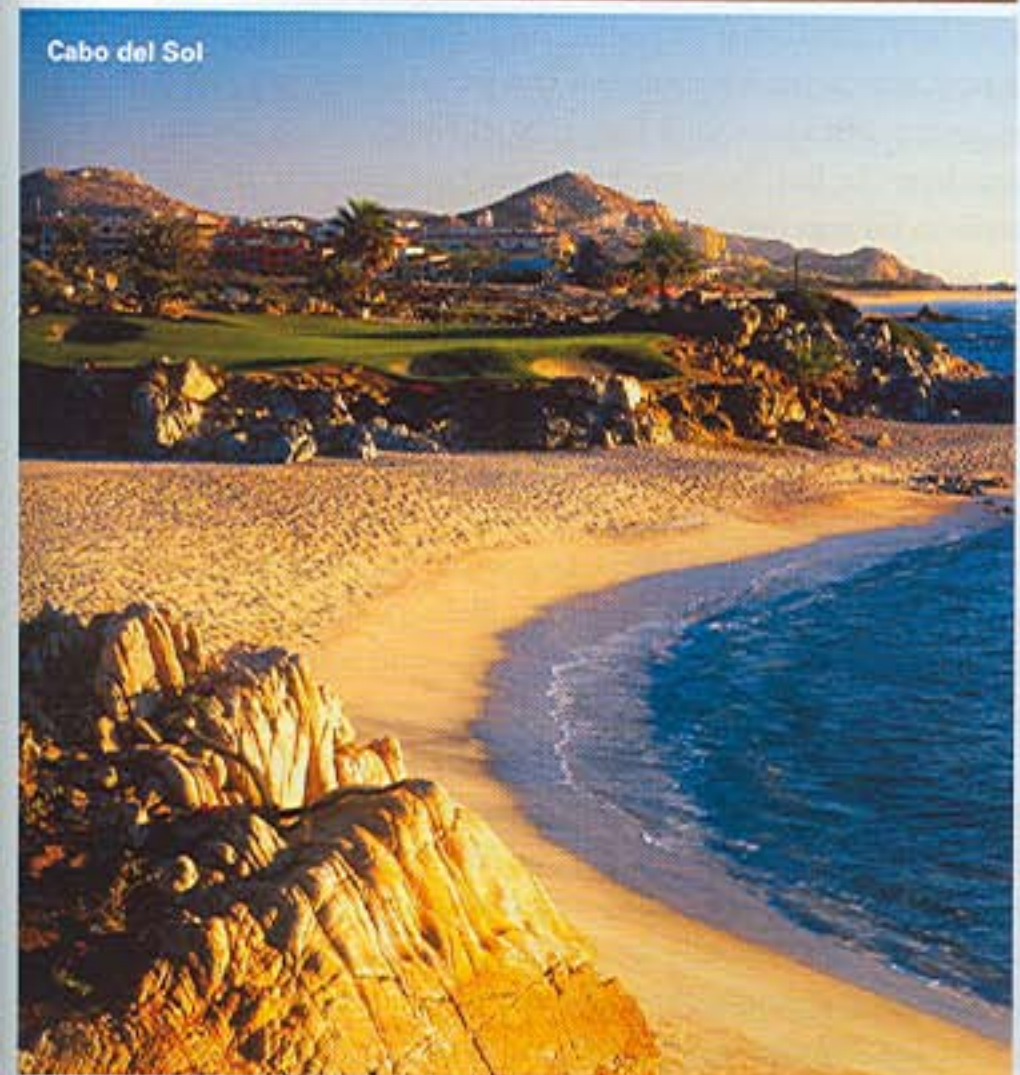
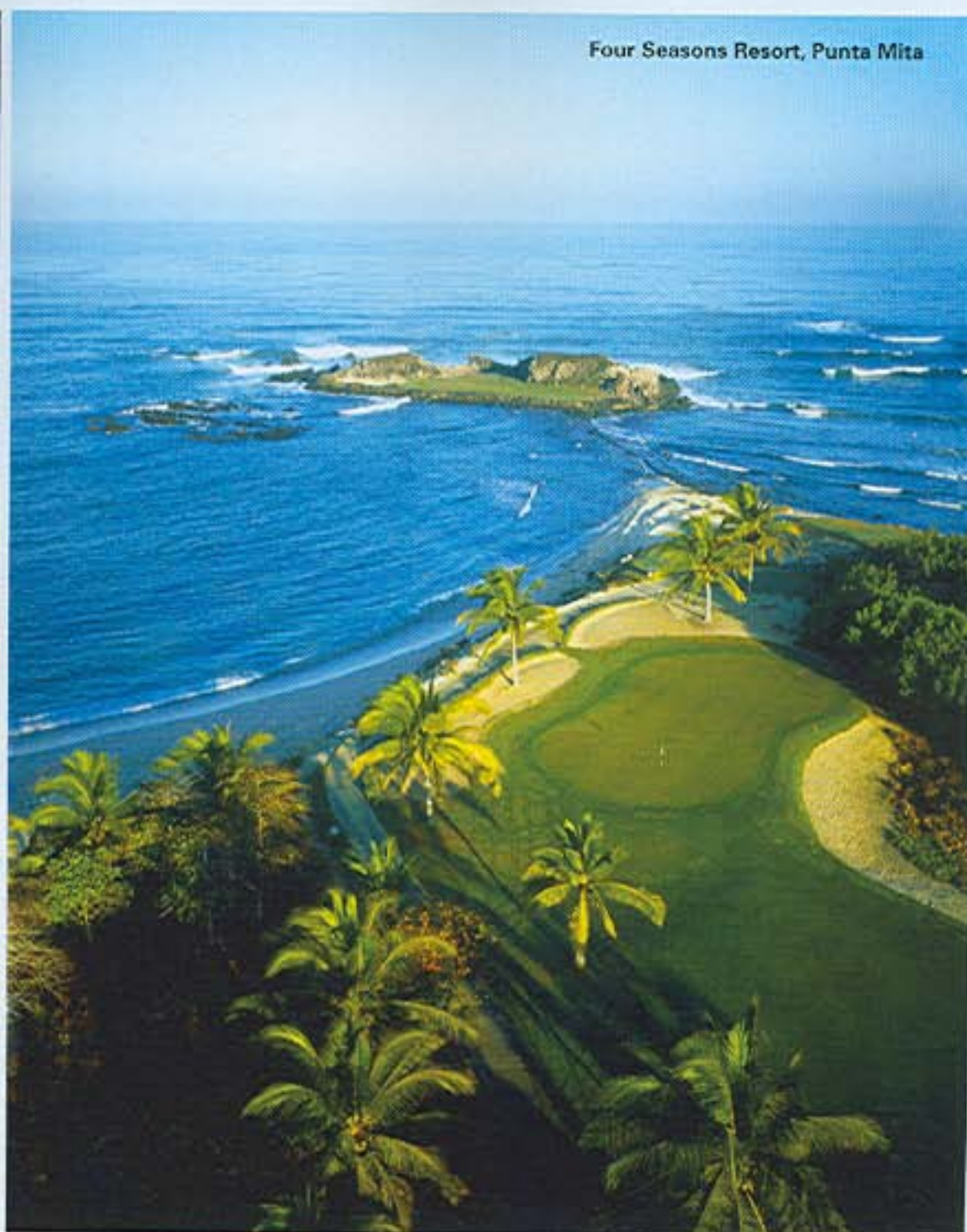
world, and predictable. We get a lot of rained-out North California golf groups down here. In Baja South you never really have to plan around the weather."

