

# Resort Profile

# Blue

*Well into its fourth decade, Casa de Campo is still the most complete and intriguing golf resort in the Caribbean*

**BY BRIAN McCALLEN**

## The Golf

Casa de Campo, “House in the Country,” rightly bills itself as the Caribbean’s most complete resort. But in reality, this 7,000-acre enclave in the Dominican Republic is the House that Dye Built. Pete Dye, that is. After scouting the rocky shore along the island’s southeast coast in the late 1960s, Dye envisioned a course that would bring golfers to the sea on both nines. Hand-built by a crew of 300 local laborers, the course christened as Teeth of the Dog redefined the golf experience in the islands when it debuted in 1971. Pete and his wife Alice liked the place and the people so much they built a thatched-roof home near the seaside seventh hole.

Dye turns 81 this December and visits the resort a few times a year, in theory to take a break from the design business. But he gets ants in his pants while he’s there. Early last year he jumped at the chance to renovate Teeth of the Dog, whose dimensions were a bit short given today’s equipment technology. Dye was wise enough to keep the Dog on a leash from the forward tees, but he turned

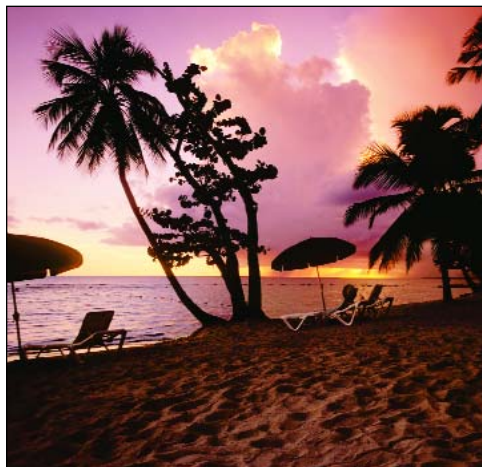
his pet spaniel into a pit bull by pushing the new back tees to 7,471 yards, where the “Beware of Dog” sign is lit for experts.

Then he really got going. After greens and tees were resurfaced in salt-tolerant paspalum grass, Dye began shifting fairways, repositioning bunkers, and altering hole angles. He also found ingenious ways to stretch and tweak his vintage layout. By taking out the restrooms behind the fourth tee, the designer added nearly *100 yards* to a formerly petite par four that now doglegs sharply to the right and tops out at 489 yards.

Reopened last December, the “new” Teeth of the Dog remains one of the most scenic and beguiling resort spreads in the hemisphere from the blue tees (6,485 yards) or white tees (6,015 yards). If all you did was hop a morning flight in New York, play the course, and then fly back home, it would still be worth the trip.

As good as it is, Teeth of the Dog looks positively pint-sized compared to Dye Fore, the majestic layout routed along bluffs 300 feet above sea level. Opened in 2003, Dye Fore rivals Dye’s work at Wisconsin’s Whistling Straits as an engineering extravaganza. It was built on incised tableland near Altos de Chavon, the resort’s cliff-hanging replica of a 16th-century Mediterranean village.

Dye Fore’s scale is grand: Boulevard-wide fairways lead to enormous greens staked out by massive bunkers. Topmost holes offer spectacular views of the Chavon River’s lazy coils as well as misty mountains in the interior.



Two captivating choices await you at Casa de Campo: Tackle the seaside Teeth of the Dog (far right), or lounge on the beach (inset).

# Heaven



## Insider's Edge

**The one shot you need:** On Teeth of the Dog, a windcheater. On Dye Fore, a long, straight tee ball.

**Toughest hole:** On Teeth, par-four 17th, which plays to a seaside green that Dye enlarged but somehow made look smaller. On Dye Fore, the par-four fourth, 500 yards from the tips, will rock your world, especially if you overcook the approach shot.

**Best chance for birdie:** On a Pete Dye course? You must be kidding.

**Cart it or hoof it?:** Walking is recommended (with a caddie) on Teeth of the Dog and Links. Take a cart on Dye Fore.

**Best time to visit:** November through April.

**Don't leave home without:** A wide-brimmed hat, SPF 30 sunscreen, and *Spanish for Travelers* phrase book.

**Nicest touch:** Friendly staff, and bar stocked with Dominican rums and mixers in Excel villas.

**Best drink:** A frosty piña colada served in a hollowed-out pineapple at El Pescador on the beach.

**Worthwhile souvenirs:** Jewelry made from native amber, top-shelf Dominican cigars.

**Don't miss:** Kandela!, an Afro-Caribbean musical extravaganza staged in open-air amphitheater at Altos de Chavon.

note is struck at the 18th, a giant par five that plunges into a valley before rising sharply to a pulpit green undercut by gaping bunkers. As stagecraft, Dye Fore has few equals anywhere.

