

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Discover the island that has great golf, white sanded beaches and clear blue Caribbean waters

FLORIDA

There's more to Florida than theme parks and Peter gets behind the wheel and hits the highways of the Sunshine State's Gulf Coast

MUNICH

Jane brings you the lowdown on all you need to know to plan and enjoy Oktoberfest and Munich

STAY, PLAY & SPA

Weekend, short stay getaway or spa day? We bring you hotel & spa reviews from Japan and Portugal

EQUIPMENT & APPAREL REVIEWS

Ben Hogan, Puma, TaylorMade and Titleist

THE MASTERS

Our review and betting guide to golf's first Major of the year

PLANET GOLF

REVIEW

ISSUE 27



VIEW.COM

WELCOME

Wow, how time flies as spring arrives and like the flowers and trees our spirits start to rise and open up to the wonderful opportunities and promise the summer months hold in store. With that in mind, Peter literally hits the road again, unfortunately not in a vintage car this time, but hits the highways of Florida for another two-part series of the best places to visit and stay on the Sunshine State's Gulf Coast.

For those looking at golf holidays I head to the Dominican Republic and bring you some of the wonderful courses on that beautiful island. And for those who like to plan a bit further in advance, Jane brings you tales from Munich and the Oktoberfest – and if you follow her lead, you will not only enjoy a lot of wonderful beers but soak up some fantastic

sights and history.

Our stay, play and spa section takes you to Portugal and Japan, while our golf equipment reviews bring you the latest equipment and apparel releases from Ben Hogan, Puma, TaylorMade and Titleist. We also have an added bonus to Paul and Shain's informative Pro Tips in the form of a guest appearance from DP World Tour professional Ricardo Santos.

Last, but by no means least is our world-renowned review and betting tips to this year's first Major Championship, The Masters. Yes, another packed issue for you to enjoy and from the team and myself we wish you a wonderful summer packed with lots of sunshine and laughter.

MEET THE TEAM

Editor

James Mason

Art Director

Jimmy Kennedy

Associate Editor

Peter Ellegard

Hotel and Spa Editor

Charmaine Hibbert

Features Editor

Jane Finn

Contributing travel writers

Ilesha Hinds

Bernadette Kennedy

Stephanie Mason

Contributing PGA Professionals

Paul Babbage

Shain Johnson

General enquiries

enquiries@planetgolfreview.com

Follow us on social media by clicking on the logo below or add us using our username

Instagram: @planetgolfreview

Twitter: @planetgolfreview

YouTube: James Mason Planetgolfreview



TRIAL R O T I E D

REVIEW



Interactive links

By clicking on the interactive links on the cover headlines, contents headlines or section opening image will take you to the start of each feature and by clicking on the word contents at the bottom of each page this will take you straight back to the contents page.

There are also links that will take you to video reviews and links on our adverts that will take you directly to their websites. All this means you don't have to scroll through the magazine – unless you want to – just a click will take you to the feature you are looking for

VIEW.COM



6

p 4 The Masters
The first Major Championship arrives and we bring you our world-renowned review and betting tips

p 6 Scotland in focus
He may have not walked 10k miles, but we take another look through Peter Ellegard's Canon camera lens, as he heads north and takes both the high and low roads to Bonny Scotland

p 10 Munich
Thinking of heading to Oktoberfest this year or just want to soak in the history of Munich and the surrounding area? Jane Finn has everything you need to know

p 17 Florida Road Trip Pt1
After his adventures on the road in California, Peter Ellegard hits the highway once again along the Gulf Coast in the Sunshine State

p 22 Dominican Republic
This time, James Mason heads to the beautiful Caribbean Island of the Dominican Republic and reviews five very different golf courses

p 30 Equipment and apparel
The latest equipment and apparel reviews from Ben Hogan Golf, Puma, TaylorMade and Titleist

p 43 Ask the Pro
A guest appearance as DP World Tour Player Ricardo Santos joins Paul and Shain in this issue to bring you tips to help improve your golf game

p 47 Play, Stay & Spa
James and Peter bring you reviews of two perfect places to stay, play & spa in Japan and Portugal

STENTS CONTENT CON

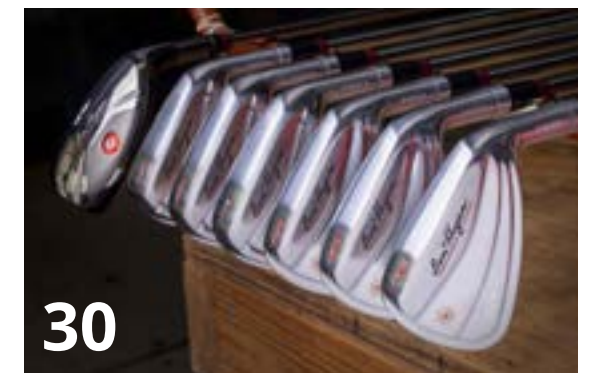
REVIEW



17



22



30



BATTLE OF MY OWN

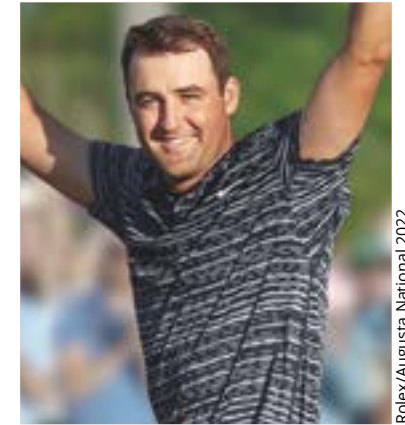
There maybe less animosity this year between the PGA Tour and Liv golfers, but every player knows there will be an underlying battle, to show which tour has the best players competing in their tour's events

It's a year on from the first Champions dinner after the first wave of players left the PGA Tour to join LIV. This year sees defending Champion Jon Rahm being reunited with PGA Tour players after defecting to LIV earlier this year, and while the build up to this year's tournament doesn't have the anticipation and build up to the clash of both tours as last year, I am sure the LIV players and especially defending champion Jon Rahm will be looking to strike a blow for the Saudi-backed rebel tour.

