

## How Discovery Land Company Founder Mike Meldman Perfected The Private, Luxury Golf Community

When Mike Meldman founded Discovery Land Company in 1994, it was always about one thing: his kids.

“As a father of two at the time—now three—I wanted to create places my family would enjoy and where we could create memories doing activities that we all loved,” Meldman tells *Forbes*.



The 18th hole at Baker's Bay in the Bahamas. DISCOVERY LAND COMPANY

It might sound cliché, but the Milwaukee, Wisconsin native and Stanford graduate has scaled his global real estate empire by prioritizing family, privacy, and high-end service for discerning members. It's been so successful that billionaires, CEOs, presidents, athletes, and A-list celebrities own homes within several of Discovery Land's properties. Meldman is also the third co-founder of Casamigos Tequila, alongside George Clooney and Rande Gerber (the husband of Cindy Crawford), who is also a Discovery member.

The development company has 30 private, members-only residential luxury golf communities in sought-after locations around the world, including North America, the Caribbean, and Europe.



The Ridge House at Silo Ridge in Hudson Valley. ANDY CARLSON

Each Discovery Land community is individually (and discretely) branded, and acts as an exclusive club for homeowners. In order to be a member, you have to be a property owner, which Meldman says creates a really unique type of community. Many purchase land and build, or buy a home in some of the more established communities, which can cost anywhere from \$3 to \$50 million.

Once you're a part of the community is when you really get to experience Meldman's ingenious operation. His goal was always to create a laid-back, high-end club that eschewed traditional stuffy golf club rules in favor of a fun environment.



Members doing yoga at CostaTerra in Portugal. MATTER FILMS

“When I started Discovery, I set out to change golf by making it more accessible to families of all ages and skillsets,” he says. “I wanted to make it an incredibly fun experience for all. I think that’s the allure about our golf tradition—it’s just a really great time. A lot of factors contribute to this vibe, like the fact that you can golf barefoot, there are no tee times, you can head to the comfort station for an Oreo blizzard, or take a dip in the ocean

between holes—this is what makes Discovery golf different and has improved the game for so many of our members. We have many pros that call our courses home because of this energy, and I think we will continue to make changes to the game in this positive way.”

Meldman didn’t golf when he first started Discovery Land Club, and many of the members don’t, either.



Golfing at Silo Ridge. DISCOVERY LAND COMPANY

“They buy for a lot more than golf even though it’s a golf community, he says. “They buy for other reasons, like security and amenities.”

And don't expect every community to look the same. Each is designed specifically to its surrounding environment and culture. Baker's Bay in the Bahamas has distinct Bahamian-style architecture, while CostaTerra in Comporta, Portugal follows the local Alentejo style. Every property, however, is gated, has on-site medical services, and amenities like an 18-hole golf course, spa, tennis, pickleball, wellness facilities, gardens, farms, and culinary offerings. Each property also has an Outdoor Pursuits program, which differ from region to region, like fly fishing in North America, spear fishing or scuba diving in the Caribbean, or surfing in Portugal.



Kitesurfing in the Bahamas. DISCOVERY LAND COMPANY

“My sons grew up in San Francisco and I wanted them to become mountain and water adventurers before they were teenagers,” Meldman says. “They experienced new activities and learned from local experts.”

Business boomed during the pandemic, as the wealthy fled to their vacation homes to wait out the worst of the virus.

“Because they are all set in spacious and secluded areas, our communities were perfect and safe places to spend their time in lockdown,” he says. “As people decided to wait things out at their vacation homes, every project we had ended up seeing very strong levels of demand which has continued through today. At most of the communities we have, every house and condo available for sale was sold.”

It's not uncommon for members to own more multiple homes in many Discovery Land locations, and the company is seeing more and more demand for people using their communities as primary homes.

“Post-pandemic, we're seeing a lot of members make what was their vacation home their primary home,” he says. “This is happening a lot at Silo Ridge in the Hudson Valley and

Driftwood in Austin, Texas. Because our communities have their own medical staff, food and beverage services, wellness programs, and children's academic and recreational programs our members have everything they need.”

Silo Ridge and Driftwood are two of the newest properties seeing great demand as many continue their remote work lifestyle and want to be surrounded by more natural, green environments.



Founder Mike Meldman DISCOVERY  
LAND COMPANY





Driftwood in Austin, Texas JESSICA JOHNSON

“I wanted to create communities not just where parents wanted to go; I wanted places where kids, and someday their grandkids, wanted to go with them,” he says. “My driving passion will always be family. I strive every day to create an environment for families that fosters connections, memories, and fun.”