



Puerto Vallarta One of the Top Golf Destinations

PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO -- "PV" is now home to seven golf courses. Some of the world's greatest golf course architects have crafted courses amid this tropical backdrop, including Jack Nicklaus, Tom Weiskopf and Robert von Hagge, who with 11 layouts south of the border is Mexico's most prolific designer. Myrtle Beach it's not, but with a handful of world class courses and resorts, PV can now lay claim to being a tried and true golf destination. PV resort owners and tourism officials make no bones about it they want to go head to head with Los Cabos/Cabo San Lucas as Mexico's leading golf destination. Graziano Sovernigo, founder and director of Paradise Village Beach Resort and Spa, just minutes away in Nuevo Vallarta, has done his part bringing golf here. "I'm happy to say Puerto Vallarta is finally arriving as a golf destination. It took too long, but now we have seven courses."



For years, Hawaii has been the industry leader in attracting American golfer from the mainland. But the Mexican government has unabashedly declared its intent to become the top golf destination worldwide for traveling American golfers. PV's core group of lush, jungle-rich layouts is leading Mexico in its charge to the top.

The newest offering is von Hagge's El Tigre at Paradise Village. Framed in all directions by the Sierra Madre Mountains, El Tigre is 7,239 yards, par 72, of manufactured golf course. It was built on a flat piece of land and the von Hagge layout called for a lot of dirt movement and nine separate bodies of water, just a minute away from the Pacific Ocean and Paradise Village Beach Resort and Spa.

"Create the most exciting championship golf course in Mexico", was the challenge given to the team of Von Hagge, Smelek and Baril, designers of over 200 of the world's finest golf courses. At 7,239 yards from the tips and featuring an 18th hole that players chide as a "nice par 6", El Tigre has certainly answered the call. Mexican architect Ernesto del Castillo designed the beautiful Spanish-styled 45,000-square foot clubhouse, which includes a restaurant, lounge, locker rooms, golf shop and European Spa.

Ten minutes from the PV marina and wedged in the region's breathtaking foothills are the two championship courses of Vista Vallarta. Both the Nicklaus and Weiskopf courses opened in 2001 and have met with almost universal critical acclaim. The dynamic duo was selected as the site for the 2002 Anderson Consulting Match Play Championships, and players from around the world will not be disappointed.

The Nicklaus course measures 7,057 yards and features long par-5 holes. Weiskopf's layout has more native jungle growth, is tighter, and has a signature par 3 that appears to be carved out of the jungle hillside. Weiskopf has done a masterful job of blending the elevations and natural features into an incredibly playable experience from the first tee to the green of the "drivable" 18th.





The Golden Bear's best offering may be the Punta Mita where Pebble Beach scenery mixes with turquoise-colored Pacific Ocean golf holes and perfect winter temperatures. Punta Mita is uncrowded and has one of the most spectacular holes in the world, a par 3 of 190 yards, that plays to a natural black, lava-rock island. Your only entry to the green comes at low tide, tip-toeing across a sandbar, unless you have an amphibious vehicle or boat. You will need a low, boring shot nailed into a tough head wind or cross wind to par this one. Eight holes border the ocean with a photo op at every turn.

Marina Vallarta Golf Club is PV golf at its finest, replete with jungle foliage, lagoons, iguanas, tropical birds, and a pretty strong golf course designed by Joe Finger. The course winds its way through countless palm trees and a number of holes feature views of Banderas Bay.



Nicklaus' senior designer, Jim Lipe, authored the 6,700-yard Mayan Palace Golf Club, just next door to El Tigre. Mayan Palace is a fun, less-challenging course with a hefty 580-yard, dogleg-left par-5 No. 13. Another scenic hole is a 180-yard par 3 that plays over a lake to an oceanfront green with a view of the Pacific. Just three minutes from Paradise Village is Los Flamingos Country Club. This 18-hole course is located in the countryside with lakes, jungle and countless birds. It was designed by architect Percy J. Clifford and offers tennis, too.