Diamante's bold investment represents the kind of new confidence the great builders of golf have in Mexico's elite golf potential. The sand dunes here are massive and imposing, but rather than build houses to every inch of the water to maximize profits for view lots, the new creation by Davis Love III will open to rolling sand hills and grass as a true links-style course, with dunes rising from the sea to 100 feet on the 11th hole, in an untouched environment.

Not what you envisioned? Forget your preconceptions about Mexico's golf scene. Besides all types of cliff, seaside, desert and dunes courses, the whole experience is evolving



Loreto Bay



Cabo del Sol

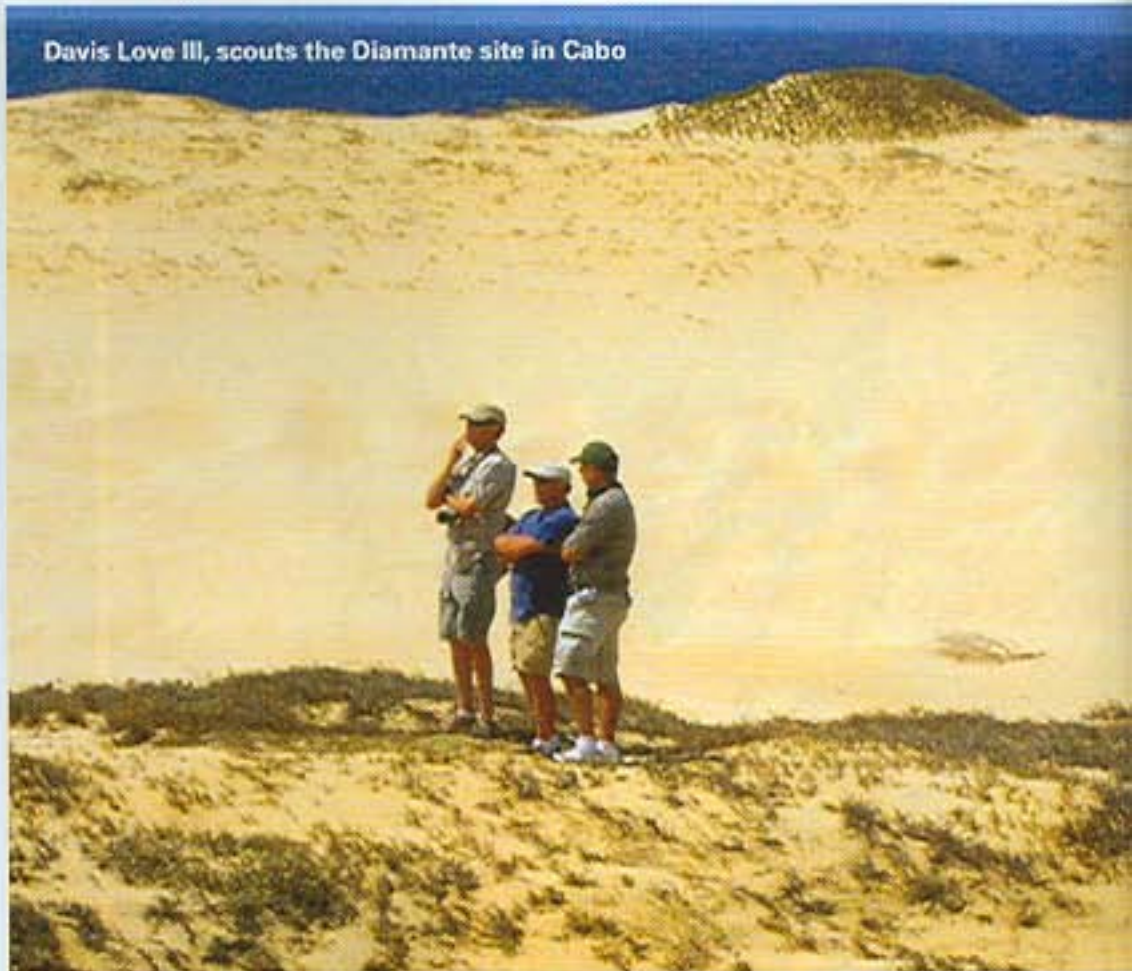


One and Only Palmilla



Los Palomas

Davis Love III, scouts the Diamante site in Cabo



quickly. The border is becoming more fluid, travel is safer, and highways wider. More importantly to golf fans, golf is becoming the main point in some luxury communities like Diamante. Whereas golf was often just another amenity offered at resorts in the near-past, golf has become the ends at places such as Cabo, Puerto Vallarta, and Puerto Penasco, where golf is driving huge investment.

"As a destination Mexico has unique offerings in cultural experience, history and landscape," says Gaudet. "The ocean and jungle or mountain and desert influences are all here, whether it's Cancun, Baja, Puerto Vallarta...and it's now represented by some of the world's most regarded designers. Nicklaus and Fazio, Mickelson, Trent Jones, Crenshaw. It has become an important address in the portfolio for top designers."

