

# THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

January 4, 2019

## Box Office to the Rescue!

Why moviegoing spiked in a record \$42B year

## PREDICTIONS '19

## Before Social Media Killed Nightlife

An early-aughts photo portfolio

*'We're soul mates. We're f—ing co-dependent soul mates.'*

SANDRA OH



# NEW YEAR, NEW GLOBES

First-time hosts **Sandra Oh** and **Andy Samberg** tease a Trump-free Golden Globes as *THR* previews the races, the red carpet glam and — oh, yeah — all those parties





**72** Playa Grande Golf & Ocean Club on Dominican Republic's remote north coast features links designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr.

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Better movies, an ethnically diverse audience and movie subscription services combine to drive a record year.

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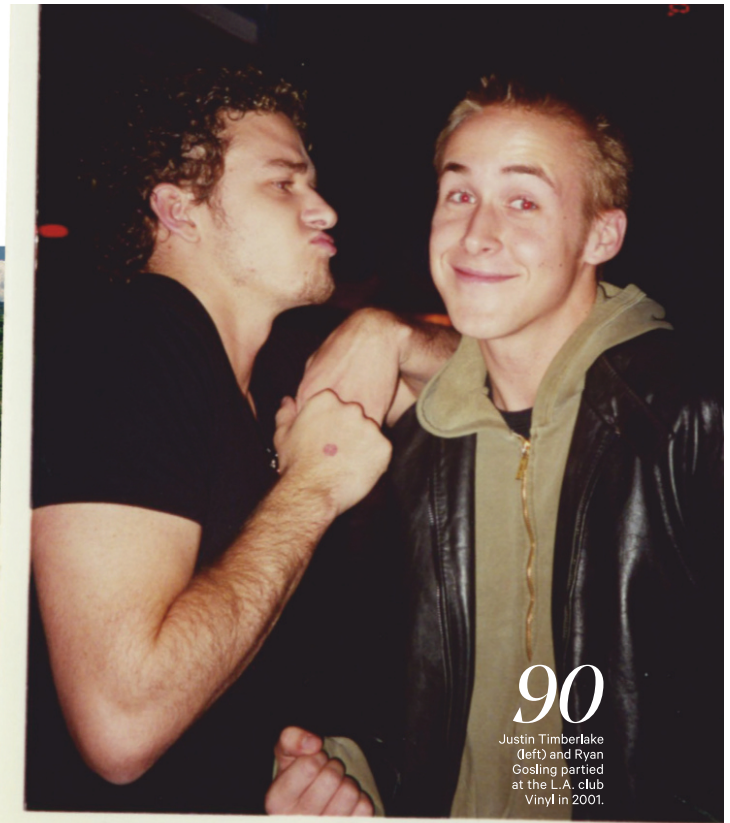
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Justin Timberlake (left) and Ryan Gosling partied at the L.A. club Vinyl in 2001.



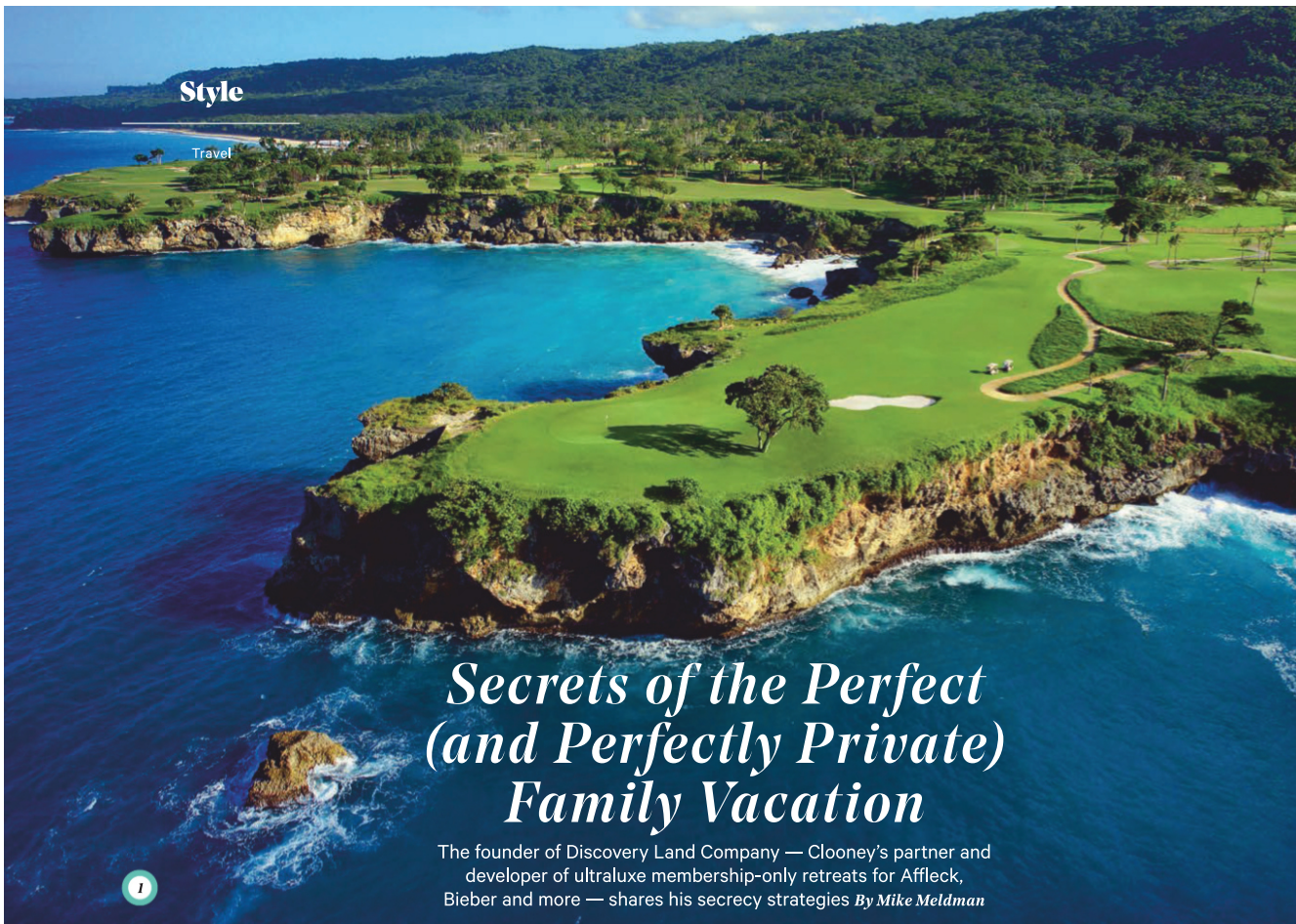
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The Fallen Fruit cocktail at Alta Adams.



