



John's Island Club



An accurate tee shot is vital on hole No. 8 of the West Course.



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AMONG the myriad challenges life throws at us, selecting the perfect vacation or second home may not rank as the most onerous, but it's nonetheless a daunting task. The options, after all, are so numerous. Some communities offer world-class golf. Others lure with an idyllic setting beside the sea. Others offer an array of activities that make them irresistible to families, while at still others the attraction is simply the level of gracious living. Making the right choice can be very difficult.

Or it can be very simple. For there is one place that has it all, one special place that offers everything even the most discerning home seeker could want, all in a single sublime community. That place is the John's Island Club.

It begins with a magical location, on a balmy barrier island halfway down the east coast of Florida, just where the tropics begin. Cold snaps are rarely an issue here, where the year-round temperature averages 74 degrees, but neither are the brutal heat waves of points farther south.

Ten minutes away is a seaside village named one of the Best Small Towns in America—Vero Beach—its streets lined with quaint restaurants, art galleries, and boutiques, plus a world-class museum and theater. This is the Old Florida, far from the city congestion and tourist trappings of Miami, Orlando, West Palm Beach, and Tampa. No wonder it's become known as the Hamptons of Florida.

At the center of this serene sanctuary is the John's Island Club, a member-owned community of 1,650 acres nestled ideally between the Atlantic Ocean and the

LEFT: L.C. LAMBRECHT

Intracoastal Waterway, with an array of residential opportunities from beachfront condominiums to luxury estates. To own a home here is to enjoy a privileged lifestyle that is unsurpassed in Florida—or, for that matter, anywhere else.

Consider the golf alone. John's Island is home to not one but three superb courses, designed by Pete Dye, Jack Nicklaus, and Tom Fazio, each with a personality as distinctive as its creator.

The North and South Courses are the heart of the John's Island Club community and emanate from the same central clubhouse. Dye's North Course weaves 6,900 yards through corridors of mature oak trees. Although the fairways are amply wide, accurate

driving is nonetheless important to avoid the grasp of strategically placed bunkers. The sternest stretch comes at holes 6 through 9—two par fours, a three, and a five, all of them brawny assignments—while the back nine pivots on the watery par-five 14th, the kind of hole that can yield eagles to those who have strength and courage but bogeys (or worse) to those who don't. The last three holes, set scenically beside the Indian River Lagoon, are a fitting finale to a golf course that radiates both challenge and charm.

Though not as long as the North, the South Course calls for careful management and shot-making, its well-defined holes threading through a gauntlet of trees, water, and sand. The front nine is the place to



On the North Course, holes 16 (below) and 17 play beside the Intracoastal Waterway.

L.C. LAMBERT (2)



make a score as water hazards loom on each of the last eight holes, most dramatically at the 18th, a Cape-hole par four that entices its assailants to bite off as much as they dare in quest of a finishing birdie.

Six miles off campus is the crown jewel of John's Island golf, the West Course, set on an extraordinary 300-acre site, a massive sand ridge flanked by tracts of marshland. Architect Fazio took full advantage of these elements to create a course where the changes in elevation are stunning, no two consecutive holes play in the same direction, and the examination of one's skills is unrelenting.

The look and feel of John's Island West—broad, bounding fairways bordered by tracts of sand and brush—invites comparisons with Pine Valley, Jupiter

Hills, and Pinehurst, but this is a golf course with a bold character all its own, based on a beguiling collection of architectural gambits—split fairways and tri-level greens, tiny pot bunkers and 100-yard Saharas, three drivable par fours, and four of the most fascinating, vexing, thinking-man's par fives assembled anywhere. Since its debut in 1988, the West has been ranked among the best courses in the nation, and from the championship tees of 6,900 yards, it is also one of the most demanding. As at the North and South Courses, however, there are five sets of markers so there's a fitting challenge for every level of player.

Although the West's fairways are never crowded, there's no shortage of company. Otters frolic in the wetlands, bass and brim weave through in the ponds,



BELOW: L.C. LAMBRECHT



The finishing hole at the West Course ascends to a green beside the handsome clubhouse where members enjoy the views from both indoor and outdoor dining areas.



