



By Sam Smith

Arriving in the Dominican Republic on a recent golf tour, I was struck by the beauty of the Punta Cana Resort & Club beneath the wings of my non-stop American Airline flight from Charlotte. The resort privately owns the Punta Cana International Airport which is located right inside the gated community property.

Located on the eastern shore of the island, the waves display a rainbow of colors as they crash against the coral rocks that protect the resort.

With VIP service available from the resort, I was escorted nicely through customs and on my way to the luxurious Westin Punta Cana Resort &



Club, passing through additional well protected security gates.

Featuring 200 ocean-view rooms on Playa Blanca beach, the Westin was clearly a hub for all of the activities available at the Resort. Ocean-side restaurants, an expansive outdoor pool, beachside grill, lobby bar, hand rolled cigar bar, walking trails, a variety of water-related sports and access to white sand beaches.

While I was excited to enjoy the Caribbean's ultimate beach, my focus was going to be on the highly rated Punta Cana Resort & Club's two golf courses.

La Cana Golf Club is a 27 hole golf course consisting of three nines that features 14 holes with striking ocean views of the crystal blue Caribbean Sea. Designed by P.B. Dye, Golf Magazine has compared La Cana to Pebble Beach and declared it the "number one course in the Caribbean."

The four shoreline holes prompted the #1 claim, and the two finishing holes are a perfect example of bringing your fabulous golf day to a high-light conclusion. The 18th features a split fairway that leads to a most unusual sea-water loving paspalum grass green measuring 72-yards from front to back. Kept in pristine condition by the ocean spray, a smooth rolling putt for a five sent me off to a wonderful ocean-side evening dinner at the hotel's Brassa Grill & Bar.

The second day of golf featured the newest of the Punta Cana Resort golf courses, the Tom Fazio designed Corales Golf Course, home the PGA Punta Cana Resort & Club Championship held in March. PGA pros and



Sam Smith with Head PGA Professional Jay Overton, Director of Golf

visiting amateur players like this venue due to the conditions of the course, hospitality of the Punta Cana Resort community and the easy access to the airport and hotels.

As Fazio does in most of his designs, he provides wide fairways to keep your spirits up. And they did! Offering multiple tee boxes, risk-reward approaches and even optional greens, at the par-4 3rd and 15th holes- just adds variety if you play Corales more than once.

The exhilarating challenge culminates playing the Devil's Elbow, Corales' last three holes. The Devil's Elbow features the striking 18th hole with a dramatic forced carry over the cliff lining the Bay of Corales, a truly

magnificent closing act of my golf experience to the Caribbean's ultimate beach. And, yes even a bogey at the 18th couldn't spoil this day.

To bid farewell, the Punta Cana Resort & Club invited my group to a Punta Cana Village Festival, where hundreds of Resort residents, staff and visitors enjoyed the taste and drinks of the Dominican Republic. It was there that I got to visit with Resort developer and owner, Frank Rainieri who started the Resort with 10 small huts on the beach, and has grown his dream into one of the most breathtaking locations in the world.



Sam Smith with Punta Cana owner Frank Rainieri at Village Festival

On my final morning with the help of VIP service, available to all guest of the Resort, I easily departed the on-property airport and settled in my airline seat, my head filled with great memories of Punta Cana.

For a once in a life-time vacation, consider a visit to the secure and pristine Punta Cana Resort & Club.

For more information go to [puntacana.com](http://puntacana.com)

