

# ALL FOR

Puerto Rico is our first stop for golf in the sun, but it's not our last. Here are four Caribbean destinations worth noting. PATRICK JONES shows us around Chi Chi Rodriguez' home island, while KINGDOM goes exploring

TALK ABOUT MAKING AN ENTRANCE. When Arnold Palmer visited Puerto Rico in 1977, he was flying a military plane—no great surprise, considering Arnie's achievements as a pilot. But rather than setting down at an airport, he landed on the aircraft carrier Eisenhower, and that is quite a special feat for a civilian.

"The Atlantic Fleet admiral asked if I'd like to do it," remembers Palmer. "I said 'sure!' It was a thrill, especially to have it be aboard the carrier named after my good friend."

Most visitors to the Caribbean are happy to fly commercially or arrive on one of the many cruises that embark daily from Florida, and arrive they do. More than 20 million people visit each year, and many bring their golf clubs—for very good reason. Pack yours and, however you like to travel, get down to Puerto Rico or one of our three other favorite Caribbean destinations. You'll thank us for it.

## PUERTO RICO

The swashbuckling Juan "Chi Chi" Rodriguez, for decades an Arnold Palmer friend and competitive foil, dramatically punctuated holing key putts by waving his putter in the air like a make-believe sword. He then rammed it back into a pretend scabbard with the same flair. The flamboyant Chi Chi is the face of Puerto Rican golf.



