

TRAVEL

Danzante Bay

A resort of a million stars

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN HURLBURT

Maybe never in the history of resort golf has a course not yet completed its final 18 holes received so much attention and acclaim.

Maybe that is because of the amazing locale of the layout.

Maybe it is because of the legendary architect who built it.

Maybe it is because of the unique owner who envisioned the entire project.

Or, just maybe, it is because of a combination of all three.

Danzante Bay Golf Club at the Villa Del Palmar resort in Loreto, Baja Mexico, on the shores of the Sea of Cortez, was designed by Rees Jones, the U.S. Open Doctor, and was the epic idea of owner Owen Perry. Words can barely capture the essence of the setting, but stunning, tremendous, unique, inspiring, majestic, and beautiful appropriately set the tone.



Architect Rees Jones believes the 17th hole will become one of the world's most iconic holes over time.

As of this writing in early summer of 2017, only 11 of the 18 holes have been completed. but that's plenty to devour for any golfer. A special routing allows for a full 18 holes to be played and among the "Ocean's 11" is a more-than-memorable par 3 hole, which features an island green perched on a cliff back dropped by the deep blue sea.

Not only was I impressed on a recent visit, but also some leading golf and travel writers have been effusive in their praise of Danzante Bay and Villa Del Palmar. The following are just a few headlines sampled from recent articles.

"Ocean's Eleven: Danzante Bay Golf Course is Rees Jones' Unfinished Symphony," Michael Williams, *GolfWRX*.

"Danzante Bay—The Next Baja Must-Play," Tony Dear, *Colorado Golfer*.

"Grade A Architecture—Danzante Bay Golf Club," Matt Ward, *Golf Travel Weekly*.

According to Jones, each of the remaining seven holes will be shaped by summer and ready for play later in 2017. Overall, the project was something that stunned even the veteran architect, who has created or renovated some of the best golf courses in the world. How the project has come online slowly reminded Jones of times gone by.

"In the old days, golf courses were built slowly and that is what we did here," Jones says. "We weren't under pressure to open on a deadline and we had time to make decisions. That

was a nice change. This is a 'build it and they will come' type of place. The bay is what attracted Owen to create everything here from a barren piece of land. The reason I think the whole project turned out as well as it has is because Owen is dedicated to the place and whenever there was a decision to be made, he deferred to the golf course routing to make it a special course. This has been a phenomenal opportunity for me."

As Jones alluded to, when Perry first laid eyes on the land and the bay about a decade ago, he knew he had to create a masterpiece.

"When we first came to Loreto there was nothing happening, but I loved it," Perry says. "My wife and I came and stayed in the old inn. We were drinking wine and playing backgammon and we thought 'what's wrong with this place?' The diversity of experience you can have here is endless. There are thousand-year old olive trees. The whales breed

babies off the coast. The golf and fishing combination is nearly unmatched. Fish love the structure of the islands and there are secret spots just 20 minutes from the resort. There are yellow fin tuna, red snapper and they are incredible to eat and featured at the resort. There is so much that makes this place special: the color of the mountains; the stars at night. It's amazing. We utilize no up lighting because our stars are the attraction. I like to call it, 'a resort of a million stars.' The looks on our guest's faces has made it all worth it."