All four Major Championships are now set to have an underlying battle for supremacy between the two tours for who has the best players, with the LIV tour having no world →

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER

9/2



Rolex/Augusta National 2022

JORDAN SPIETH

22|1



Rolex/Augusta National 2022

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA

25|1



Srixon

VIKTOR HOVLAND

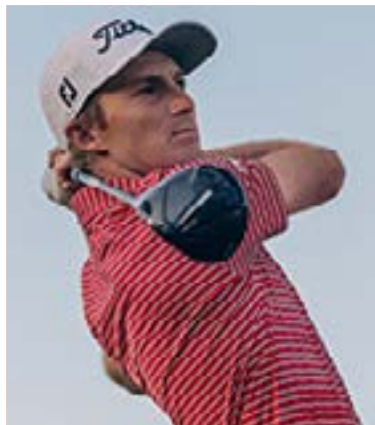
33|1



Ping

WILL ZALATORIS

33|1



Titleist

RUSSELL HENLEY

80|1



Titleist

ranking points because of their 54-hole, no cut format, they will be looking at these events to try and showcase their tour, which gets little to no publicity.

And with the ex-flower nursery that is Augusta National set to be in full bloom, with its vast variety of flora and fauna, manicured fairways and – fingers crossed – perfect spring playing conditions, the perfect stage is set. Here are our tips, to who we feel will be donning the green jacket in the Butler Cabin come Sunday evening. Let battle commence.

MY TIPS TO WIN

No real surprise that I am going for the world number one and the 2022 Masters Champion **Scottie Scheffler 9/2 – with BetFred** – who has two wins, a runner-up finish and two other Top 5 finishes and has only been outside the Top 10 once in his eight starts this season and that was still a Top 20 finish!

The 2015 Masters Champion **Jordan Spieth 22/1 – with LiveScoreBet** – brings with him a lot of great memories of Augusta, but also some painful ones. Since he first teed it up at The Masters taking the runners-up spot in his first ever start, he has gone on to win, had another runner-up finish, three other Top 5s and has only finished outside the Top 25 twice in his ten

starts and I am sure he will be right in the heat of the battle again come Sunday

I have tipped the 2021 Masters Champion **Hideki Matsuyama 25/1 – with LiveScoreBet** – a couple of times already this season, when he won at the Genesis Invitational and at the weekend in the Valero Texas Open where he currently sits inside the Top 10. It is great to see Hideki coming back to form and I think he will be challenging again come Sunday afternoon

MY EACH-WAY TIPS

Having played in this event as an amateur and made the cut **Viktor Hovland 33/1 – with LiveScoreBet** – has teed it up three more times since then and has two Top 25 finishes with his best finish being a seventh-place last year when he opened up with 65, but couldn't keep that scoring going. Viktor only has two Top 25 finishes this year from his five starts, but I expect him to challenge here this week

Another player that had a runner-up finish here in his first ever start is **Will Zalatoris 33/1 – with LiveScoreBet** – who followed that up the following year with a sixth-place finish. Something that goes against all the norms because of Will's known weakness being his putting from short distances. I actually think

the pace of the greens at Augusta help Zalatoris on those short putts and I feel we he will be back challenging again this year after having to withdraw last year due to his back problems

MY OUTSIDE TIP

I tipped **Russell Henley 80/1 – with BetVictor** – for the weekends Valero Texas Open and he currently sits inside the Top 5. Russell has two Top 5 finishes so far this season and although he missed the cut at THE PLAYERS Championship he has come back to form this week. Henley has teed it up seven times at Augusta and has four Top 25 finishes including two Top 15 and his best finish coming last year with a Top 5

LONGER ODDS TIP

Try **Erik Van Rooyen 2500/1 – with BetVictor**

We would like to emphasise that betting should be for fun and not a way to make a living. We see it as a way of adding excitement to a tournament while you watch and hopefully this guide will help you make an informed choice.

As always good luck and have fun!



16th Redbud, 170 yards, Par 3

Ryan Schreiber

- Scottie Scheffler 4/1
- Rory McIlroy 10/1
- Jon Rahm 12/1
- Xander Schauffele 16/1
- Brooks Koepka 18/1
- Hideki Matsuyama 20/1
- Jordan Spieth 20/1
- Joaquin Niemann 25/1
- Ludvig Åberg 25/1
- Viktor Hovland 25/1
- Wyndham Clark 25/1
- Cameron Smith 28/1
- Justin Thomas 28/1
- Patrick Cantlay 28/1
- Will Zalatoris 28/1
- Bryson DeChambeau 33/1
- Dustin Johnson 33/1
- Cameron Young 35/1
- Tony Finau 35/1
- Collin Morikawa 40/1
- Matt Fitzpatrick 40/1
- Sahith Theegala 40/1
- Shane Lowry 40/1
- Jason Day 50/1
- Max Homa 50/1
- Sam Burns 50/1
- Tommy Fleetwood 50/1
- Min Woo Lee 55/1
- Brian Harman 66/1
- Corey Conners 66/1
- Patrick Reed 66/1
- Russell Henley 66/1
- Tyrrell Hatton 66/1
- Justin Rose 80/1
- Rickie Fowler 80/1
- Si Woo Kim 80/1
- Sungjae Im 80/1
- Tom Kim 80/1
- Sephan Jaeger 90/1
- Adam Scott 100/1
- Sergio Garcia 100/1
- Byeong Hun An 125/1
- Eric Cole 125/1
- Harris English 125/1
- Nick Taylor 125/1
- Phil Mickelson 125/1
- Sepp Straka 125/1
- Tiger Woods 125/1

More

IMPRESSIONS FROM SCOTLAND



Left: Ring of Brodgar, Orkney
Below: Seals and sailing ship, Mull of Kintyre, Argyll



Left: Piper on the Royal Mile, Edinburgh

Left: Glen Garioch Distillery in Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire
Right: Edinburgh Castle from Princes Street Gardens



Left: Cruden Bay, Aberdeenshire

Right: Piper at Leith Port, Edinburgh
Below: Perthshire countryside



Above: Beach at Askernish, South Uist
Right: Stills at Glen Garioch Distillery, Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire



Left: Skara Brae, Orkney

IMPRESSIONS FROM SCOTLAND

Right: Burns
Museum, Alloway,
Ayrshire
Far right: The
Kelpies, Falkirk



IMPRESSIONS FROM SCOTLAND

See more of Peter
Ellegard's work on
Instagram
@peterellegard or
peterellegard.co.uk

Right:
Campbelltown
harbour, Kintyre
Peninsula, Argyll
Below: Tantallon
Castle, North
Berwick, East
Lothian