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Smackdown! Aerin Beauty + Johanna Ortiz lipstick in Tayrona Nude Beach.

DRINK: DAMON CASAREZ; LIPSTICK: NEEL COO. PLAYA: COURTESY OF DISCOVERY; LAND COMPANY: GOSLING COURTESY OF PANTEA SARAH





Style

Travel

# Secrets of the Perfect (and Perfectly Private) Family Vacation

The founder of Discovery Land Company — Clooney's partner and developer of ultraluxe membership-only retreats for Affleck, Bieber and more — shares his secrecy strategies *By Mike Meldman*

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**T**om Brady golfing with Michael Jordan, Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck powwowing post-divorce announcement, A-Rod romancing J.Lo: Hollywood has retreated to Mike Meldman's private-member Discovery Land hangouts, from Baker's Bay in the Bahamas to Silo Ridge and Yellowstone Club in the U.S., since he created the first of 23 in 1995. The hyper-exclusive real estate developments are unique for combining five-star resort amenities and adventures under a private-club model in spectacular natural settings. Owning a lot or

home (from \$1.6 million to \$35 million) is required for membership (\$125,000 with \$25,000 annual dues) for each destination, with some industry insiders owning up to half a dozen Discovery vacation homes. The newest opening, Playa Grande Golf & Ocean Club on Dominican Republic's remote north coast, epitomizes Meldman's model with 2,400 beachfront acres and the just-reopened Pebble Beach-level course designed by late iconic architect Robert Trent Jones Sr. For the first time, Meldman (one of George Clooney's Casamigos Tequila partners) shares his "secret sauce."

I didn't grow up a country-club kid. I never experienced that lifestyle in my very middle-class Milwaukee neighborhood. But Discovery Land Company started out in 1994 with golf. When my sons were 5 and 7, they fought with me about putting on a collared golf shirt, so when the pro said they had to, I said, "Why?" I wasn't trying to do anything revolutionary, I just wanted my kids to enjoy themselves. In business, I've made decisions organically in response to my lifestyle and my kids', and it's created a truly unique experience.

Golf clubs are intimidating, and you have to act a certain way — I love that, too, but no dress code makes golf more fun. At my place in the Bahamas or the Dominican Republic, for example, you can even golf shirtless. My attitude is, these are successful, smart people who know how to behave, and who am I to tell them what to wear and how to act? In hindsight, it's helped grow the game.

I also put coolers full of candy and Cokes on the tee boxes, because my kids were too young to golf, but they loved to run down the fairway. This evolved into Comfort Stations, filled with Casamigos tequila, chocolate-dipped meringues, guacamole, cheese and charcuterie, octopus salad and peanut butter, jelly and bacon sandwiches.

If you're a high-profile person, a Type A personality, it takes a lot of effort to go on vacation. We've changed that. You show up at Playa Grande and everything is curated for you — you didn't have to plan anything. There's



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1 The Dominican Republic coast, where Playa Grande has just begun selling phase one real estate around its golf course (including a \$35 million property dubbed The Promontory). 2 One of two new restaurants on the course, Las Brasas. 3 Discovery Land Company founder Mike Meldman.