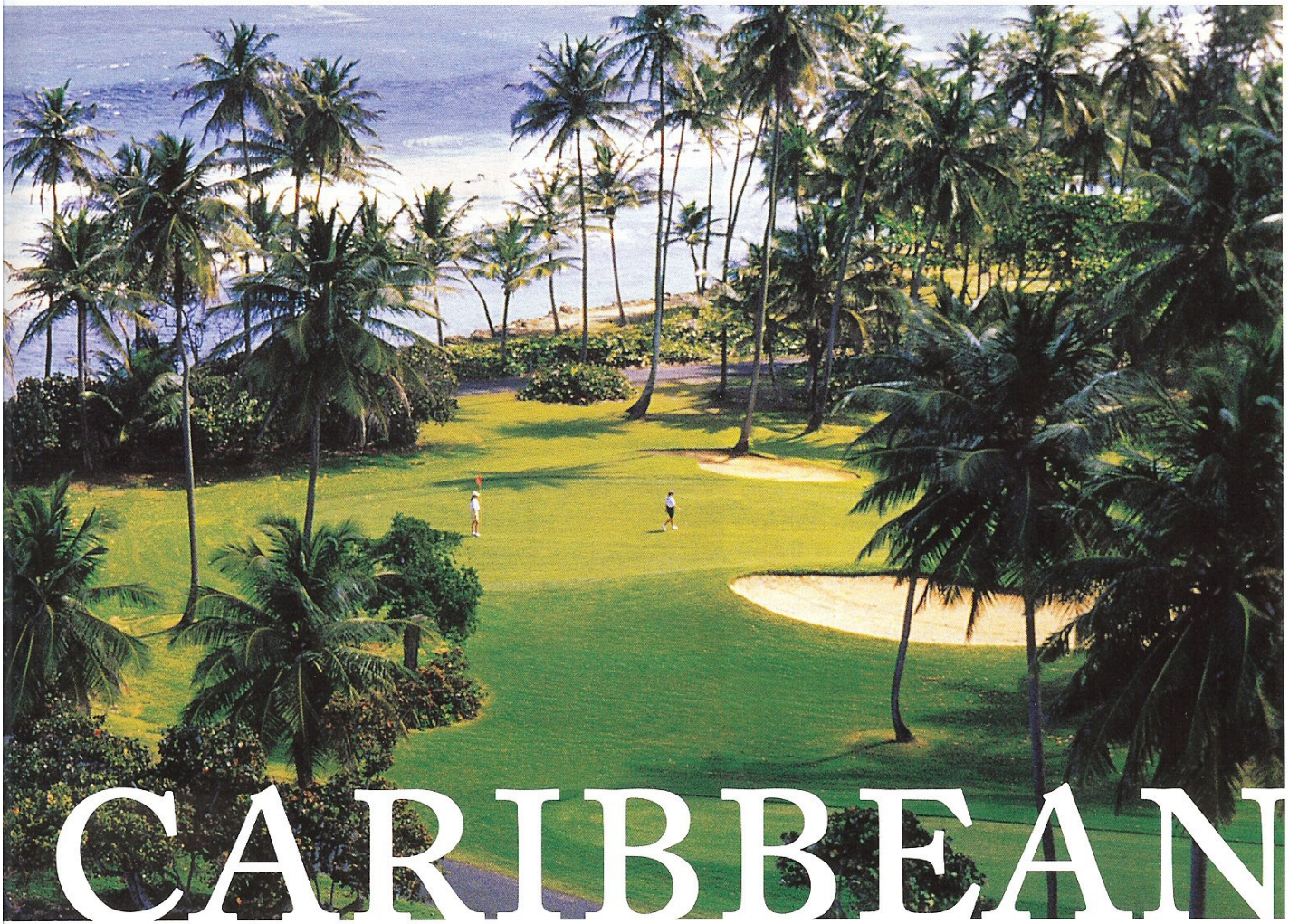


Photo: Puerto Rico Tourism Company

# CARIBBEAN



DORADO BEACH RESORT & CLUB (TOP) AND TRUMP INTERNATIONAL (ABOVE)

Rodriguez's native Caribbean island is as colorful and lively as its best-known golfer. Sun-drenched, pristine ocean beaches quickly give rise to fog-shrouded mountainous rainforests along parts of Puerto Rico's coast. Exotic iguanas freely roam across its golf courses like prehistoric forecaddies. The imposing colonial forts of Old San Juan meld into the nearby Ben & Jerry's commercial hipness of the vibrant new sections of the city.

Puerto Rico, a U.S. Territory that requires no passport for travel, serves as the perfect destination for a hassle-free Caribbean golf getaway.

Chi Chi's international golf exploits have drawn significant attention to this island of nearly four million residents though baseball, frankly, remains the prime passion here. The list of Major League Baseball players from Puerto Rico, led by former Pittsburgh Pirate Hall of Famer Roberto Clemente, is a long one. But golf has a strong foothold as well.

Rodriguez, not surprisingly, has personally designed several courses in his homeland. It is a land where he once worked as a laborer in the sugar cane fields during his youth. El Legado Golf Resort ([ellegadogolfresort.com](http://ellegadogolfresort.com)) in Guayama and Dorado Del Mar ([www.embassysuitesdorado.com](http://www.embassysuitesdorado.com)) in Dorado are among Chi Chi's local creations.



In total, there are approximately two dozen golf courses spread across this tropical destination. One of the oldest, **El Conquistador Golf Club** ([www.hiltonelconquistador.com](http://www.hiltonelconquistador.com)) in Fajardo, hosted Shell's Wonderful World of Golf match featuring Arnold Palmer versus Chi Chi and Gay Brewer in 1969.

A significant boost to the island's legitimacy in professional golf circles came with hosting a PGA Tour event, beginning in 2008. The Puerto Rico Open is staged at **Trump International Golf Club** ([www.trumpgolfclubpuertorico.com](http://www.trumpgolfclubpuertorico.com)) in Rio Grande, a course that was designed by 1992 U.S. Open champion Tom Kite. The Trump property includes nearby luxury accommodations for golf travelers at the **Gran Meliá** ([www.gran-melia-puerto-rico.com](http://www.gran-melia-puerto-rico.com)). Among its offerings are 48 ocean suites with whirlpools on the terrace or balcony along with the resort's Premier Service. Inviting hammocks at Gran Meliá are strung between palm trees along the beach for post-round siestas. A swim-up cocktail bar in an oversized pool adds to the relaxation possibilities. Fine dining from several international cuisines is also available on the property.

