Imagine a tropical paradise where there are just a handful of golf courses, it takes less than a year to get construction permits, and the number of wealthy foreign visitors is expected to double in the next three years. Where is the other end of that rainbow? In a little U.S. territory called Guam.

Located just two jet-hours from Tokyo, less than half the time it takes to reach Hawaii, the largest of the Mariana Islands is one of the highest golf course development properties in the world. The number of courses is expected to double within the next year and could quintuple by the mid-1990s.

"It's one of four areas in the world (the U.S. Southwest, Mexico and the Caribbean are the others) we see as having significant opportunity for development. It's primarily a resort for the Japanese, with potential for the Chinese and Koreans," said Paul DeMyer, national director of consulting services for the accounting firm Kenneth Leventhal & Co., publishers of the International Resort Industry Report.

Guam is the largest and southernmost island in the Mariana Archipelago, lying 1,500 miles southeast of Tokyo, according to the report. It is roughly 30 miles long and ranges from five to 81/2 miles wide. A resident population of 155,000 is scattered over its 209 square miles.

Other large islands include Saipan, Rota and Tinian. Guam and Saipan are the most economically developed. Rota and Tinian are eager to attract new developments.

With Guam's small resident population, "Everything is geared toward the visitor market," DeMyer said. Tourism is an important, though relatively young, industry. The first commercial flight arrived in May 1967.

Attracted by its proximity to Tokyo, Hawaiian-like temperatures, generally lower prices and accessibility of American goods and customs, visitor arrivals have increased 9.3 percent annually since 1980. The 780,000 visits in 1990 were up 17 percent from a year earlier. Ninety percent were Japanese; most on wholesale tour operator packages.

South Korea will likely become another major source of tourists with the Korean government's decision to issue a Guam-only visa. Guam's plans for an airport terminal expansion and expected increases in direct air service will also bolster the tourist market.

Lodging has been in short supply. Guam ranked 15th out of the 16 resort markets surveyed in number of rooms. The 95 percent occupancy rate, the highest of any resort market, reflects the need for more lodging facilities.

The situation is changing, however. Total hotel rooms doubled to about 5,100 in the past five years. It could double again within the next five to seven years. The Guam Department of Commerce reports approvals for 8,156 new hotel rooms. An additional 5,952 rooms are proposed or rumored. The new rooms are expected to double the number of visitors to 1.5 million by 1993.

Following is a breakdown of existing courses and new developments provided by Kenneth Leventhal & Co. representatives.

**EXISTING COURSES**

**Hatsuho International Country Club**
- A 27-hole, semi-private course opened in 1987 in the northern town of Dededo. Designed by Chohei Miyazaya of Japan, the course is situated near the airport.
- The course was designed to accommodate both local and international players.
- Membership fees range from $50 for local residents to $150 for international members.

**Country Club of the Pacific**
- Located on the east side of the island, the course offers ocean views.
- Membership fees are high, but the club provides excellent facilities.

**Guam Takayama Golf Club**
- An 18-hole course located in the western town of Tamuning.
- Designed by Gene Hallbrook, the course is known for its challenging layout.

**UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

**Guam International Country Club**
- A joint venture between a Japanese company and a local businessman, the course is expected to open in 1993.
- Phase I memberships are expected to reach 1,000, with Phase II memberships planned.

**Guam (Mangilao) Golf Course**
- Located on the southeast side of the island, this course is expected to open in 1993.
- Membership fees are $100 per year, with a green fee of $15.

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memberships are fetching between $143,000 and $179,000 apiece. The architects are Robin Nelson and Rodney Wright.

Leopalace Resort — Forty-five holes are planned with 27 Jack Nicklaus- and Arnold Palmer-designed holes currently under construction. The first 18 are scheduled to open in June. The private club surrounds a 190-room hotel. A successful pre-sale program has helped move many of the 4,500 international memberships, which are selling for more than $150,000 apiece.

"The slowing economy in Japan doesn't seem to be affecting membership sales at the new courses. Hatsuhoto sold 600 memberships in 1990," DeMyer said.

Another four projects totaling 108 holes — three 18-hole and one 54-hole facility — have been approved, but are not yet under construction. Four more 18-hole projects are pending approval.

"Many other people are interested in building," DeMyer said. "Land prices shot up in the last eight years, but things have stabilized lately."

Existing courses generally don't have hotels or residences associated with them. Most new courses on the other hand, are part of mixed-use projects, including homes and hotels, DeMyer said.

Most of the easily developed sites are already taken, DeMyer said. The infrastructure to support new projects is not usually available. Developers have had to pick up the tab to install roads, water lines, sewage facilities and the like.

Consequently, the review process for new projects (which must be presented to the local and territorial planning commissions as well as the territorial governor) takes longer to complete, closer to a year rather than the six months it formerly required, he added.

Developers must also deal with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers because of wetlands at many sites, according to Stanton Abrams, president of Senior Tour Players Inc., which represents many of the Senior players contributing to the design of a course planned at Talofofo.

Construction costs are double those in the continental United States, DeMyer said. Construction materials and expertise must be imported. Many sites require blasting and extensive earth-moving.

The island is made up largely of coral, with little topsoil and large clay deposits, said Nelson, who, in addition to Mangilao, is involved with two other Guam projects.

The south and east shores, in particular, are thrashed by occasional typhoon winds. Few big trees remain and telephone poles are made of concrete six feet in circumference to withstand the winds, Nelson said. When the typhoons leave, the weather turns hot and dry.

Nelson planted hybrid Bermudagrass imported from Georgia, U.S.A., at Mangilao. Water can be scarce. Extremely deep wells were needed at Mangilao, he said.

Despite the difficulties of building, the results can be spectacular. Mangilao winds its way through natural limestone forests, dip down to the ocean and finally makes its way back through lush jungle elevation to a clubhouse overlooking the blue Pacific.

Nelson's favorite hole on the "out nine" is a short par-5 tucked against a coral cliff to the left and sand-witched between bunkers and coconut palms to the right.

The back nine features two magnificent ocean holes, Nelson said. The 12th hole is a par-3 with a complete water carry over a beautiful inlet with crashing waves. The 13th is a short par-5 reminiscent of the 18th at Pebble Beach, he added.

Designing primarily for the Japanese generally requires a long and wide course that challenges the low-handicapper, but is playable for the beginner, Nelson said. Water, flower and ornamentals are also musts.

"They want the course to be aesthetically pleasing," Nelson said.

One problem facing developers is a looming labor shortage. Guam ended 1989 with a 2.1-percent unemployment rate, the Kenneth Leventhal report states.

The dependence on Japanese visitors could also prove costly if there is a significant downturn in the Japanese economy that impacts foreign travel, the report adds. Encouraging visitors from other Pacific Rim countries, like South Korea, will help lessen the island's dependence on Japan.

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