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The par-three 13th on the West plays as long as 190 scenic and perilous yards and is especially challenging when the wind blows.

PHOTO BY L.C. LAMBRECHT

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A romantic dining spot at night, a hub of activity during the day, the Beach Club sits at the center of a three-mile stretch of Atlantic oceanfront.

armadillos, tortoises, and box turtles sun themselves on the banks, and ospreys, cranes, and cardinals nest in the trees. It's an environment so pure, one scientist actually planted an endangered species here just to ensure its safety. Apart from the handsome clubhouse at the highest point of the property, there is no structure in sight. This is serenity itself.

And just how strong is the golf at John's Island? In October of 2015 the Club will host one of the most prestigious events in the game, the U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship. The six-day competition will begin

with 36 holes of stroke-play qualifying on the North and West Courses to determine the 64 competitors who will proceed to match play on the West, with the champion winning the USGA's Robert T. Jones Memorial Trophy along with an invitation to the Masters.

But golf is far from the only game in town. The Vero Beach area has long been a magnet for the best professional tennis players in the world, and there are no better facilities than those enjoyed by the members of the John's Island Club—18 Har-Tru courts along with a courtside café and a pro shop staffed by a team



of USPTA professionals. This is also the only gated community in south Florida with air-conditioned North American doubles and International singles squash courts. The squash program attracts top-ranked players and features clinics, exhibitions, and the highly anticipated annual Doubles Open Invitational that draws in some 25 teams of all ages.

The expansive main clubhouse that services the North and South Courses also is home to a state-of-the-art health and fitness center with more than a dozen personal trainers and massage therapists on staff.



A lazy afternoon at the beach can be tempting, but there is no shortage of activities for members, from golf to water sports, croquet to racquet sports, as well as a fully staffed, state-of-the-art fitness center.



Weekly classes are available in yoga, Pilates, Zumba, circuit training, and more, and there is also a comprehensive fitness/lesson program tailored specifically to golfers.

For bicyclists, joggers, and walkers, the club's private, tree-lined streets offer more than 20 miles of trails. And for those who prefer something a bit less strenuous, two full-size croquet lawns are available for casual play or tournament competition. The club calendar also offers plenty of stimulation for the mind and soul, everything from book clubs to bridge camps, speaker forums to computer classes, trivia contests to wine tastings.

And on top of all this, the John's Island Club has something that few if any communities can match: three miles of private white sandy beach centerpieced by a magnificent 50,000-square-foot Beach Club. Since the day it debuted five years ago after a multi-million-dollar

reconstruction, this has been the focal point of club activity. Set on a slight rise just a few paces from the beach, with an open-air design that combines the classical and tropical, the Beach Club offers multiple dining options, all of them with spectacular views of the sea.

A favorite gathering point is Rafters with its rough-hewn beams, tall tables, and 30-foot-long bar, the perfect place for breakfast, lunch, dinner—and late-night socializing. Rafters is the quintessential club-gathering place where members and their guests can relax, dine, share a drink with friends, watch the game, or enjoy a round of billiards. For dinner, there's the casual elegance of the Ocean Hearth or the expansive Island Room, where French doors open onto a seaside terrace for al fresco dining. There's even a cozy outdoor living room complete with a wood-burning hearth for





One of the favorite gathering spots is Rafters at the Beach Club. With its beamed ceiling, high-top tables, and expansive bar, it's the perfect place to get together with friends for drinks and dining beside the sea.

those rare chilly evenings. It all wraps gracefully around an illusion pool that seems to flow straight into the sea.

Back inside is a library, complete with fireplace, card and game tables, and a pool table, as well as an office area for members' use, equipped with a computer, printer, and fax machine.