Above: Clan McNab Burial
Ground, Loch Lomond & The
Trossachs National Park
Right: Historic Leith Links
cairn, Leith, Edinburgh

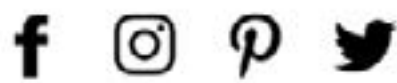


Above: Falls of Dochart, Killin, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs
National Park
Right: Falkirk Wheel, Falkirk



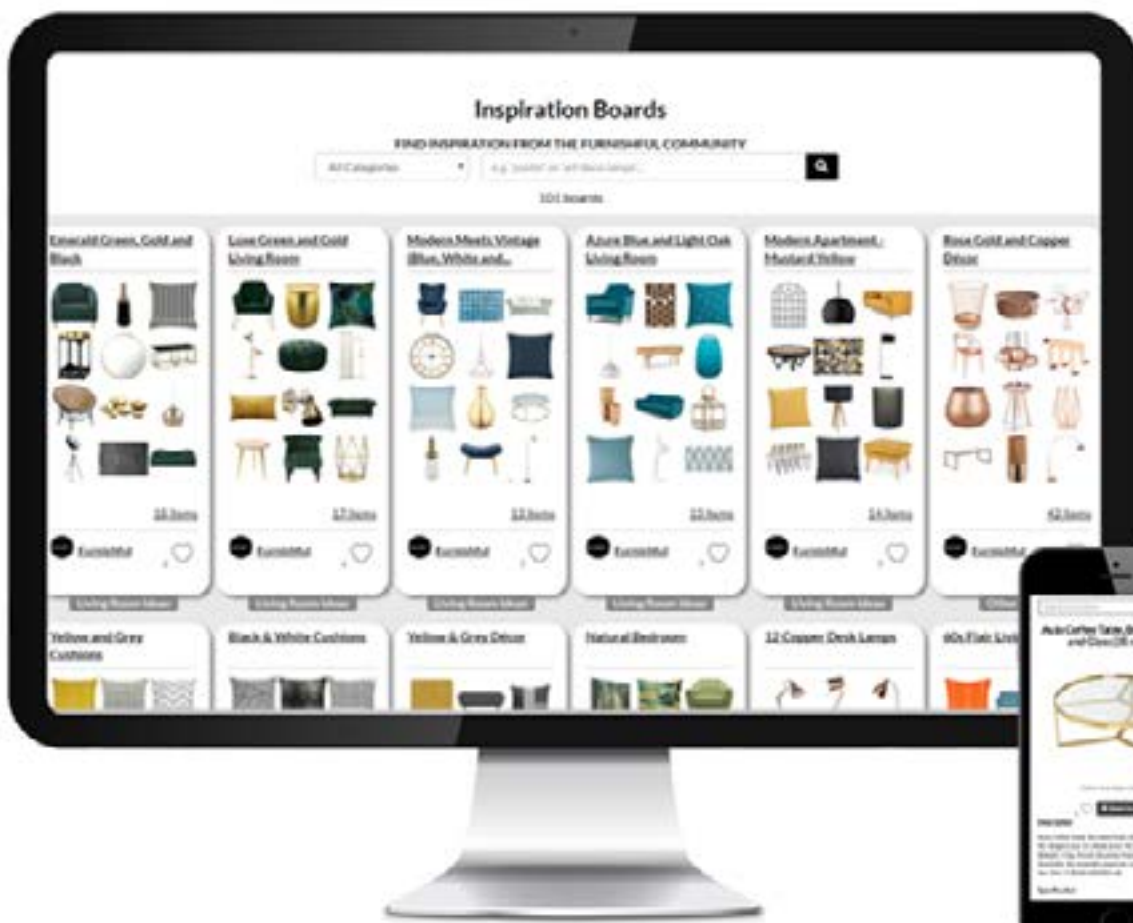


Furniture shopping made easy



SHOP THOUSANDS OF
FURNITURE
AND
HOME DÉCOR
items from over 30
retailers

Shop Now



www.furnishful.co.uk

THIS MAGIC MOMENT

Magic, music and memories accompany **Jane Finn**
as she explores Germany's third-largest city



Whimsical
Neuschwanstein
Castle - King
Ludwig II's dream
come true

BY JANE FINN

Imagine feeling awake, alert and fully alive after spending hours in planes, trains, and automobiles. Are you having trouble doing that? So did I until I touched down at Franz Joseph Strauß airport and immediately found my way to one of Munich's best-kept secrets.

While many of you may not agree, I find overnight flights magical. Primarily because it never ceases to amaze me that I go to sleep in one country and wake up in another. What I do not relish is leaving my bags with the concierge, then aimlessly wandering the streets until my room is ready and I can grab a nap. But thanks to a tip from a friend and savvy traveller, I have found an alternative that is bound to influence future itineraries.

Instead of heading directly to Paintner Gaestehaus, where we are staying, I opt to spend my early morning hours at Therme Erding, Europe's largest spa - occupying 185,00 square metres, it's easy to get lost in this tropical paradise, and that's precisely what I do. After →

Right:
Theresienwiese
Far Right: The
Vitality Oasis



München Tourismus, Jörg Lutz



Therma Erding

“It’s easy to get lost in this tropical paradise, and that’s precisely what I do. After a plunge in the cold pool followed by a series of mineral baths and a hot stone massage”

“Even though I know the Lothringer Ritter doesn’t stand a chance against the Bavarian Knight, my eyes are riveted on the joust far above my head”

a plunge in the cold pool followed by a series of mineral baths and a hot stone massage, the weariness of the past few days slips away, and a sense of contentment descends. Intending to read my book, I find a quiet corner where I can stretch out on a luxurious lounge, but within minutes, my eyes flutter shut, and I am dreamland-bound.

The warm sunshine filtering through the palm trees gently teases me awake. I feel refreshed and reenergised, but for a moment, completely disoriented. I’m meant to be in Bavaria, not the Bahamas! Then I recalled that I had made a detour from the airport and can attest to the fact that the Vitality Oasis lives up to its reputation. Gone is any hint of jet lag, and I’m primed to begin exploring Munich and the world’s largest beer festival – Oktoberfest.

FINDING THE RHYTHM

Munich is the heart of Bavaria, and Marienplatz is the heart of Munich. Not much bigger than the original settlement established in 1152, Marienplatz is now a busy commercial area visited by thousands daily. Still, at every turn, I hear the whispers of the past and cannot help but be seduced by the old-world charm surrounding me. Stunning cathedrals and architecturally significant buildings frame the massive pedestrian square. Still, I must get behind the facades to uncover the secret gems that have shaped Bavarian culture and inspired countless generations.

