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Old Quarry G.C. at Santa Barbara Plantation: Pete Dye golf (and so much more) in Curacao

 *By David R. Holland,
Senior Writer*



In addition to Old Quarry Golf Course, Curacao offers diving, fishing, sailing, tennis or just venturing out to the beaches throughout the island. (Courtesy of Old Quarry G.C.)

CURACAO, Netherlands Antilles -- Mount Tafelberg looms over Pete Dye's **Old Quarry Golf Course** like President Hugo Chavez rules Venezuela and eccentrically imagines he owns this Caribbean island. He doesn't own it -- the Dutch do.

Curacao, home to Santa Barbara Plantation, a 1,500-acre gated community with two marinas, a new Hyatt Regency and Old Quarry G.C., is located about 35 miles off the northern coast of Venezuela and is the largest of the ABC islands that includes Aruba and Bonaire.

Remember the pretext to William Shakespeare's 1610-11 play, "The Tempest": "What would you do if you were stranded on a desert island?" Well, Curacao certainly fits the description. But you can play golf here.

"With rainfall at only 20 inches a year and evaporation at 92 inches per year, water conservation and accurate delivery of irrigation was key," said Jim Bolinger, the golf manager who headed the construction. "Another was the need to blend it into surroundings that are desert like with various forms of cactus and combine it with the influence of the Caribbean. Where else in the world can you find cactus growing just adjacent to salt water? It is a striking contrast."

The "quarry" is that craggy expanse of limestone, Mount Tafelberg, a center point of the development, and where on your journey around the 6,970-yard, par-72 golf course, you might even see explosions. They are still mining marble.

The building of Old Quarry Golf Course

So you are going to build a championship golf course more than a thousand miles from the United States and there are no skilled workers. What do you do?

"When Pete Dye built Teeth of the Dog (Dominican Republic) back in 1969, they had similar challenges with the workers not knowing about golf," Bolinger recalled. "It was a steady job and the workers learned as we progressed -- they learned from two experienced shapers and slowly gained experience. It was the same here in Curacao. I know the workers have a great sense of pride in how they participated and learned.

"Two additional technicians from Mexico came and spent a

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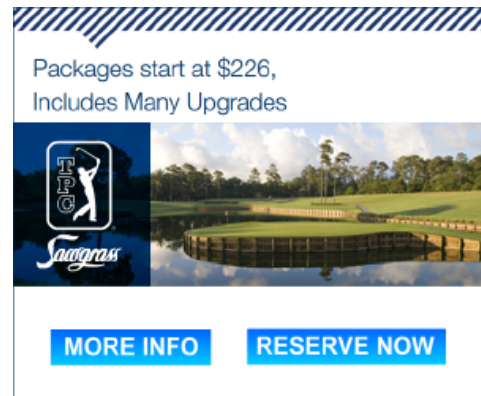
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year installing the irrigation system and trained two locals on how to fix any problems after the system was operating."

Once the irrigation system was operational, Bolinger and his crew had a pick of three water sources: effluent water from an on-site water treatment plant, fresh and salt water, and reverse osmosis water that was purchased. All of these sources were mixed to produce irrigation water for the wall-to-wall Paspalum.

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Old Quarry Golf Course: The routing

The holes are as close to natural as possible, Bolinger said, with minimal shaping just to make it playable and not to destroy important surrounding vegetation.

"People tell me they enjoy the challenge and diversity of the course," Bolinger said. "During your round you will experience ocean holes, bay side holes, marsh views of a rookery, mountain and valley view holes. The par 3s are all a test in itself, sometimes appearing to be more difficult than they really are. And the very constant trade winds blow and gust around the mountain that frames most of the course."

Most likely you won't get wet during your round, but the wind is constant, especially on the two opening holes along the ocean -- a par 4 and par 5 where the wind pushes your ball toward the Caribbean.

Mount Tafelberg is in view on the tee shot at No. 4, a 380-yard par 4, and then more fun begins. The par 5s are reachable in two, and there is a marina par 3 before climbing to the base of the mountain for more rugged scenery.

Eight months out of the year you can bank on temperatures in the 90s. "But people should come to Curacao not only to golf but enjoy scuba in crystal water, fishing, sailing, tennis or just venturing out into the various beaches throughout the island," Bolinger said.

Old Quarry Golf Course: The verdict

If you are going to make the effort to fly almost all the way to South America, most Americans have picked Aruba in the past, but Curacao is a worthy opponent. Old Quarry Golf Course is fun and challenging, but there's much more to do. The Dutch love tennis and will probably gravitate to golf as another recreational opportunity.

September 17, 2010

David R. Holland is an award-winning former sportswriter for The Dallas Morning News, football magazine publisher, and author of The Colorado Golf Bible. Before launching a career as a travel/golf writer, he achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force reserve, serving during the Vietnam and Desert Storm eras. Follow Dave on Twitter [here](#).

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Dave Holland's Curacao piece

David Pearson wrote on: Sep 23, 2010

Dave Holland has done it again. This very talented writer has gotten to the core of what makes Pete Dye's new "Old Quarry" golf course (an oxymoron, I'll admit) such an unusual test and treat.

Like Teeth of the Dog at Casa de Campo, Dye had to work on a rocky, arid soil; using unskilled labor unfamiliar with backhoes and bunkers. He mixed his own topsoil, and he, son P. B. and Jim Bolinger taught and trained the hardworking Curacaoans for a year and a half. The result is Old Quarry, arguably one of the five best courses in the Caribbean, and certainly the most scenic.

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[Old Quarry G.C. at Santa Barbara Plantation:
Pete Dye golf \(and so much more\) in Curacao](#)

Old Quarry Golf Course is a Pete Dye design in Curacao's Santa Barbara Plantation, a 1,500-acre gated community with two marinas and a new Hyatt Regency. The golf course blends into its desert-like surroundings with various forms of cactus and combines it with the influence of the Caribbean. But the golf course is only part of the fun at this resort community.
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