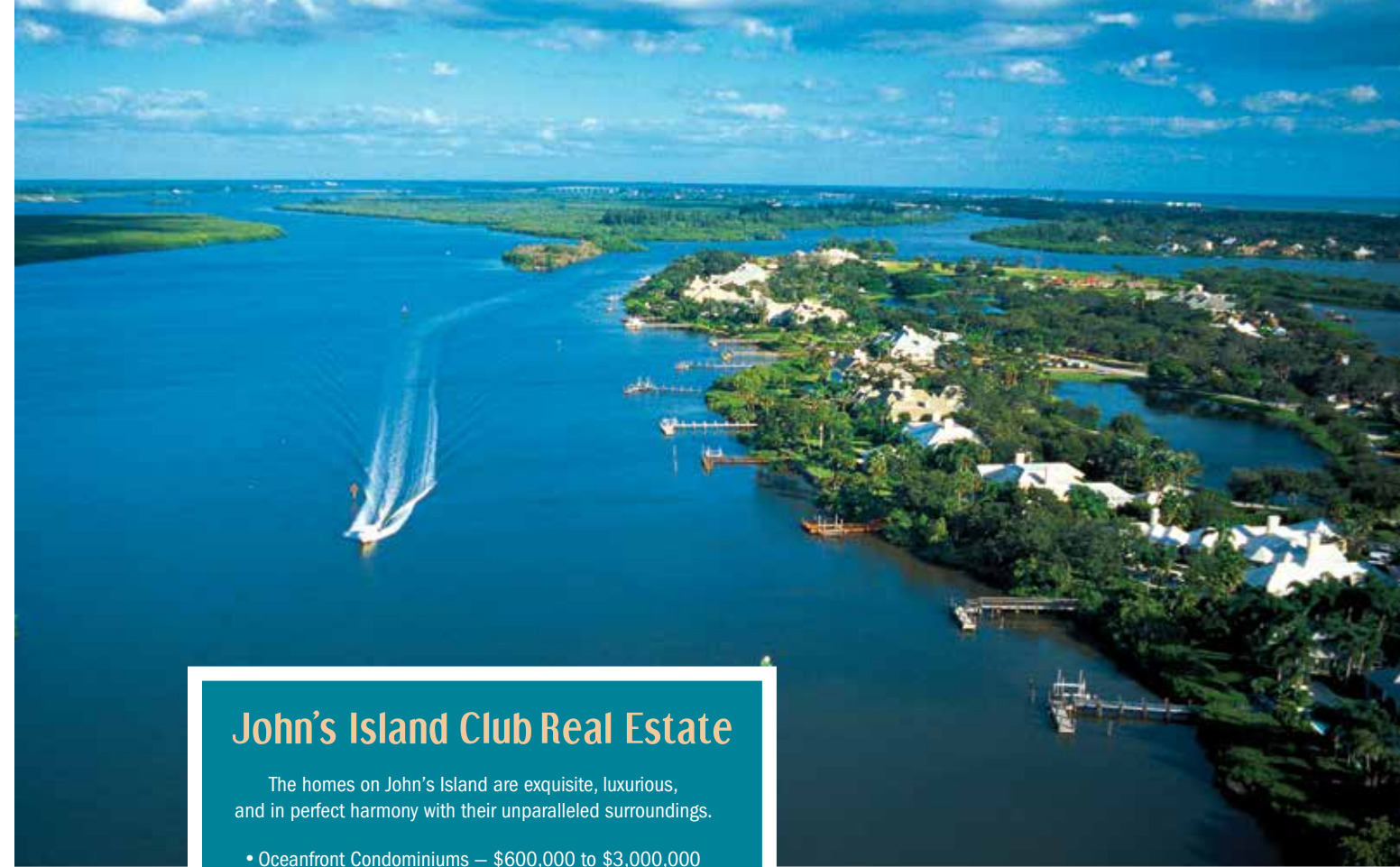
The Beach Club is the ideal place for families to converge, and that's important, because families are what this Club is all about. A unique vertical membership program allows the parents and children of members to play golf and enjoy all the club's other facilities and benefits at no extra charge. And no matter what time of the year, there is always something going on for the kids (and grandkids), whether it's beachside bingo or paddleboard lessons, sports camp or sand-



castle building, the Jingle Bell Jamboree in December or Adventure Island Camp in July.