As luck would have it, I emerge from the



München Tourismus, Tommy Lösch

S-Bahn just as the City’s famed glockenspiel springs to life. Forty-three carillon bells musically accompany the scenes that tell a tale that’s been told for over 100 years. Even though I know the Lothringer Ritter doesn’t stand a

chance against the Bavarian Knight, my eyes are riveted on the joust far above my head. And when the errant foreigner is unseated, like everyone else in the crowd, I spontaneously applaud the local knight’s victory.

I can now study the impressive New Town Hall (Neus Rathaus) when the crowd disperses. As my gaze wanders over the intricate stone ornamentation, carved columns and richly coloured stained glass windows, I spot a →



Karim Von Orelli



München Tourismus, Sigi Müller



München Tourismus, Alfred Müller

Above: Siegestor (Victory Gate)
 Bottom far left: Neus Rathaus (New City Hall)
 Middle: World-famous glockenspiel
 Left: Olde Town



Left: View from the observation deck
Below: Law Library, Neus Rathaus



München Tourismus, Thomas Klingner

München Tourismus, Sigi Müller

small sign pointing to a ticket window where I can purchase a lift to the top of the tower. Cheerfully, I hand over €6.5 and within minutes, I'm on the observation deck, staring over the rooftops of Olde Town, past the onion domes of Frauenkirche, and across sweeping views of the Isar river, all the way to the alpine chain of mountains that casts faint shadows along the horizon. In a word, spectacular!

After hanging out at the top of the world, I think I've seen all there is to see, but something prompted me not to be too hasty, and I set out to explore some of the many rooms that are open to the public.

Upon entering the Law Library, my eyes are

drawn to the gleaming wooden bookshelves that encircle the room, but it's the gilded spiral staircase that rises to kiss the 10-metre ceiling that captivates my interest. The lady beside me murmurs that it's very 'Harry Potterish,' but another memory gently tugs at my subconscious. I feel like I've been here before, but that's impossible, as this is my first time in Munich. Then, our guide asks us to close our eyes and listen as she hums a couple of bars from a vaguely familiar tune. It's been years since I watched Cabaret, but suddenly, I can hear the music and picture Liza Minelli in front of that staircase, 'strutting her stuff' as the infamous Sally Bowles.

Emerging from New City Hall, I note the number of people clutching bags in their hands and take a moment to check out the retail scene. I could shop here like royalty at the trendy boutiques or seek a fashion consultation at the luxurious Breuzinger Fashion Store, but I much prefer poking around open-air markets, so I head to the Viktualienmarkt in Olde Town to wander among the stalls and talk to the vendors.

POTA-TOE, POTAT-OH

When we travel, we create new memories, but sometimes, the sights and sounds of a new place trigger a childhood remembrance that forms a bridge between the past and present. →

“Another memory gently tugs at my subconscious. I feel like I've been here before, but that's impossible, as this is my first time in Munich. Then, our guide asks us to close our eyes”

Right: Outdoor stalls at Viktualienmarkt
 Bottom Left: Temporary Oktoberfest Biergarten
 Below right: Serving with style and a smile



München Tourismus, Werner Böhm

“The six major Munich brewers have erected massive, temporary beer halls, some accommodating 10,000 plus patrons. I take a seat on the terrace at Paulaner’s for my first taste of sweet Munich lager”



München Tourismus, B Roemmel



David Finn

My Dad was Irish and a connoisseur of the humble potato. He often lamented that after he moved to Canada, his penchant for spuds diminished when there were only two or three basic and, in his mind, boring choices available. So, you can imagine my delight when I stumbled across a stall selling only potatoes but offering more than thirty varieties. As I listened to the farmer extol the virtues of each one, I could hear my father telling me what he would not give for a sack of Cobblers or Queens, and I was back in his kitchen, making dinner together. I leave with a plan to import some seedlings when I return home and a reminder of how my Dad had taught me to relish life’s simple pleasures.

EIN PROSIT!

Speaking of simple pleasures, during my university days, one of the highlights of the fall semester was a trip to Kitchener-Waterloo to celebrate Oktoberfest. Billed as the world’s second-largest beer festival, in those days, I never thought I would find myself in Munich, where it all began. I didn’t know what to expect, but as I joined the throng of women wearing elegant dirmdls and men sporting stunning embroidered jackets and lederhosen, I felt the

excitement mount, and suddenly, I was twenty again.

Sweeping through Theresienwiese’s gates, I’m astounded at the sheer magnitude of the venue. A giant Ferris Wheel dominates the midway at the far end of the fairgrounds, and in between, there are hundreds of carny stores and food booths serving up local delicacies like veal sausage, potato pancakes, crumble cake and my personal favourite – crispy pork knuckles with sauerkraut. The six major Munich brewers have erected massive, temporary beer halls, some accommodating 10,000-plus patrons. I take a seat on the terrace at Paulaner’s for my first taste of sweet Munich lager, and within minutes, I learn that my companions at the table hail from North Dakota, Ghana, Munich, Spain, and the Czech Republic. Indeed, it is an international gathering!

After several renditions of Ein, Zwei, and G’Suffa, I say Auf Wiedersehen to my newfound friends and make my way to Oide Wiesn to join my colleague, Markus, who has ‘won the lottery’ by scoring a table for eight in one of the tents where we can immerse ourselves in the Fesztzelt traditions.

I’ve had a brilliant evening, singing →

slightly off-key, fumbling through a polka and raising my stein in a series of never-ending toasts. I know the party will continue for hours, but I have more common sense than I had when I was twenty, so after two or was it three litres of beer, I make the wise decision to trundle back to the guesthouse for a solid night's sleep before heading to the Alps tomorrow.

SO BEAUTIFUL IT HURTS

That refrain keeps playing through my head as I meander throughout the medieval town of Füssen. It's drizzling rain, but that doesn't dampen my spirit because the cheery pastel-coloured buildings were created to chase the gloom away.

I take my time navigating the cobblestone streets because the view changes every few steps, and there are new treasures behind every door.

