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THE TRAVEL ISSUE



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*You've
got to play:*

17th at DANZANTE BAY

by Tony Dear

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOANN DOST

As you climb the sharply uphill par-four 16th at Danzante Bay, all thoughts are on what lies over the ridge behind the green. You putt out a little quicker than normal, then drive vigorously to the crest of the hill.

You've heard about the par-three 17th hole. Maybe you've watched Round Trip on Golf Channel, or seen pictures in airline magazines or on Twitter and Instagram >>





posted by golfers fortunate to have already gazed upon the scene from the tee—looking east over the Sea of Cortez and down a cliff to the long, narrow peninsula green, ringed by sand, nearly 200 yards below.

Depending on the time of year and time of day, the water is either a shimmering turquoise or a deep, foreboding blue. Doesn't matter, though, for the view ranks among the best in the game. That's not even up for debate.

The 17th wasn't part of course designer Rees Jones's original plan. Its potential came to Jones and senior design associate Steve Weisser's attention late in the day, and it caused a few routing headaches. But, says Weisser, it had to be built.

"After having made our original routing, we were walking the site and found the peninsula on which the 17th is now located," he adds. "We determined how we could make the circulation work and, as construction of the 15th and 16th had not yet begun, we adjusted those holes, extending them so they would meet the new 17th."

The first 11 holes (including what is now 17) opened at Danzante Bay in April 2016. Guests were so keen to play them the resort created an 18-hole routing, with seven holes played twice. The remainder of the course, built among the mountains and valleys of the Sierra de la Giganta range near the 181-unit hotel (which specializes in timeshare and all-inclusive rentals), opened last December, creating a wonderfully varied layout of desert, canyon, cliff, and dune holes that blend into the natural environment. This is Resort Golf 101: a beautiful, exciting site with a very enjoyable and playable golf course.



The 1,600-acre Villa del Palmar resort, of which the course is part, was developed in 2008 by the Villa Group, which has nine luxury resort properties across Mexico (Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta, Cancun, and Riviera Nayarit). Villa del Palmar at the Islands of Loreto, as its properly known, is located about 20 miles south of an international airport whose only traffic from the U.S. right now is a single Alaska Airlines flight from Los Angeles (frequency ranges from one to five flights a week). Canada's WestJet flies into Loreto from Calgary.

In March, Danzante Bay became the 33rd property in the PGA Tour-owned TPC Network, joining courses in the U.S., Malaysia, Puerto Rico, and

Colombia. It's early days in the relationship, so Jones's layout is likely to remain untouched for the time being. "The full 18 at Danzante Bay only opened in December 2017, so no changes have been discussed," says Jim Triola, chief operating officer of PGA Tour Golf Course Properties. "It's too early to say what might happen, but several TPC venues have, of course, become tournament sites. For now, though, TPC Danzante Bay will receive the support and strength of the brand including access to our acclaimed agronomic expertise as well as substantial marketing services."

Loreto is in roughly the same place, metaphorically speaking, that Los Cabos was 30 years ago. A quiet,

quaint town of roughly 14,000 people founded in 1697 by Jesuit missionaries, it is on the verge of a huge spike in tourism-related development. Villa Group made what promises to be a judicious early move to establish itself in the town 315 miles north of Los Cabos and 700 miles south of Tijuana.

Situated on a beautiful horseshoe bay with the Islands of Loreto just a short distance out to sea, the only marketing services the resort and golf course are likely to need from the TPC Network will be dazzling photographs splashed across various publications. Word of the amazing location, and the 17th hole in particular, will spread like wildfire, beckoning vacationing golfers to make haste for Danzante Bay. 