It's truly this family atmosphere that makes the John's Island Club the special community it is—exclusive yet unpretentious, vibrant yet relaxed, broad-based yet close-knit, a place to forge the friendships and make the memories that will last a lifetime. ■

Written by John's Island Club member George Peper, former editor of GOLF Magazine and current editor of LINKS Magazine.

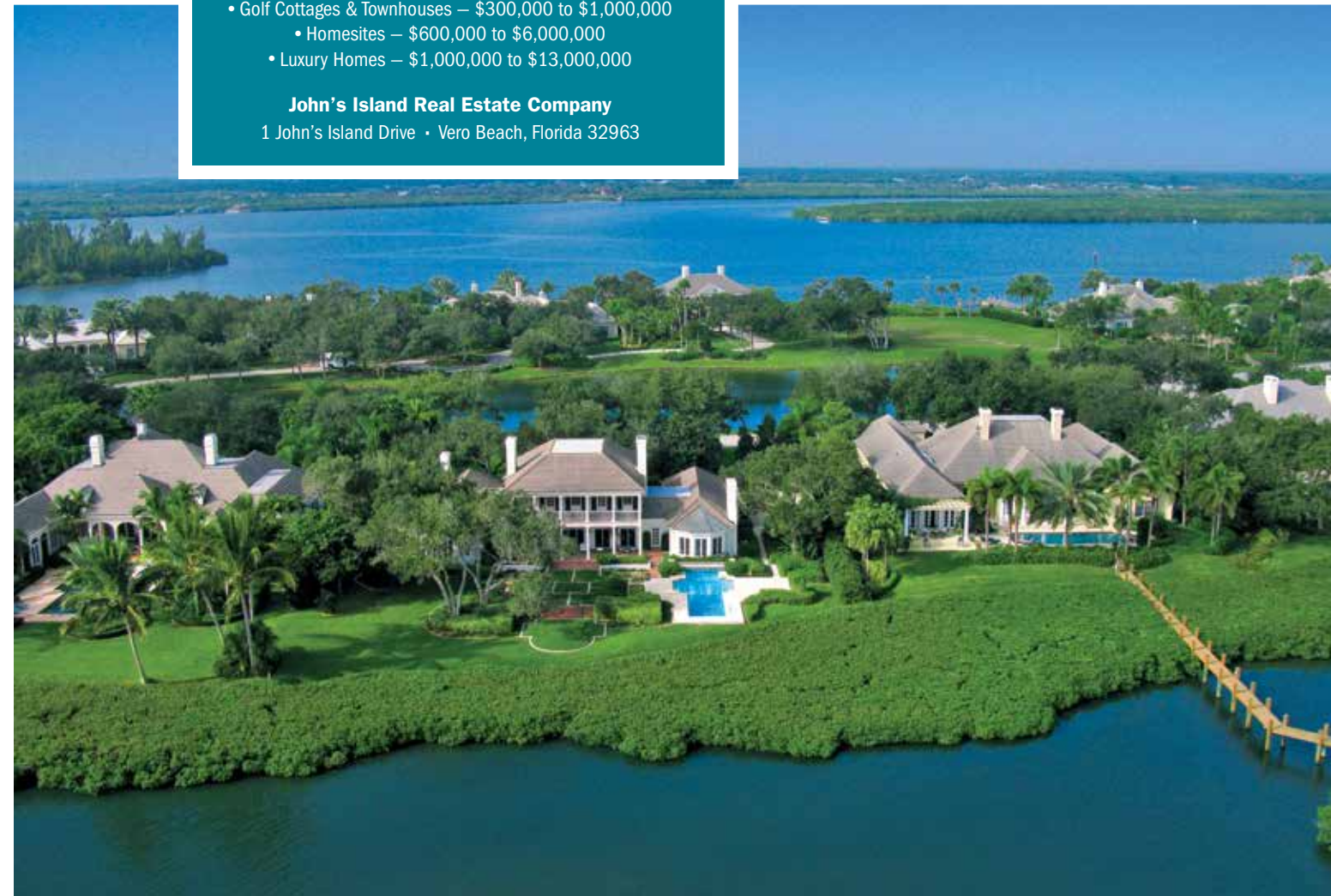


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