Füssen is nestled among a cluster of mountains, so some of its greatest treasures are not readily visible. Fortified after a hot cup of

coffee and a slice of the best apple strudel I've ever tasted, I veer away from the shops in search of Hohes Schloss, which turns out to be one of the best-preserved castles in Bavaria. Choosing a different route back, I'm drawn towards the rococo paintings that adorn Heilig-Geist Spital Kirche. I nip inside for some respite from the rain and am awed by the peace and tranquillity I experience sitting quietly in this small, serene sanctuary.

The last door I open leads me deep inside the Benedictine Monastery of St. Mang. While the church is impressive, I spent what time I had in the Museum. While I'm unfamiliar with any of the artists, I'm fascinated by how the curators have woven art and history together to tell how the village earned its reputation as Europe's premier manufacturer of lutes and violins.

What I intended as a quick stop for coffee has turned into a three-hour adventure, and frankly, I wish I could have stayed longer. Now, I have to make tracks to get to Schwangau in time to tour the world-renowned fairytale castle that many

consider King Ludwig II's great folly.

THE CASTLE IN THE AIR

The road leading to Schloss Neuschwanstein is long and lined with trees that obscure the view, but as I round a corner, the silvery walls and glistening turrets appear to rise from the clouds. There is no denying Neuschwanstein's breathtaking beauty, but today, shrouded by a curtain of rain, it seems more mystical than magical. Still, I can feel the alchemy that has captured the hearts and souls of millions, including Walt Disney.

History would have us believe that King Ludwig II was 'mad' for investing his fortune in constructing an enchanting tribute to composer and friend, Richard Wagner. But, as I gaze upon the man-made wonder before me, I ponder if this is true or if the young king was simply misunderstood. From my observations, he was a visionary – daring, imaginative, highly creative and determined. That his legacy endures is a testimony to the fact that even though King

Ludwig didn't live to see Neuschwanstein completed – dreams can come true.

The message is clear as I reflect on what I have learned on his trip. Too often, we are content to admire the exterior but fail to open the door to experience the beauty that lies within. This holds true for the places we visit and the people we meet along the way.

I remember the potato vendor, the server who brought me my breakfast this morning and the gentleman on the bus who took me under his wing to explain how the City's transit system worked when I first arrived. A simple act of kindness that made an indelible impression. All it took was a question or two to spark conversations that revealed more about Bavarian culture and tradition than I would have ever learned from reading a book.

To quote Walt Disney, "We keep moving forward, opening new doors and doing new things, because we're curious ... and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths". A good mantra wherever you may roam.

WHERE TO STAY

Paintner Gaestehaus

W: Hotel-paintner.dr

T: +49 89 - 842539

WHAT TO DO:

Therme-Erding

W: Therme-erding.de/en

T: +49 8122 5500

Marienplatz

W: Marienplatz.de

T: +49 89 2300

Füssen

W: En.fuessen.de

T: +49 8362-93850

Neuschwanstein

W: Neuschwanstein.de

T: +49 8362 930830

"But, as I gaze upon the man-made wonder before me, I ponder if this is true or if the young king was simply misunderstood"

Bottom Left: Olde Town Fussen
Below Right: Schloss Neuschwanstein





JOHN WILSON DESIGN

Finest Bespoke Interiors

info@johnwilson.design

www.johnwilson.design

Instagram [john_wilson_design](https://www.instagram.com/john_wilson_design)

ROAD TRIPPIN'

In his latest driving adventure, Peter Ellegard heads off to discover Florida's extensive coastline. This two-part foray takes him along its beguiling and surprising Gulf Coast, journeying between Naples and Tampa before heading north to the Alabama border for part two

Cars driving along the sanibel causeway bright and early in the morning



Visit Florida - Chris Joy

Left: Naples Pier

“There is nature aplenty, the numerous protected areas along its shores offering wildlife encounters at sea, along rivers, in springs and on land. Unspoilt islands offer escapes far from madding crowds, but there are also towns and cities with attractions, activities, restaurants, bars, nightlife and shopping if you crave more action”

Think of Florida and the first thing likely to spring to mind, other than Orlando’s theme parks and other attractions, is its sun-kissed beaches.

That’s hardly surprising. From sea to shining sea, the Sunshine State boasts almost 8,500 miles of combined Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastlines, second only to Alaska of all America’s states.

During my 40 years as a travel journalist, I have visited Florida countless times and driven pretty much all of its coastal highways and byways, each coast making for enjoyable and very different road trip experiences.

The Gulf Coast alone encompasses more than 5,000 miles of coastline and stretches from the Paradise Coast in the south to the Alabama border in the northwest corner of Florida’s Panhandle region. Following coastal roads, the journey is the equivalent of driving from John O’Groats in northern Scotland to England’s Land’s End. So the best way to experience it is by doing it in two stages: north between Tampa and Pensacola, and the

southern section between Naples and Tampa.

BEST BEACHES

Beach lovers will find some of the best sands in the US along Florida’s Gulf Coast. Renowned expert Dr Beach, aka coastal scientist Stephen Leatherman, regularly names its beaches among the country’s top 10, with winners including a quartet of Panhandle beaches – St George Island State Park (2023), Grayton Beach State Park (2020 and 1994), St Joseph Peninsula State Park (2002) and St Andrews State Park (1995) – as well as Sarasota’s Siesta Beach (2017 and 2011), Clearwater’s Caladesi Island State Park (2008) and Fort DeSoto Park’s North Beach (2005), in St Petersburg.

There is nature aplenty, the numerous protected areas along its shores offering wildlife encounters at sea, along rivers, in springs and on land.

Unspoilt islands offer escapes far from madding crowds, but there are also towns and cities with attractions, activities, restaurants, bars, nightlife and shopping if you crave more action.

Accommodation spans everything from beachside rental cabins and homely B&Bs to luxury resorts.

On the Paradise Coast, sophisticated resort city Naples and neighbouring Marco Island are where the well-heeled come to stay and play. High-end resort hotels and condos line white-sand beaches peppered with multi-hued parasols, while Old Naples offers upscale shopping, dining and art galleries in its quaint, Victorian-era downtown.

