

# SIMPLY GOLD

MEXICO'S NEW EL DORADO

By Scott Kauffman





El Dorado was a mythical place also known as the Lost City of Gold, a place Spanish conquistadors and fellow Europeans sought out in their quest for the riches of the New World. Of course, no one ever found that ancient legendary city, but there's a new story of El Dorado emerging from MexiCompany Travelers are being drawn to newfound riches in the form of stunning oceanfront property, luxurious homes, and the finest in amenities and service—all in an unparalleled private-club setting.

Unlike the El Dorado of centuries past, the modern-day El Dorado Golf & Beach Club is no tall tale—thanks to Discovery Land Company, the San Francisco–based real estate group that has made a name developing such remarkable club communities as Kukio on the Big Island of Hawaii; Iron Horse in Whitefish, Montana; Mirabel in Scottsdale, Arizona; and the Madison Club in La Quinta, California.

Now, Discovery Land Company is taking its world-class act south of the border with its latest venture. Located in Mexico's Baja Peninsula, in the fast-developing region of Los Cabos, El Dorado Golf & Beach Club is a 520-acre project shaping up to be an exquisite gated beach- and golf-resort community. Being situated along the popular "Golden Corridor" that connects San Jose del Cabo to Cabo San Lucas is special in itself. Combined with the fact that Discovery Land Company controls more than a mile of arguably the most breathtaking beaches along the entire coast of the Sea of Cortés, and El Dorado has the makings to be the finest family-oriented club community in Mexico—replete with dramatic beachfront homesites, a spectacular beach club, and a Jack Nicklaus–designed golf course that some say might be one of his most beautiful.

"As far as aesthetics and physical beauty are concerned, the property may be one of the best we have in our portfolio," says Discovery Land Chairman-CEO Mike Meldman, whose private enclave is nestled between the renowned Las Ventanas and Palmilla resorts. "There is over a mile of beachfront along the Sea of Cortés and the property is terraced,

so there's basically 270 degrees of ocean views. It's stunning."

It's a prime palette for the Nicklaus Signature course, a delightful layout that deftly interfaces with the ocean and plays into an unspoiled valley sprinkled with gorgeous desert landscapes. The Discovery Land Company team along with Nicklaus did a major renovation of the existing space, completely redoing the greens, reversing the routing of the front and back nines, and adding tens of millions of dollars in landscaping. The updated course is scheduled to open this December.

"In my opinion, it's one of Nicklaus's best golf courses, and we're enhancing it with landscaping and other improvements that will make the course even more dramatic than it was before," says Meldman, whose company got its start developing the top-rated Estancia Club in Scottsdale.

El Dorado Golf & Beach Club is being developed by Discovery Land Company in partnership with Mexico's prominent Sánchez-Navarro family, noted for developing Cabo Real and brewing Corona beer.

According to Meldman, the Sánchez-Navarro [family] have been critical in the success of El Dorado because of its respected and influential ties to the local market.

"They're a very well-connected family and make phenomenal partners," adds Meldman. "El Dorado was intended to be their prime asset, so they placed the course on a very impressive piece of coastline. It was a bold decision and I agree with it."

"My sense is that Cabo is destined to become the new Riviera. The government has a master plan which includes the construction of several large-scale, state-of-the-art marinas. With all these boats, it will be similar to cruising the French Riviera or Sardinia." —Mike Meldman, chairman-CEO, Discovery Land Company

**Discovery's** master plan at El Dorado calls for 67 custom home sites that range from 1/3 to 1-plus acres; 24 Beach Villas (2,600-3,800 square feet, three to four bedrooms); 42 Golf Villas (4,200-4,400 square feet, five bedrooms); and 32 Casitas (1,750-5,000 square feet, two to six bedrooms). All of the homesites and residences will afford spectacular beachfront locations and/or ocean, golf, and desert mountain views. The private, nonequity club will be to 395 members.

Besides the championship golf course, the 24-hour guard-gated community will feature home-care and maintenance programs and the following amenities: a world-class spa; a state-of-the-art fitness center; a members-only shopping boutique; inviting men's and women's lounge and locker areas; resort-style swimming facilities; championship tennis courts; and numerous indoor and outdoor dining facilities, from casual poolside to exquisite five-star dining.

The Beach Club, ensconced in the golden sands of one of Los Cabos's prettiest swimming beaches, is being designed so families can enjoy El Dorado's beautiful surroundings in complete comfort and privacy. The club will regularly host a full calendar of family-friendly activities such as evening bonfires, clambakes, games, and parties.

Discovery's signature Outdoor Pursuits Program, the company's lifestyle-and-recreation concierge service, is available to all members and guests. Designed to assist members with every aspect of life and leisure, Outdoor Pursuits takes care of everything from organizing scuba trips and marlin fishing to dry cleaning and handyman services—utilizing the Baja's most experienced and knowledgeable professionals in the process. Ultimately, the convenience of Outdoor Pursuits allows members to maximize the valuable time they have with what's most important: family and friends. Additionally, El Dorado will offer property management services, ensuring that one's property is well-maintained and secure.

One element that makes El Dorado so attractive to Meldman is the community's excellent air transport. Los Angeles and Scottsdale are just an hour and a half away, and major cities such as Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, and San Francisco are 2 1/2 to 3 hours away. In all, more than two dozen U.S. cities offer nonstop flights to Cabo San Lucas, including Newark, N.J. Upon arrival in Cabo, passengers and pilots will find two user-friendly commercial terminals and a private FBO, all of which are less than 30 minutes from the gates of El Dorado.

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tion of several large-scale, state-of-the-art marinas. With all these boats, it will be similar to cruising the French Riviera or Sardinia."

In addition, outside of El Dorado, there is a richness and authenticity to Cabo that is unique. For instance, just a 15-minute drive from the development are numerous local hotels and restaurants and the famed downtown Cabo San Lucas nightlife. Or, just a short drive to the north toward San Jose del Cabo, one can spend the day in colonial "Old Mexico" where the atmosphere is more rustic and relaxed.

In all, it's a formula that resonates with Discovery Land Company's network of approximately 3,000 loyal members and residents. Meldman also makes a point that investing in Mexico is a safe and sound investment, particularly with Discovery's development and marketing team at the helm.

Some background: Mexico changed its constitution in the 1990s to allow foreigner ownership of beachfront property, basically granting American buyers constitutional protection and rights. Under current Mexican law, any individual is permitted to own land through a trust that is set up through a bank and controlled by that individual. As the landowner, you are the beneficiary of the trust, which allows you the same rights that you have over your property in the United States—meaning you can sell, rent, lease, or build on it.

Meldman believes that his company's experience further adds to the project's security. "Our credibility, created by our well-established track record of high-quality projects and high-quality service, brings a sense of security and long-term value," he says. "Also, when Americans buy real estate [in Cabo], they get American title insurance. So you have most of the protections you have when buying in the U.S."

Meldman says what makes El Dorado so distinctive when compared with neighboring world-class resort communities is its privacy and exclusivity along with the integrity of its amenities package and service. "We are surrounded on both sides of El Dorado by world-class, extremely well-run resorts, however, the key point is that they are resorts, not private clubs. At El Dorado you will have all the amenities of these five-star resorts—perhaps even better ones—but there will only be 395 families using them. This intimacy allows us to really get to know our families and really get to know their kids."

It's a golden formula that, fittingly, can be found at a place called El Dorado. **PI**

For more information on El Dorado Golf & Beach Club, call 415.676.5800 or visit [www.discoverylandcompany.com](http://www.discoverylandcompany.com).