One of the island's newest golf offerings is **Bahia Beach Resort & Golf Club** ([www.bahiabeachgolfclub.com](http://www.bahiabeachgolfclub.com)). The Robert Trent Jones Jr. design in Rio Grande is the home course for off-season resident Carlos Beltran of the New York Mets. The impeccably groomed course is the centerpiece for the first development in Puerto Rico to be designated a Certified Gold Audubon International Signature Sanctuary. The final three holes on the course run parallel to the beach and provide a picturesque finish to a memorable round.

Another popular option in the northeastern reaches of Puerto Rico is the **Rio Mar Beach Resort and Spa** ([www.wyndhamriomar.com](http://www.wyndhamriomar.com)), a Wyndham Grand Resort. Tom and George Fazio collaborated on the resort's Ocean Course, which features panoramic views of the Atlantic Ocean. Rio Mar also features an additional 18 holes by Greg Norman. The 6,945-yard River Course follows along the Mameyes River as it runs from the nearby mountains to the sea. Views of Puerto Rico's **El Yunque Rainforest** rise above many of the holes. A distinctive 35,000 sq. ft. clubhouse is the centerpiece of both layouts.

**Palmas del Mar** ([www.palmasdelmar.com](http://www.palmasdelmar.com)) in Humacao is another Puerto Rico resort featuring 36 holes of golf. The Palms course was designed by Gary Player. Rees Jones was the architect for the Flamboyant Course. The luxury resort features the island's largest array of available accommodations.

The Embassy Suites **Dorado del Mar Beach and Golf Club** ([www.embassysuitesdorado.com](http://www.embassysuitesdorado.com)) designed by Chi Chi is yet another of Puerto Rico's top choices for a Caribbean golf destination. Located 25 miles from downtown San Juan, the palm-tree lined course features unforgettable Atlantic Ocean views.

For fans of layouts by architect Robert Jones Sr., the **Dorado Beach Resort & Club** ([www.doradobeachclub.com](http://www.doradobeachclub.com)) in Cerromar offers several of his original creations. The 72 holes available for play comprise the East Course, West Course, Sugar Cane Course and the Pineapple Course. Dorado Beach has served as a past host of the World Cup of Golf and the Senior Tournament of Champions.

Puerto Rico's marketing slogan is "Explore Beyond The Shore." That is sound advice for all that the island has to offer. Just make sure that plenty of golf along some of its stunning Atlantic and Caribbean coastal courses is also an integral part of the itinerary.



NEVIS IS HOME TO A RAINFOREST AS WELL AS SANDY BEACHES

## NEVIS

Although it's the tiny sister of St. Kitts, Nevis doesn't have to make up for anything. This nature-lover's paradise offers a whole world of adventure in its 36 square miles, and not all of it is on the beaches. Primarily rainforest, Nevis holds a peculiar species of green vervet monkey, brought to the island by British settlers. In addition to these chattering inhabitants, donkeys are a common sight in the forest, often trailing young behind them. Booking a nature tour is well recommended.

On Nevis' northwestern shore sits the **Four Seasons Resort** ([www.fourseasons.com/nevis](http://www.fourseasons.com/nevis)). Designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr. along Pinney's Beach, it offers the island's only 18-hole golf course, along with 196 plush rooms and suites set into 12 two-storey guest buildings on the shore (in fact, the government doesn't allow any structure on Nevis to be taller than two stories because it would then tower over the palm trees that blanket the island).

The course provides dramatic views of the Caribbean as well as St. Kitts. Carved out of a coconut plantation in the 1980s, it begins at sea level before working its way 450 feet up and eventually settling back near the shore. And the views are fantastic, as you'd expect from an Oceanside island course.

After your round, the **Botanical Garden** is worth a visit, as are the **Nisbet Plantation** with its white coral sand beach, the **Montpelier Plantation Inn**, a sugar mill dating from 1794, and the imposing colonial stone architecture of the **Courthouse and Public Library**, which was built in 1825. When you're thirsty, head back to the Four Seasons and stop in at **Mango** for a signature Mangojito or the Topsy Palmer. >