Naples is just two hours from Miami, crossing the Everglades National Park, a journey I have done a number of times. Alternatively, you can get there from Tampa, which also has direct international flights and is a three-hour drive away. →



“This part of Florida took a direct hit from category 4 Hurricane Ian in September 2022, wreaking unimaginable destruction to coastal communities besides leaving dozens of people dead in its wake. Visiting eight months later, I’m very pleasantly surprised by how much it has already recovered”

Sporting opportunities abound, including excellent golf, deep-sea fishing and water sports galore. From here, you can also visit the nearby Everglades for an exhilarating airboat ride or swamp buggy tour and explore the mangrove-cloaked Ten Thousand Islands by boat and kayak. Just inland from Naples, the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge protects the core habitat of the endangered mammal and other native wildlife. It has two looped hiking trails open year-round. The wetlands of Florida’s far south are also the only place in the world where alligators and crocodiles coexist, although you are highly unlikely to see them together.

RECOVERING FROM IAN

An hour north of Naples is Fort Myers, in Lee County. This part of Florida took a direct hit from category 4 Hurricane Ian in September 2022, wreaking unimaginable destruction to coastal communities besides leaving dozens of people dead in its wake. Visiting eight months later, I’m very

pleasantly surprised by how much it has already recovered.

Fort Myers itself largely escaped the brutal devastation endured by barrier islands Fort Myers Beach, Captiva and Sanibel that bore the brunt of Ian’s fury. Rebuilding is ongoing in all three tourist destinations. Captiva’s South Sea Resort, a delightful place I have stayed at a couple of times, began a phased reopening in July 2023 and launched its new 12-hole short golf course, The Clutch, in November to replace the destroyed course I had fun playing during my stays.

Strolling through downtown Fort Myers on a Saturday evening, I wouldn’t have guessed the city had been hit by 150mph winds only months before. The streets are busy and bars and restaurants are bustling, including the Firestone Grill Room, where my partner Julie and I dine (I love the auto-themed elements including wash basins set in tyres – and its rooftop Skybar, too). In Prohibition-style speakeasy The 86 Room, bartenders use blowtorches to expertly craft smoke-filled cocktails before we try them

ourselves.

Nature was badly hit by Ian, evident from the swathes of lifeless mangroves we witness from our top-floor balcony at the Hyatt Regency Hotel Coconut Point Resort in Bonita Springs, but it is staging a comeback.

DOLPHINS, OTTERS AND GATORS

On a two-hour kayaking trip along the Imperial River from Bonita Springs with CKT Kayaks, Julie and I see damage to houses, boat docks and jetties caused by the unimaginable 10-foot-plus tidal surge that resulted in extensive flooding, but the towering trees survived unscathed. Manatees have returned to the river and are often seen by kayakers and boaters. We don’t come across any ourselves, but we do spot a playful otter as we paddle downstream and back upstream as well as an alligator basking on the river bank, its jaw menacingly open.

Free dolphin-watching boat trips of the Caloosahatchee River estuary →

From left to right: Lee County Courthouse, Fort Myers, downtown Fort Myers, kayaking on the Imperial River in Bonita Springs, Cocktail making at The 86 Room in Fort Myers

are offered for guests staying at the Westin Cape Coral, so we join an early-morning cruise from its newly-rebuilt dock and are rewarded by the sight of eight dolphins in three separate pods. As we skirt small islets and coastal mangroves close to Sanibel Island, we clearly see how much of the vegetation has been stripped bare or left dead. A half-submerged yacht also leans at a drunken angle, its sails in tatters. Yet birds have returned to roost on the tiny sand keys, despite the damage to them.

Our guide tells us that Mother Nature will take about five years to fully recover from the deadly tempest. It's good to see that the healing is at least under way.

Another barrier island, Gasparilla, lies just north of Ian's landfall point, Cayo Costa. The historic wooden Gasparilla Inn & Club, a favourite of mine, sustained damage but was back up and running within weeks while its wonderful Pete Dye-designed course reopened in October 2023 after a planned revamp was brought forward because of hurricane damage.

A series of other barrier islands line the Gulf Coast up to and beyond holiday favourite Clearwater, among them Sarasota's Siesta Key and Longboat Key where I have holidayed before.

MY AMI NICE

However, the star of this coast for me is idyllic Anna Maria Island, just offshore of Bradenton. Here, only low-rise developments are allowed so its wide, pristine beaches aren't dwarfed by buildings. I visit twice in 2023, the first time staying several nights in a first-floor apartment right on the beach in June and then again in December while in Bradenton for golf's inaugural World Champions Cup.

Sunsets don't come much more stunning than those on Anna Maria, whether watching from our balcony drinking wine or at the nearby Beach House waterfront restaurant sipping a delicious My AMI Vice cocktail that combines strawberry daiquiri and pina colada.

The pace of life here is relaxed and unhurried. Free golf buggy taxis (tips are welcome, of course) ferry you around its main Bridge Street shopping and commercial area. As we stroll onto Bridge Street Pier, an osprey is languidly perched on the clock tower at the pier's landward end, scouring the gin-clear waters for its next meal and oblivious to the comings and goings below.

At Bean Point, on the island's northern tip, benches alongside the wooden boardwalk commemorate departed loved ones. I can't imagine a more idyllic and poignant place to cherish memories or to just sit and take in the glorious views beyond the golden-yellow sea oats swaying in the breeze on the beachside dunes.

Several horses are being ridden onto the beach after a swim in the sea as we cross the bridge to the mainland, leaving me wistfully imagining doing that myself on a future visit. →

Bottom left: Mural on Anna Maria Island

Middle: Beach and lifeguard station on Anna Maria Island

Bottom right: Anna Maria Island sunset

“Sunsets don't come much more stunning than those on Anna Maria, whether watching from our balcony drinking wine or at the nearby Beach House waterfront restaurant sipping a delicious My AMI Vice cocktail that combines strawberry daiquiri and pina colada”



ART FOR ART'S SAKE

Lunch overlooking Bradenton's Twin Dolphin Marina is followed by a walk through its Village of the Arts, a fascinating neighbourhood where many of the houses sport funky portraits and designs with decidedly weird sculptures in their gardens.

Interstate 275 crosses Tampa Bay on the impressive Sunshine Skyway Bridge, linking southern Florida with the peninsula containing popular holiday spots St Petersburg and Clearwater.

In downtown St Petersburg, the Salvador Dali Museum is home to more masterpieces by the surrealist Spanish artist than any other museum in the world. Nearby, the landmark, new St Pete Pier jutting into Tampa Bay forms the heart of a 26-acre entertainment and dining district.

Fort De Soto Park lies at the southern tip of the peninsula on the Gulf Coast, just below St Pete Beach where the grand Don CeSar hotel, nicknamed the Pink Palace, has welcomed guests to its pink façade for almost a century.

