

In the Spotlight

CASA DE CAMPO RESORT WHERE FAMILIES GATHER

Whatever your desire, you can accomplish it here.

By Mark Pazdur, Publisher

LA ROMANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: In total, oceans compromise nearly 97 percent of the water found on earth and cover 70 percent of its total surface. If all the salt in our planet's oceans could be "captured," it would equal the mass of the moon!

"Water is omnipresent at Casa de Campo Resort. You can arrive via land [a modern tollway connects the resort to

both Punta Cana and Santo Domingo], sea [with a marina offering a prime location for sports fishing enthusiasts], or air [Punta Cana Airport, 45 minutes away, offers non-stop flight options from most major U.S. gateways]," explained Jason Kycek, senior vice president at Casa de Campo.

Soon, the resort will celebrate its 50th anniversary in grand style. "Our new Premier Club and destination Spa





Mark Pazdur, “Big Papi,” Jose our caddie, and “Linen Cowboy” after a round of golf.

“The service we received during our stay can be summarized in one word: outstanding. Our personal concierge always responded within minutes and completed requests that were out of the ordinary. One night we were celebrating a family birthday. Not only did the concierge order a celebratory balloon display, there were personalized placemats on the table. Absolutely first class and wowed all of us.”

— MARK PAZDUR

& Wellness Center will be welcoming guests and the final touches on \$90 million in expansions and renovations will be complete,” detailed Kycek. “I like to refer to our Premier Club as a ‘hotel within a hotel’ since it will have its own dedicated registration area and bar exclusive to our Premier Club guests. It will offer the utmost of privacy with no detail overlooked. For example, even the television cable box power button will be camouflaged in deference to light sleepers.”

A STAR IS BORN

In the late 1960s, the town of La Romana was home to the single largest sugar-producing mill in the world. Owned by Gulf+Western, the mill was a major employer, but management knew there was potential to leverage its location and climate, thus a new industry—tourism—was born in the region.

Knowing that no Caribbean resort would be complete without an oceanfront golf course, Pete Dye was hired to design a stunner.

Over the next year, more than 300 Dominican workers hand-carved the design from the rugged coral landscape to bring Pete Dye’s vision to life. Upon hearing the workers refer to the sharp coral rock with its canine teeth as “diente de perro” (which means Teeth of the Dog in Spanish), the name stuck.

“Golf is not a pastime, it’s a way of life at Casa de Campo Resort,” smiled Kycek. “Whether you are a single



Our summer family vacation.

digit stick or it takes you several holes before making a divot in a fairway, you can’t help but be enamored by our golf facilities. We have been long known for golf, but now with our newest amenities, we offer the whole package.”

THE GRANDEST OF GRAND SCALE

Casa de Campo Resort is 7,000 acres of tropical paradise. “About 70 percent of our guests are from the United States, 10 percent reside in South America, and 10 percent are from Europe,” highlighted Kycek. “With a base of 2,400 homeowners, we are able to offer amenities and services that a stand-alone resort would struggle to justify. I can’t think of another destination in the world where you hop into your golf cart [every guest is provided a complimentary golf cart for transportation] for an afternoon of

fun at our equestrian center; shooting club; golf facilities; sandy beaches; or strolling around Altos de Chavón, a replica 16th century Mediterranean village.

"Our property is the size of an aircraft carrier, so it takes time to make a turn," continued Kycek. "If you haven't been to Casa de Campo recently, you will be blown away by our progress to create one of the hottest destinations in the Caribbean, if not the world."

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

During the height of the summer travel season, we had a family reunion at Casa de Campo. Our five-night stay was at the resort's posh, four-bedroom Villa Gray that sleeps up to 12 and has a private pool/Jacuzzi, access to two golf carts, a game room, personal concierge, and butler service that provides cooked to order breakfast in your full-service kitchen. The home felt modern, clean, and worthy of

A REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK



With seven dramatic holes on Teeth of the Dog hugging the craggy coral formations of the Caribbean Sea, it's easy to comprehend why Pete Dye remarked, "I created 11 holes and God created seven." The course is ranked a "Top 100" in the world by both Golf Magazine and Golf Digest. If you are staying on property, you have access to 63 holes of golf. Teeth of the Dog is a must play, but, in my opinion, the Chavon Course at Dye Fore is an equally compelling choice with five cliff-side holes with views of the Chavon River and its rugged canyon.



The extensive equestrian center is among the best in the Caribbean. Private guides are available for a leisurely ride through herds of water buffalo, lakes teeming with ducks and local fauna, and sugar cane fields. The tropical climate is conducive for board shorts and tee shirts. If you take advantage of a horse ride, pack a pair of Levi's in your luggage.

Perhaps the best thing about Minitas Beach is that it's a private, unspoiled haven. Ample beach chairs and umbrellas are available, and sunscreen is a must.



the setting in an episode of *Million Dollar Listing*.

Over the course of our stay, we took full advantage of various activities, including playing golf, skeet shooting, horseback riding, touring Altos de Chavón, a boat trip to Catalina Island, and indulging in several feasts fit for a king.

Events over the past three years have taught us valuable lessons to not take anything for granted. As we watched the sun set while sipping on Casa de Campo's

signature mojitos, I was reminded about a famous quote by Robin Williams, "Life is fleeting. And if you're ever distressed, cast your eyes to the summer sky when the stars are strung across the velvety night. When a shooting star streaks through the blackness, make a wish."

My wish: a return to Casa de Campo. ■

For more information, visit casadecampo.com.do.



From a pleasure craft to a luxurious yacht, the docking facilities at the marina can accommodate a wide range of vessels. Concrete docks with wooden catwalks provide access to each boat mooring which are equipped with water, electricity, and cable TV hookups. With water just offshore teeming with blue marlin, you never have far to go to fish in some truly spectacular seas. Take time to meander the cobblestone walkways to window shop and enjoy a meal at one of the on-site restaurants.

Altos de Chavón is a place like no other—a replica 16th century Mediterranean village in the heart of the Dominican countryside. Its 5,000-seat, Grecian-style amphitheater was inaugurated by Frank Sinatra for a live HBO special in 1982. Other notable performers over the years include Sting, Elton John, and Gloria Estefan. Our dinner at La Piazzetta was a notable highlight with its gourmet Italian food and strolling mariachi trio.



Casa de Campo's 245-acre outdoor Shooting Centre has 200+ stations for trap, skeet and sporting clays, and pigeon rings. Its 110-foot tower that projects sporting clays is one of the largest in the world. As a first timer, I must admit the thrill of hitting several clays, albeit my success rate hovered around 10 percent.

Enjoy a different kind of island escape with a half-day excursion to Catalina Island for snorkeling or curling your toes in the warm, sugary sand. The 30-minute boat trip (each way) is reasonably priced at \$48/person and even includes complimentary Presidente beer and snacks during the voyage.

