



CASA de CAMPO

A private playground half the size of New York City's Manhattan.

OUR SUMMER VACATION AT THE RESORT MAKES A DAD PROUD.

By Mark Pazdur, Publisher

LA ROMANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Fresh-faced and bright-eyed from graduating college, my fraternity brother, Ed Underhill, commented, “You know, we aren’t technically ‘old’ until we have been out of school for a year!”

Fast forward 25 years, much has changed. We are both married with seven kids between us, our careers are firmly established, and wrinkles blemish the face. One thing remains unchanged. Our friendship is deeper than ever.

Our families decided to combine forces for a joint summer vacation. Over Dominoes pizzas, we brain-

stormed over locations and drafted a wish list of activities. It was a tall order indeed. The adults craved golf, beach, and spa, while the kids—ranging in age from 12 to 18—were eager for a more adventuresome itinerary including horseback riding, snorkeling, and zip-lining.

Finding a destination—let alone a resort—that would satisfy everyone, narrowed the field of choices quickly. After thorough research, Casa de Campo, in the Dominican Republic, was the clear choice.

HALF THE SIZE OF MANHATTAN, NEW YORK CITY Casa de Campo Resort, spanning 7,000 tropical acres on the southeastern coast of the Dominican Republic, is home to three Pete Dye courses (Teeth of the Dog, Dye Fore, and The Links), a 370-slip Marina & Yacht Club, a Polo & Equestrian Club, La Terraza Tennis Center, a 245-acre Shooting Club, a private powder sand island, a dozen dining options, and a hidden gem of an amenity, Altos de Chavon, an artisan village modeled after a 16th century Mediterranean town.

After a full day of travel from Los Angeles, a cold scented towel and chilled water infused with green

Altos de Chavon is a town built of stone, perched high above the Chavon River. The cobblestone walkways are lined with three museums, boutiques, restaurants, a night club, and a 5,000-seat Grecian-style amphitheater inaugurated by Frank Sinatra in 1982.



Teeth of the Dog 5th hole

More than 300 Dominican workers hand-carved Pete Dye’s first course at Casa de Campo from a rugged coral landscape in 1970. Upon hearing the workers refer to the sharp coral rock with its canine teeth as “diente de perro” (teeth of the dog in Spanish), Pete’s naming of the course Teeth of the Dog seemed fitting. (Right inset) Mark comes up short on the par 3, 5th hole. He decides to remove his socks and shoes and attempts a recovery shot—with mixed results.



Dye Fore Course

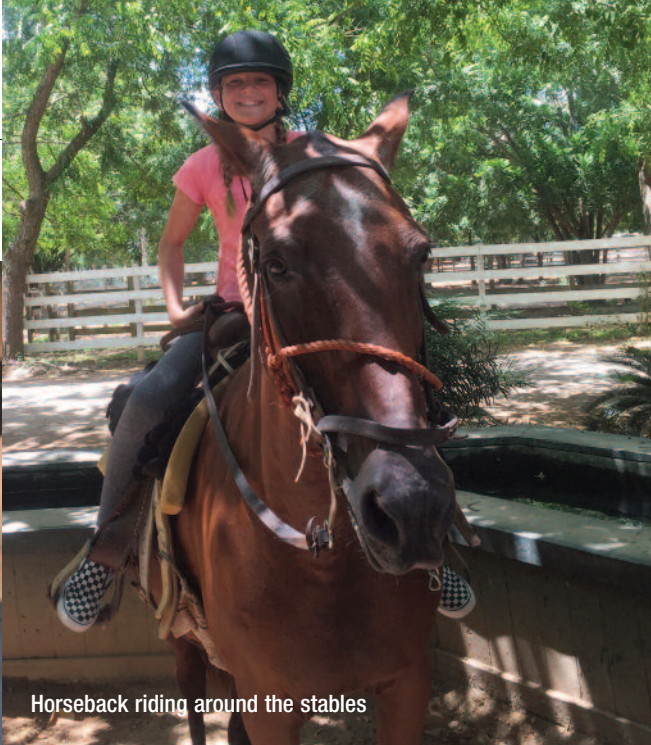


Ed Underhill tries to recover from an errant shot on the Teeth of the Dog.

INSTAGRAM WORTHY EXPERIENCES



The Pazdur and Underhill families pile into a mini-bus for the drive from Punta Cana International Airport to Casa de Campo Resort.



Horseback riding around the stables



The families celebrating the end to a fun-filled day.



Snorkeling in the clear waters at Casa de Campo's private island. The 30-minute boat ride from the resort's Mintas Beach Club to Catalina Island provides an opportunity to feel the salt spray of the warm Caribbean waters.

apple and cinnamon hit the spot in the lobby. At check-in, adults were offered a choice of a complimentary Presidente beer or a flute of champagne. Eager, but bleary-eyed from travel, my 12-year-old Katie suddenly acted as though it was Christmas morning when she learned we had use of two golf carts!

Management at the resort understands the rite of passage of father to child to drive a golf cart. While not encouraged by the hotel, most dads willingly turn the keys over to their kids for chaperoned trips from the lobby to the room. It is a memory I fondly recall with my dad more than three decades ago.

Our two-bedroom suites were modern, fresh, and contemporary. A common refrain in our group was the suites actually were nicer than our impression of the resort's website photography. Usually it is the reverse. My insider tip: upgrade to a suite versus an ocean-view room. Since accommodations are set back from the ocean (allowing for the ocean holes to be built for the Teeth of the Dog Golf Course), your money is better spent on more space versus a better view.

A CHOICE AND DECISION

Casa de Campo offers three Pete Dye designed golf courses. The oceanfront Teeth of the Dog, ranked by almost all golf media organizations as one of the best in the world,

deserves the accolades. It is the type of course you want to cross off your bucket list, and want play again. While I'm not a big fan of mandatory caddies at Teeth of the Dog, I found ours to enhance the round, and his expert advice proved true. Our caddie, with 20 years under his belt at the resort, praised good shots and admonished mishits. After a particularly poor approach shot, he ribbed me to "do the walk of shame," since I left the ball short.

The Dye Fore Course and The Links Course are more pedestrian. Dye Fore rewards accuracy off the tee by limiting blind shots to the green. We all appreciated the ample bail-out areas limiting lost golf balls. If your trip affords the time for only one round of golf, without question, the course to play is Teeth of the Dog. The conditioning, beautiful scenery, and variety of holes combine for what was one of my favorite rounds in my publishing career. ■

Getting there: La Romana Airport (LRM), five minutes from the resort is serviced year-round by JetBlue Airways from JFK, New York and seasonally by American Airlines from Miami (MIA). All major airline carriers fly into Punta Cana Airport (PUJ), 60 minutes away. Passports are required for travel. The Dominican Republic is on Eastern Standard Time.

For information on packages, visit casadecampo.com.do.