At the other end of the peninsula are the beach areas of Clearwater. Julie and I stay at the Sheraton Sand Key Resort on Sand Key, where its extensive white beach adjoins that of Sand Key Park. We take the free Jolley Trolley shuttle from the hotel over the adjacent bridge to Clearwater Beach, enjoying an al fresco seafood dinner after watching yet another spectacular sunset.

We also drive to charming seaside town Dunedin, where statues and wall art commemorate the long-gone rail link that brought visitors in search of sun, sea and sand. A ferry from its pier takes you to the stunning beaches of car-free state park Caledesi Island. But time is pressing, so instead we drive to Honeymoon Island to dip our toes in the bath-warm waters of one of its pretty crescent bays.

CUBAN FLAVOUR

The final stop on this journey is Tampa. Although not directly on the Gulf Coast, it has a strong maritime affinity. At 4.5 miles long, its elegant Bayshore Boulevard fronting Tampa Bay boasts the world's longest continuous pedestrian walkway.

We stay at the Hotel Tampa Riverwalk and enjoy an evening walk under the colour-changing canopy of the adjacent, scenic Tampa Riverwalk path along the Hillsborough River.

There is only one place to have dinner in Tampa – at the Columbia Restaurant. Located in historic Cuban and Spanish enclave Ybor City, it was founded almost 120 years ago and is the oldest and largest Spanish restaurant in the US, having originally been established as a café for the immigrant cigar makers who had settled there.

From its tiled façade and balconied interior to its waiters resplendent in formal suits and bow ties, it remains a popular institution and eating there is a treat. Even our mojitos are made at the table with a flourish by our waiter, Chris.

Before heading home, we visit the Florida Aquarium. Regarded as one of the best in America, it is a great place to spend our final day and features habitats displaying many of Florida's native animals, birds, sharks, stingrays and other sealife.

I'm smitten by this part of Florida.



Visit Florida



Top left and right: Village of the Arts, Bradenton
Middle left: Tram in Tampa. Middle right: The historic Don CeSar hotel, aka the Pink Palace
Bottom left and right: Columbia Restaurant, Ybor City, Tampa

HOW TO GET THERE

Direct flights to Tampa or Miami

WHERE TO STAY

Hyatt Regency Hotel Coconut Point Resort

T: +1 239 444 1234

W: hyatt.com

Westin Cape Coral

T: +1 239 541 5000

W: marriott.com

Sheraton Sand Key Resort

T: +1 727 595 1611

W: marriott.com

Hotel Tampa Riverwalk

T: +1 813 223 2222

W: hoteltampariverwalk.com

WHERE TO EAT

Firestone Grill Room

T: +1 239 334 3473

W: firestonefl.com

Beach House Waterfront Restaurant

T: +1 941 779 2222

W: beachhousedining.com

Columbia Restaurant

T: +1 813 248 4961

W: columbiarestaurant.com

WHAT TO DO:

CGT Kayaks

T: +1 239 221 8218

W: cgtkayaks.com

Florida Aquarium

T: +1 813 273 4000

W: flaquarium.org

WELCOME TO THE REPUBLIC

James Mason heads to the Dominican Republic and finds sun, sea and sand awaiting him – and that’s just on the golf courses!



TEETH OF THE DOG

Pete Dye’s Teeth of the Dog has always been on my must-play list, and to say I was disappointed not to play it the first time I visited the Dominican Republic would be an understatement. But with the new road from Punta Cana airport having been laid, Casa De Campo is now only a 45-minute drive away.

As I stand on the first tee, seeing how well the course is presented and manicured, it’s obvious that I’m in for a treat. It’s 3.30pm and the course is empty – what a feeling. I know I will finish as the sun starts to set, and as I smash my drive down the 404 yard opening hole, I look across to the 18th green and know that it will be beautiful.

The par 4, 390-yard 2nd looks stunning from the tee, with the waste bunker running down the left hand side. It’s a great driving hole and I’m sure it will be one of your favourites – it was certainly one of mine. The 3rd is when you get the first glimpse of the gorgeous azure sea.

The 5th is the first hole that you play over the Caribbean Sea – 176 yards from a slightly elevated back tee to a green that is long and thin. Not only does the green sit out on a peninsula with the sea on the left, but there is also a semi-circular bunker that goes from the back around the left of the green to the front, as well as three further bunkers on the right if you decide to bail out. It’s a great hole.

The 6th is a dogleg left again with the sea running down the left hand side, and from the back tees it’s a 501-yard par 4. But the great holes just keep coming, with another stunning par 3 to a green surrounded by the sea, another semi-circular bunker over water, and four bunkers on the right if again you want to bail out. This one measures 229 yards and at that length is a tough hole.

The 8th follows the shoreline and at 414 yards is another hard nut to crack. The front nine comes to a close with the 602-yard par 5 from the back tees. The back nine starts with a run of well-designed inland holes, the pick of these being the 12th and 14th.

The 15th brings you back to the sea and a run of truly stunning holes. Sandwiched between two great par 4s at the 15th and 17th is yet another par 3 over water, and even though this one is 204 yards from the back tees, I felt that visually this one is the toughest of the three par 3s on the sea, but there is a larger bail-out area



SOMETIMES YOU CAN BE LET DOWN BY ALL THE HYPE, BUT NOT THIS TIME. PETE DYE HAS PRODUCED A BEAUTIFUL COURSE IN A WONDERFUL LOCATION

on the left. Both of the par 4s have infinity-type greens, and being in the right position off the tee is key, that way you can trust your yardage and hit a full shot into both greens.

The final hole is a tough par 4 of 484 yards from the back tee, with water just short and left of the green and a large bunker that cuts its way into the fairway on the left. And with the trees that surround the green in full bloom – one of which is bright red – and the orange sun slowly sinking as I putt out, it was the perfect setting to close my round.

Sometimes you can be let down by all the hype, but not this time. Pete Dye has produced a beautiful course in a wonderful location. →



COURSE VIDEO

Main image: Aerial view of the 15th
 Top right: Looking down the 2nd
 Middle: Tee shot at the 5th hole
 Bottom: Tee shot on the par 3 16th
 Left: Bunker and Caribbean Sea protecting the 7th green

DYE FORE

As I hit the hacienda-type bar that overlooks the 18th green on Dye Fore and the Chavón River, I know I'm in for yet another treat. Dye Fore may not have the oceanside holes of its cousin, Teeth of the Dog, but if the vistas from this little watering hole are anything to go by, Pete Dye has created another gem of a course.

