



BY
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COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

THE ELS DESARU COAST DEVELOPMENT IN JOHOR IS A HARBINGER FOR TOURISM GROWTH IN THE REGION

Desaru, along the eastern seaboard of Malaysia's southern-most state of Johor, has always been an idyllic destination for beach lovers. It's tranquil tree-framed shore and laid-back vibe have made it the go-to spot for those harried by urban demands looking for a rustic escape. Things are changing, though, and in a good way.

The recent opening of Els Club Desaru Coast has propelled the area into the forefront of golf tourism in Malaysia. The development includes the Ocean Course, a 27-hole layout designed by Ernie Els, offering three distinct nine-hole configurations – the Coast, Ridge and Lakes. The club, managed by Troon Golf, will also be home to The Els Performance Golf Academy, the region's first. The modern, luxurious clubhouse at Els Club Desaru Coast forms the hub for visitors. It includes two casual dining restaurants including an all-day café and bar.

But it's Ernie Els' course takes centre stage. "It certainly has the makings of one of South-east Asia's top destinations," the four-time Major champion commented. "You have a great location in close proximity to so many major Asian hubs. You have a corner of coastline that simply takes your breath away and an ownership group dedicated to creating some of the finest tourism attractions in the world. When you add these ingredients together, you have the makings of something very special."

The three nines offer different playing experiences. The Ridge has wide fairways with little rough to help those looking for reprieve from their errant drives. Fairways have greater movement at the Coast, which also plays out towards the sea. The par-3 third here easily stands as one of the complex's signature holes. The Lakes is the shortest, at 3,655 yards, but shot accuracy is crucial if you are to stay away from the numerous water hazards.

Build quality, operational efficiency and maintenance are top-notch, as owners Themed Attractions Resorts & Hotels (TAR&H) – who also own and operate Els Club Teluk Datu in Langkawi – have collaborated with Troon Golf from the outset. "Troon has been central in identifying the most effective development pathway, managing the investment and the delivery across the golf supplier network," says Mark Chapleski, area manager for Troon Golf.

"The strategic significance of Desaru Coast's shoreline location and the potential impact on Malaysia's tour-

ism proposition makes it the type of project that is focused on sustainable tourism and economic legacy," Chapleski continues. "Troon has been at the centre of destination developments and government backed investments, which allows us to consider similarities and provide insights to ensure efficient progress."

Headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona, Troon is the world's largest golf management company with now more than 250 golf courses in its portfolio.

"The Valley Course is also scheduled to open soon," reveals Chapleski. "Designed in collaboration between fellow golfing icons Ernie Els and Vijay Singh, it will be the first time two of golf's most recognised personalities are united on an exceptional project. It has some differing qualities with tree-lined fairways, elevation changes, unique bunker design and meandering streams throughout most of the course. It will play a bit more difficult than The Ocean course."

And there's more to come. The destination will also be home to internationally renowned hotel chains and resorts. The Westin Desaru Resort, Anantara Desaru Resort and Hard Rock Hotel Desaru Coast are currently in the construction phases. And work on Aman Resorts & Villas is well underway. In addition, a state-of-the-art conference centre, themed water park and retail village will further help make Desaru Coast a premier all-purpose destination

"We have made considerable strides in bringing the very best partners to Johor, and have set in motion a tourism legacy that will deliver jobs and a world-class experience," says Muhammad Zainal Ashikin, chief executive officer, Destinations Resorts & Hotel Portfolio of TAR&H, an investment holding company incorporated to develop, manage and operate hospitality and attraction destinations.

He adds: "We are committed to embedding a new standard for hospitality, service and quality that will set Desaru on course to become one of the top tourism and golf destinations regionally and internationally."



A 27-hole layout designed by Ernie Els, offering three distinct nine-hole configurations – the Coast (above), Ridge (right) and Lakes (below).



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