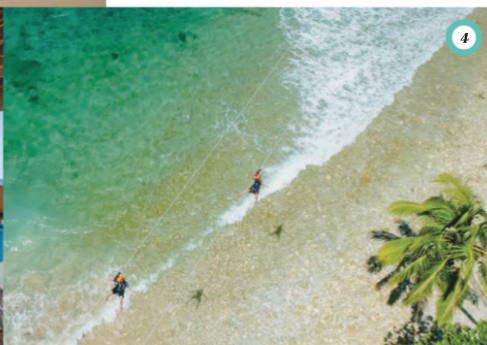
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COURTESY OF DISCOVERY LAND COMPANY ©





1 Playa Grande is home to several of the Dominican Republic's top surf breaks. 2 Meldman (left) with Discovery executives J.J. Dudum and Joey Arenson. 3 New Playa Grande restaurant The Point. 4 Activities include a zipline over the ocean's edge.



an Outdoor Pursuits menu of everything you can do, and we orchestrate it. Whether you're in the DR or Montana, you'll want to take advantage of the environmental and cultural options, from surfing to kiteboarding to skiing.

The whole idea stemmed from spending time with my kids. My third project was in Whitefish, Montana, and I wanted to turn my sons on to the mountains (they lived in San Francisco). I hired people who could teach not only me but everyone at the club how to be a mountain man. By the time they were 10, my kids could tie their own fly for fly fishing, go on backcountry pack trips to camp and eat fish they've caught for four or five days. This became ingrained in the culture of our places and resonated with members, because these people work hard, and probably their one regret in life is "I didn't spend enough time with my family." Kids want to be at these places, even as they get older. It gives families time to make all kinds of memories — that's a big part of the secret sauce.



Clooney

It's family-first, but there is still tequila flowing. When I did El Dorado Beach & Golf Club in San Jose del Cabo, George Clooney and **Rande Gerber** came down a lot; we did George's birthday parties there. They bought a couple of houses, named the compound Casamigos. We were there drinking tequila, wanting to find one we all liked, when we came up with the concept. We didn't mean to sell it, but it took off overnight.

The private-club model has weeded out people. If you're a bad guy, you kind of know it, and you won't buy real estate or go through the membership process if you know you're not going to get approved. We have

a very strong, friendly, educated membership, and a lot of them bring friends. It's great socialization for parents and kids — you meet like-minded people with diverse interests, making it even more dynamic.

We have captains of industry, athletes, actors, owners of sports teams. At all our places, they're able to actually relax and be themselves and enjoy the

environment and their family. No one needs anything from them, because everyone has a lot. No one is hitting you up for an interview or job or picture, because everyone is at the top of their industry.

Many hotels and restaurants value the publicity of selling a picture of someone recognizable. We're the opposite — and we have good security to make everyone comfortable. At The Summit in Las Vegas, we have almost our own police force. Employees and even members are very careful about social media.

When I saw Playa Grande, I thought it's like Kauai on steroids, as close to off the grid as you can be for having so many amenities, combining luxury and privacy. If you have an adventurous side, there's more to do here than anywhere else, and we spent 19 months modernizing the spectacular golf course with bunkers to take advantage of the ocean.

A big part of what we offer is a farm-to-table experience (members can pick their own mangos and guavas), and Playa Grande has it all naturally. We don't have to fabricate it. It's organic. **VZJZ**

Style

Travel

3 Very Private Destinations for Disappearing



**MUSHA CAY** In the Bahamas' Exumas Chain, **David Copperfield's** 11 islands feature a private airstrip as staff watch for arriving boats. Large craft can't approach the 700-plus acres and 40 sugary beaches. Available only on a buyout basis. Five guesthouses for up to 12 people, \$39,000/night, [mushacay.com](http://mushacay.com)



**SWEET BOCAS** Its owner personally approves the industry and tech folk who rent the staffed seven-bedroom overwater villa in Panama. Boat access is for renters only; accommodations exist for security teams, but they've been known to be sent home early as unnecessary. \$80,500/week for up to 12, [sweetbocaspanama.com](http://sweetbocaspanama.com)



**VILLA MANZU** Perched on Costa Rica's Peninsula Papagayo, this 30,000-square-foot estate is surrounded by rainforests and the Pacific and inaccessible to all but guests. **Kim Kardashian** selected it for her first vacation after she was robbed in Paris in 2016. \$16,500/night, for up to 14 guests, [villamanzu.com](http://villamanzu.com)

CLOONEY: ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES; FOR TURNER; GERBER: COURTESY OF RECOVERY LAND COMPANY; CAY: COURTESY OF MUSHA CAY; MANZU: COURTESY OF VILLA MANZU; BOCAS: COURTESY OF SWEET BOCAS