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The World's Top International Golf Communities

From Bermuda to France, these are the top spots outside the U.S. for living and hitting the green

By Nancy A. Ruhling

Residential golf communities on the international scene are exceedingly exclusive because they are as rare as record-breaking pars.

The model—a real estate-driven lifestyle club where people buy second homes—is an American invention of the last quarter century, according to David Smith, president and owner of the Los Angeles-based golf course developer and marketing and management company Golf Projects International, which has worked on more than 70 projects in 27 countries.

“In most parts of the world, it’s not a product that fits the culture,” Mr. Smith said, adding that in Asia, for example, golf is seen as a business-advancement vehicle instead of a leisure activity, and in Scotland, the home of St. Andrews Links, the largest public complex in Europe, golf is a tourist-driven diversion. “The few countries that have these types of communities are places where Americans buy second homes.”

He noted that in many countries, golf destinations are dominated by resorts that include golf courses as part of the amenities for their guests, who either come for short-time vacations or purchase timeshares. “In the U.S. communities, it’s about selling prestige and privacy,” he said. “It’s an American concept, so they are being built where they can be sold to Americans.”

Here are some of the top golf course communities around the world that follow the U.S.-style model.

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Costa Palmas.



Mexico

Los Cabos, whose international airport is only four hours from most U.S. cities, is the site of two top communities—Costa Palmas and Coronado at Quivira Los Cabos.

Costa Palmas caters to multi-generational families who desire a golf experience at their vacation home.

Michael Radovan, managing director of Irongate, the developer of Costa Palmas, said that the community draws people from California, Texas, Michigan, Illinois, New York, Connecticut, Colorado, Washington state, as well as a few from the U.K. and Mexico.

Its 18-hole link-style golf course, designed by Robert Trent Jones II, can be broken down to three short courses: one played to the Sea of Cortez, one to the mountains and one to the marina, the only private one on the East Cape. There's also a 1.5-acre putting green and driving range that doubles as a six-hole course.

"Our golf experience is designed for everyone from young kids just learning to very serious players," Mr. Radovan said.

The master-planned community offers whole ownerships at the Four Seasons Resort & Residences and at the Amanvari Resort & Residences.

At the Four Seasons, homeowners have the choice of a turnkey two-, three- or four-bedroom house in a small multi-family building priced at US\$2.25 million to US\$6.5 million, or a custom single-family villa of 6,000 to 20,000 square feet that's on the beach, in the marina with a boat in the backyard or overlooking the golf course. Prices for the latter, including land purchase and construction, start at \$6 million. (Prices are quoted in U.S. dollars for the international market.)

At Amanvari, buyers have a choice of lots on the beach, on the ocean or overlooking the golf course. Prices for the land and construction of the villas, which are 5,000 to over 10,000 square feet, start at \$10 million, Mr. Radovan said.

The members-only Costa Palmas Beach & Yacht Club, which homeowners are invited to join, offers a variety of amenities, including a 50,000-square foot clubhouse, a restaurant, a fitness center, a softball and soccer field, pools and hot tub and tennis and pickleball courts.