Golf is exploding south of the border, bringing in the high-end U.S. tourism and investment contingent Mexico's leaders desire to see most.

"The management and upkeep of the courses is at U.S. standards, but you also have the exotic experience of being in another culture, a different country, very close and accessible to home," says Lynne Bairstow, director of marketing and operations for Punta Mita. "Golf is growing in Mexico—especially at the elite level—and it is a priority for the country's tourism business," she says.

Beachfront greens, ocean front tees, sand in your toes and tropical ocean breezes. For U.S. golfers, access is easier with airline routes and roads to Mexico proliferating, making it easier to get there and increasingly difficult to want to leave. Especially with a new desert or links-style course to play opening every few months, it seems.

At Las Palomas near Rocky Point on the northern Sea of Cortes, Jon Mirmelli, in a joint venture with Abigail



Querencia



Casa Lapalapa, Punta Mita

Properties, is in the enviable position of being a 3.5-hour drive from five million golf-minded people.

"In Arizona there are 300 courses," he says. "We are one of only two in Puerto Penasco, so our natural customer is coming from a golf state. The principle reason for coming here is to be on the sea, and then their natural instinct on vacation is to want to golf."

The natural blown-sand dunes links style course at Las Palomas was top-ranked last year by *Golf Inc.* in 2006 in the international category. New air services and new highways are connecting the resort to bigger markets every year, not just Arizona but San Diego, Vegas and others, people who are coming to visit or buy luxury ocean golf vacation homes at a bargain that are often closer to their home state than traditional U.S. options.

Ambience and aura aside, golf or golf real estate in Mexico has to work financially for U.S. customers, and it works like nowhere else.

"It comes down to the value of what customers are getting and what they pay," Mirmelli says. "Where in the U.S. can you find a 2,000 square-foot condo on the water for \$400,000 to \$500,000 with high-level finishes—granite, stainless, travertine? You can't," Mirmelli says. "We have the luxury of providing what our customers want at a fraction of the cost. I'm looking out at the ocean right now, so tranquil and relaxing, and our customers see that value. We have no hurricane or earthquake issues, it's just a very nice place, the water is warm and the sea is calm."

Security has drastically improved, and the near-zero unemployment resorts bring to the small towns close to them ensures the Mexican people have an interest in security for American expats and vacationers.

"GMAC, General Electric and M&I Bank are three

major lenders that have entered the market in Mexico," Mirmelli says. "So not only have the customers said 'hey, I like it and feel safe,' but large U.S. institutions have done their homework and agreed."

Gaudet says golfing and buying land around Baja is a Western experience now.