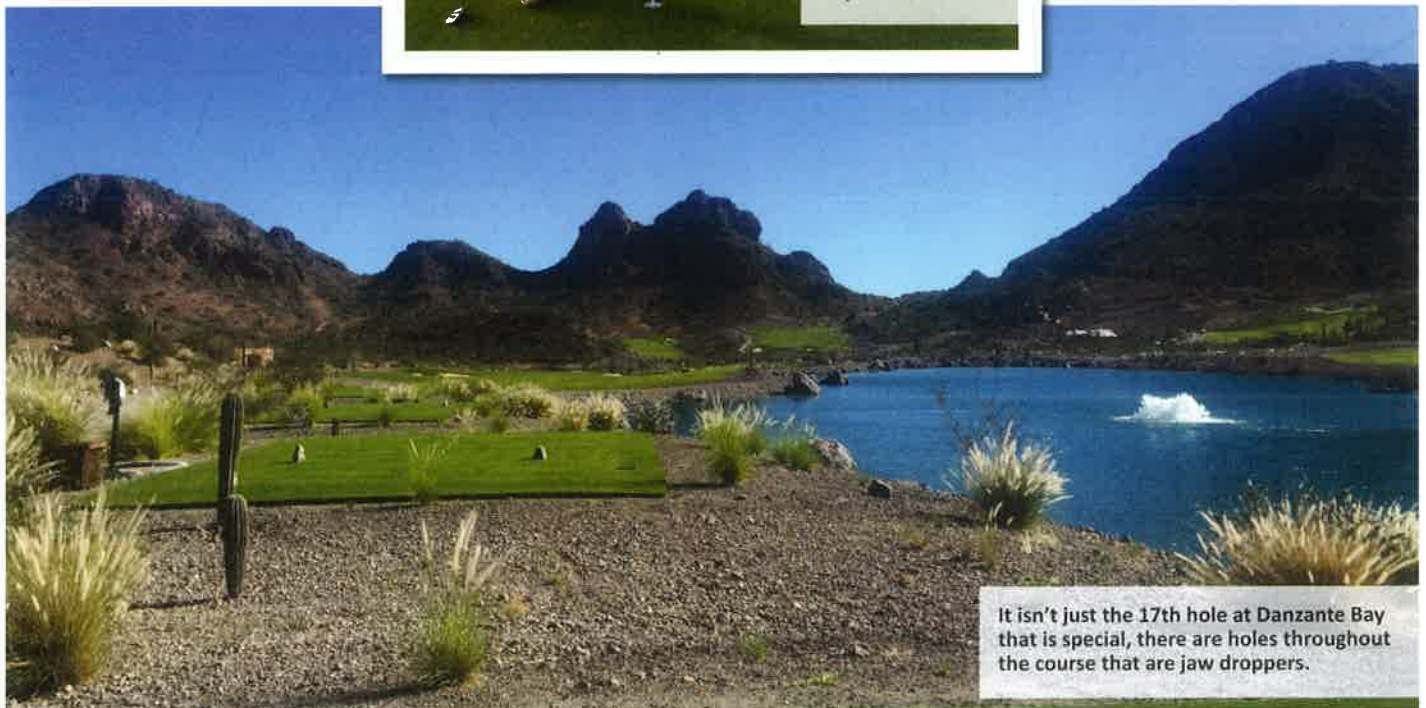
Perry is a partner in the Villa Group and while the resort was first to open prior to the course, golf was always a key element in the process. Partnering with Jones was an easy choice for Perry and the two shared a vision.

"I wanted a true golf architect, not a personality that does golf course architecture," Perry says. "Rees committed to spend a lot of time here and work with us. He has been great. I can't even tell you what it's been like to work with him, but it has been very special and even better than we ever expected. He was always open to our ideas. It's never been take it or leave it with him. Basically, we've had a love affair with Rees Jones because of how accommodating he has been."

Jones, Perry, and leaders on both teams worked together in the creation of the hole at Danzante Bay. In the first draft of hole designs, the 17th wasn't included. But on a walk of the property, the group hiked up a



Architect Rees Jones designed Danzante Bay Golf Club



It isn't just the 17th hole at Danzante Bay that is special, there are holes throughout the course that are jaw droppers.



Everything, even the practice tee, has been created with style.

hill and saw the perfect location for the 17th and immediately added it to the rotation, even if it meant moving dirt to make it possible. The hole is so special Perry ordered the implementation of a live web cam that operates 24/7 and can be found at www.DanzanteBayGolfClub.com.

“We thought we were lucky to have the opportunity to create holes 12 and 13 because of their amazing location, but to get the go ahead to create the 17th was like a Mana from heaven,” Jones says. “My dad was given the honor of designing Mauna Kea in Hawaii by Lawrence Rockefeller and he always told me that it was a chance of his lifetime to build the third hole there. I feel the same way about the 17th at Danzante Bay. It’s unlike any hole in Mexico and will become one of the most iconic in the world over time.”

While the 17th provides the wow factor, Jones is pleased with how playable Danzante Bay will be for all levels of golfers.