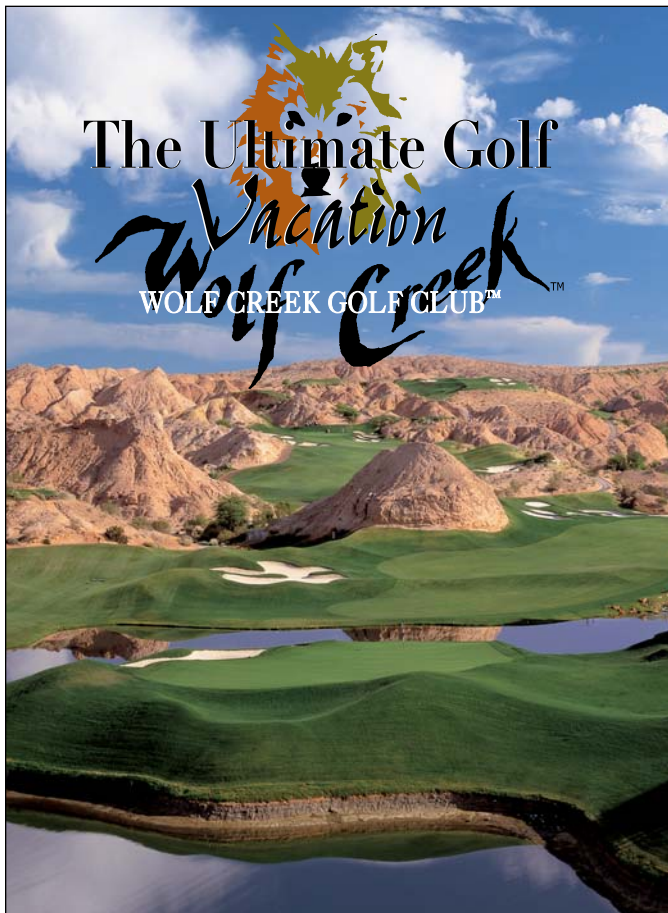
Unsurprisingly, Dye isn't done at his eponymous course. Taking shape on gently rolling terrain near the mouth of the river near the resort's stylish marina is Dye Fore's new South nine. Later this year, existing holes from the current 18 will be blended with these new holes, which feature Dye's usual optical illusions and flourishes. In time, a North nine, to be routed on steeper terrain near Altos de Chavon, will be woven into holes that skirt the river bluffs. When complete, this vast, dramatic 36-hole spread will rank among the finest achievements of Dye's legendary career.

There's a third golf option at Casa de Campo. The Links, a 30-year-old upcountry design by Dye that climbs into rolling hills above the resort's polo fields, is framed by fields of tall guinea grass and mature trees. While relatively

Shimmering on the horizon is the Caribbean Sea. But Dye didn't build the course for sightseers: From the tips, Dye Fore is an otherworldly 7,714 yards, though the course can play as short as 5,225 yards.

Despite the extensive earthworks,

Dye Fore, built to support an upscale residential development, sits naturally on the land. The incoming nine is especially memorable. The 12th and 15th holes, each a one-shotter calling for a brave tee shot over a chasm to a cliff-side green, are stunning. A crescendo



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short at 6,602 yards, the layout's narrow corridors, small greens, and numerous lagoons will keep you honest.

### The Activities

Golf is Casa de Campo's calling card, but this family-friendly resort welcomes sports enthusiasts of all stripes. The tennis center has 13 composite Har-Tru courts, 10 lighted for night play. The shooting center offers more than 100 sporting clay stations and a 110-foot target tower. Last spring, lights were installed at the facility. Golfers who believe that the movement of tracking a clay pigeon with a shotgun is a swing of its own now gravitate to the center after dark to relax in the cool night air and enjoy a fine Dominican cigar in the Safari Club.

World-class polo is played at Casa de Campo from November to May, and the matches are exciting to watch. The equestrian center (English or Western saddles) offers guided trail rides. Fishing, both river and deep sea, is available.

Catalina Island, a sandy private atoll, is accessible via catamaran or charter boat. You can paddle a kayak up the Chavon River—and return later in the day for a sunset cruise. For those who prefer shopping adventures, exclusive boutiques can be found in and around the lively marina.

A word about Altos de Chavon: This village in the sky was conceived in the 1970s by Roberto Copa, set designer for Fellini and Visconti. The rustic village was hand-built and “aged” to look centuries old. Narrow cobblestone streets lead to plazas, fountains, an archaeological museum, a tiny church, quaint shops, and shady cafes. There is also a 5,000-seat amphitheater where concerts are held.

### The Hotel

Casa de Campo offers 300 updated hotel rooms and suites; two- to four-bedroom homes; and deluxe Excel Club villas. These multi-bedroom villas feature a private garden and a pool, made-to-order breakfast daily, and a

golf cart for getting around. For an ultra-luxe experience, Exclusive Villas offer beautifully appointed homes in prime oceanfront settings. A villa “microsite” on the resort's website features villa images as well as details on size, location and cost. All-inclusive golf packages are available in each category of accommodation.

### The Trip

Casa de Campo is about as easy to get to from the Met Area as any major resort in the world. It sits a mere 10 minutes from the international airport at La Romana, and there are numerous non-stop flights every day from New York's Kennedy Airport. It's possible to be on the first tee within an hour of touchdown. For reservations and further information, call 1-800-877-3643 or log on to [www.casadecampo.com.do](http://www.casadecampo.com.do). ■

**Brian McCallen** is a longtime travel writer whose forthcoming book, *Golf's Best New Destinations*, will be released in Fall 2006. He lives in Stonington, Connecticut.

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