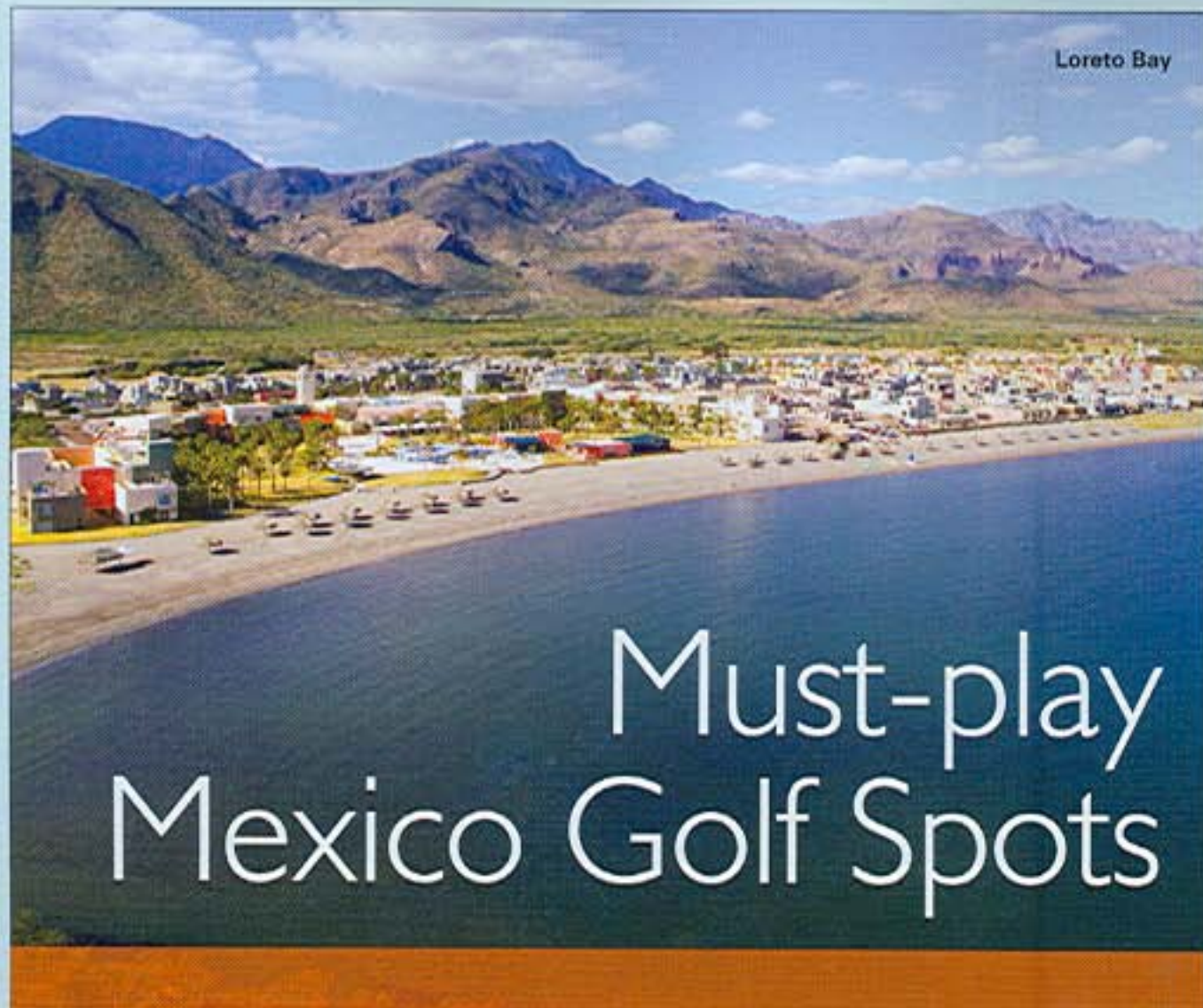
"For political, economic and security reasons, it's much easier to buy properties down here now," he says. "It's easier to do big things and feel safe about it. Acquisitional land holdings are legitimately protected."

Baja is without rival in the world on many levels as a renowned golf destination, but mainland Mexico is just getting started. The east coast of the Sea of Cortes is expected to erupt over the next decade, with Baja-esque boom towns popping up on the Mexico Coast side. Combined with outstanding facilities like Cabo del Sol, Cabo Real and El Dorado, and you can see that east, west, or north, the whole country is set to grow faster than Charles Barkley's golf score.

"Potential? We haven't scratched the surface yet," Mirmelli says. "With the boomers retiring and the movement toward vacationing for longer periods and with the ability to work with cell phones and the internet, people are staying longer. Golf completes the experience for them."

It's the fishing village aura of most Mexican seaside communities that is the real gift to golf Mexico brings, mainland or peninsular. That's what inspires the songs.

"Fishing and seaside communities just bring in a different type of calm," Gaudet says. "Mexican culture is reserved, adaptable, with a laid back atmosphere, and it's easy to blend into. For a traveler, it's not a high-tension experience. Water, palm trees, beaches, it doesn't seem to be so pressure-driven."