“Length is not a major factor on these holes and there is a lot of grass around the greens,” Jones says. “You’re not dead if you go over the green. We wanted to make sure all level of players, men, women,

DANZANTE BAY GOLF COURSE
COMMEMORATING THE OPENING

NOVEMBER 5, 2016

BY

REES JONES

ARCHITECT

OWEN H PERRY JR

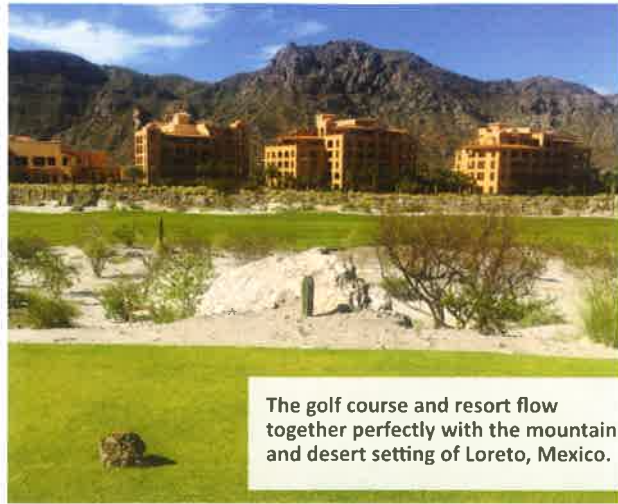
DEVELOPER

seniors, and lesser players, all enjoy it because the resort will cater to a lot of people who aren’t avid golfers, but who will want to experience the beauty and diversity of the course. We embrace the ‘Tee it Forward’ initiative. Length has been stressed too much in golf course design. Strength isn’t as much a factor here at Danzante Bay, but finesse is. It is also a natural course. We kind of found the course within the natural terrain and the holes spoke to us.”

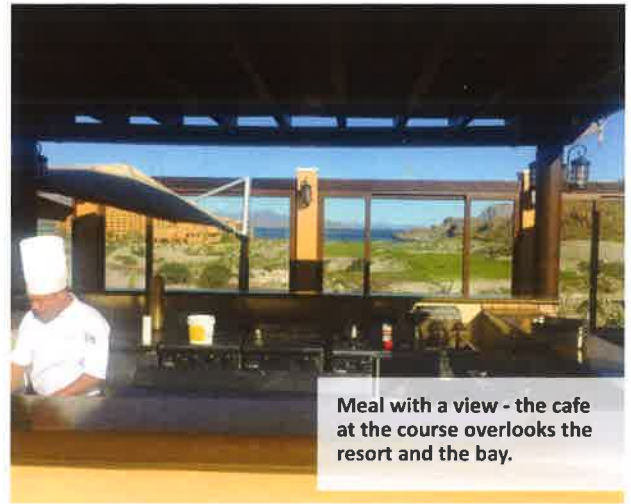
While it is in a resort setting, a series of dazzling homes, most with scintillating views of the sea, mountains, resort, and course are available for purchase. Whether for home or vacation, a visit to Villa Del Palmar at The Islands of Loreto and a chance to play Danzante Bay should soon be a part of a trip itinerary.

All About the Resort:

The Villa del Palmar at The Islands of Loreto broke ground in 2008, and in a short time has earned its place in the USA Today 10-Best and earned a World Travel Award as Mexico’s #1 Beach Resort in 2015. The resort was named the 16th best resort in Mexico by Trip Advisor.



The golf course and resort flow together perfectly with the mountain and desert setting of Loreto, Mexico.



Meal with a view - the cafe at the course overlooks the resort and the bay.

Travel Weekly magazine has recognized the Islands of Loreto with a Silver Magellan Award in the Adventure Destination category. Villa del Palmar at the Islands of Loreto was also recognized as Mexico's Leading Beach Resort in the 22nd and 23rd annual World Travel Awards. It also earned recognition as Mexico and Central America's Leading Resort by the same prestigious organization.

Villa del Palmar is a luxury destination resort on the Sea of Cortez, off the eastern coast of the Baja peninsula overlooking Danzante Island (one of five in the region). Flanked by the rugged Sierra de la Giganta range, the Villa del Palmar is the first and only resort to occupy one of

the Gulf of California's last virgin coastlines.

The resort features 181 new, spacious, beautifully appointed Deluxe Ocean View, one, two and three bedroom Suites with terraces and stunning ocean and mountain views, timeshare options, three restaurants offering gourmet dining, an attentive English-speaking staff, five swimming pools, a 39,000 square-foot Sabila Spa and Wellness Center, two tennis courts, beautiful beaches, a private beachfront Danzante Bungalow, and a mild and warm climate year-round. &

All-inclusive options are available. All information can be found here:

www.villagroupresorts.com/resorts/villa-del-palmar-loreto