Must-play Mexico Golf Spots

LAS PALOMAS: A Rocky Point award-winner where sand, sea grass and dunes combine for true links-style with great finishes on par-3 and par-5 holes 17 and 18 designed by Forrest Richardson and Arthur Jack Snyder. Bonus: a fun extra par-3 "19th" hole for settling scores. Soon, a 42,000-square-foot spa, 12 restaurants and 2,000 homes and condos, fractionals from \$90,000 to \$250,000 and homes to \$2.1 million. Nearby, the Corona family reportedly will invest \$1.2 billion in a resort.
www.laspalomas.com

DIAMANTE: Baja's unspoiled west side is establishing itself as the leader in golf development with places like Diamante, where Phil Mickelson's desert course design will become a talker in golf, yet is within earshot of the crashing waves that nearly touch the adjacent Diamante masterpiece, a Davis Love III links-style dunes course. The total: 36 holes of golf heaven close to Cabo but a world apart. The Love course will be ready in December.
www.threepalmsint.com

QUERENCIA: Tom Fazio's first design in Los Cabos towers high above the ocean with breathtaking vistas detached from the buzz of Cabo, but close enough for convenience. Unique bunkers, breaks and fairway contours create golf that is challenging yet inviting.
www.lascabasquerencia.com

PUERTO LOS CABOS: Two of golf's greatest champions created a great pairing. Jack Nicklaus and Greg Norman both designed Signature courses that focus on the natural beauty of the sites and exploit views of the Sea of Cortez. One wanders along the sea and the other creates space along the hillsides.
www.puertoloscabos.com

CABO PACIFICA: While marlin fishing here, Jack Nicklaus developed a vision of bigger fish to fry. Cabo Pacifica, at land's end, has miles of white beaches and two Jack Nicklaus Signature courses on its 1,850 acres. Ocean views and desert golf amid lush landscaping make it unforgettable.
www.cabopacifica.com.mx

ESTRELLA DEL MAR: One of Mexico's top-rated golf courses, this Robert Trent Jones Jr. design 18-hole beauty wanders amid miles of beach at this Mazatlan-area resort community that encompasses 816 acres—including a sea turtle sanctuary—on-site.
www.estrelladelmar.com

PALMILLA: See in a hurry why Nicklaus is king of Cabo. At Palmilla, where a seaside lifestyle and old world architecture are steeped in tropical charm, Nicklaus designed a 27-hole course for this Mike Snell development. With soaring cactus and broad views, this is true Cabo.
www.palmilla.com

VISTA VALLARTA: Opened in 2001, this Jack Nicklaus Signature Course rises far above Puerto Vallarta. Dense palm forest, giant Fica trees and wandering creeks and arroyos reveal why the Puerto Vallarta area is considered by many the best of Mexico. A Tom Weiskopf creation nearby exploits extreme terrain.
www.vistavallartagolf.com

PUNTA MITA: A no-brainer for luxe golf experiences, with an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course ranked World's Best Golf Resort by readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* 2006 and one of the best golf courses by *Travel & Leisure Golf* in 2006. The course will run beside Punta Mita's second 18-hole Nicklaus Signature course slated to open in December, 2007, the same time a St. Regis Resort and Residences will open. Existing luxury experiences include The Four Seasons Punta Mita Resort.
www.puntamitaproperties.net

LORETO BAY: Emphasis here is on nature and sustainability, whales and wildness. Firm against the Sierra de la Giganta Mountains, this is the best of the Sea of Cortez. The dramatically renovated course re-opens in Fall 2008, redesigned by David Duval and by Troon Golf.
www.loretobay.com

YUCATAN COUNTRY CLUB: The social and sports concept is at the heart of this resort, with a Jack Nicklaus course with expansive views of lakes and tropical foliage. A par-72, 7,282-yard course challenges the conventional wisdom that dictates "you can't spend all your life on a golf course."
www.yucatangolf.com

MOON PALACE: Cancun sand dunes got a nice ring to it? It will after seeing what Jack Nicklaus did to alter the Cancun Maya golf landscape here. This 7,165-yard par 72 is set amid a resort packed with splendor. Moon Palace Resort boasts a Robert Von Hagge design regarded as one of Mexico's best, while the Nicklaus design for Moon Palace Golf Resort has four sets of tees and a 141-yard par 3 on the 17th with an island green that is either a home run or ... a ker-plop.
www.moonpalace.com

CABO DEL SOL: An 1,800-acre community that sets the standard in Cabo, this stretch of golfer's heaven boasts courses along the Sea of Cortez by Jack Nicklaus Design and through the desert and saguaro by Tom Weiskopf. The Pebble-like Nicklaus course runs 1.5 miles of oceanfront, and is an astounding golf experience.
www.cabodelsol.com ■