I jump in my buggy and head to the first. Without doubt, you will love the stunning views of the Caribbean from this elevated position, but what I also like is the gentle breeze – it helps when the sun is high in the sky and smiling down on me.

The opening hole is a 'gentle' 610-yard par-

5 from the back tees. The course measures a gigantic 7,770 yards from the tips, but the good news is that there are five teeing options, so you pick a length to suit your skill level. Rumour has it that Pete was working in yards and the locals were working in metres!

The 2nd may be shorter at 385 yards, but you really need to make sure you are on the dance floor – the drop-off from this raised green and its two bunkers on the left will leave you a very difficult up and down if you miss the green.

The 3rd brings you to the first of the two great par 3s on the front nine, but, more importantly, this starts a run of stunning holes that look down on the marina and the shimmering azure

hues of the Caribbean. My favourite is the 4th, where you can watch the Chavón River meander down to the sea.

The back nine comes to a close with a beast of a par 4, which measures 490 yards off the tips and plays all uphill, with a waste bunker running all along the right hand side from about 240 yards out to a green that is nearly 50 yards deep. Walking away with par from that tee felt more like a birdie, but the gold and blues play 420 yards and 360 yards respectively, so as I say, you have a choice.

You are going to enjoy the opening hole to the back nine – it's one of those heart-stopping moments of sheer beauty as you look down →

THE COURSE MEASURES A GIGANTIC 7,770 YARDS FROM THE TIPS, BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THERE ARE FIVE TEEING OPTIONS, SO YOU PICK A LENGTH TO SUIT YOUR SKILL LEVEL. RUMOUR HAS IT THAT PETE WAS WORKING IN YARDS AND THE LOCALS WERE WORKING IN METRES!



COURSE VIDEO

Right: Aerial view of the 5th hole and the marina
Top right: Raised green at the 2nd
Bottom right: Tee shot at the 15th





THE CLOSING HOLE IS ANOTHER TOUGHIE AT 600 YARDS, BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS YOU HAVE A VERY WIDE FAIRWAY TO AIM AT FROM AN ELEVATED TEE. IT'S THE PERFECT HOLE TO FINISH ON, UNLESS, LIKE ME, YOU ARE HEADING STRAIGHT THROUGH AND PLAYING ALL 27 HOLES!

from the tee and watch the Chavón River serenely flowing past. I had to pause for a moment to take it all in. The green on the 10th just seems to sit out on its own, looking down upon the majesty of the river – it truly is a great design.

The 12th brings you to the first of the two par 3s on the back nine. This is the one place where I thought Pete missed a trick, because the 220-yard par 3 15th green sits just beyond the 235-yard 12th green, whereas I thought a St Andrews-type double green would have been fun. But on both holes (the right on the 12th and left on the 15th) it's a long way down to play your second shot if you slice or hook one down there!

The closing hole is another toughie at 600

yards, but the good news is you have a very wide fairway to aim at from an elevated tee. It's the perfect hole to finish on, unless, like me, you are heading straight through and playing all 27 holes!

You can choose to go the valley route or aim up on the hill, but no matter where you land, making the green in two is going to take another great shot to a very small green that sits in its own amphitheatre. And if you have friends watching from the hacienda bar, that simply adds to the fun and pressure of a truly great closing hole.

I continue out to the new 9 holes on the Dye Fore course, and as I drive my buggy across, I can see these are fairly new and will take a bit of time to bed down in their surroundings. But

that doesn't take away from the great design as you stand on the tee of this 405-yard dogleg right opening hole; you will have to steer clear of the slim bunker running down the right hand side, and to the right of that is water. The green then sits nicely perched by the water's edge – it really is another great opening hole.

The first of the two par 3s sits just behind the green, is played over water and measures 195 yards from the back tee. The other par 3 comes at the 25th and again is played over water to an island-type green that measures 214 yards from the back tees. In between those two great par 3s are two par 4s and two par 5s, all well designed golf holes, and some very mean bunkers, Mr Dye – one small and shallow pot bunker is perched in the middle of the fairway

at the 22nd.

The new holes come to a close with the beautiful 384-yard 8th, which is played through a series of bunkers that protect both the right and left hand sides of the fairway, making you thread your ball through them. And the 492-yard dogleg left par 4 9th has yet another one of those little shallow pot bunkers, this time on the left of the fairway, just before the water that runs down the left hand side.

The 27 holes that make up Dye Fore may not get the praise that the Teeth of the Dog garners, but don't let that put you off – it's a great course that will test every part of your golf game. I heartily recommend that you experience this course. →

Left main: Aerial view of the 10th, 11th, 12th and 15th holes

Top right: 2nd shot to the 23rd hole

Bottom right: Green on the par 3 25th hole



PUNTA ESPADA

“I believe Cap Cana will offer one of the finer golf experiences in the Caribbean and perhaps the world,” states Jack Nicklaus in his introduction to the Punta Espada course. Few could argue with those words once they have experienced this piece of heaven on earth. Everyone here eulogises how great the course is, including professionals from other courses and sometimes when that happens you wonder whether to believe the hype?

And as I stand on the 1st tee I am thinking in one word, yes! I knew it was going to be a great experience from the moment I stepped on to the practice ground with the triangles of balls all lined up waiting to be hit to practice greens that most courses would be happy with as their main greens. The 1st tee is elevated and looks down on a perfectly-manicured fairway with a slight dogleg to the left with the crystal clear

waters of the Caribbean as a backdrop, I don’t think I could hit a bad shot if I tried!!

As I head up to the 2nd tee and look down I notice the tee has been crafted on top of a rock and looking down the fairway below I can see the green in the distance sitting out on a peninsula. It is really is hard to concentrate while taking in the shear beauty and trying to remember I’m here to play golf and not just on a sightseeing tour of some of the best scenery in the Dominican Republic. Hole after hole offers a great golf challenge but also these breath-taking views. The par 3, 190 yard 4th over an inlet from the sea, the par 5, 12th which carves its way back down to the shore, the 250-yard, par 3 13th which is all carry across the Caribbean sea from the back tee.

Then you have the finish of the 16th, 17th and 18th holes that bring you down to and along the

shoreline. As I walk off the 18th green I think to myself if I could only choose three holes to play for the rest of your life, I wouldn’t go far wrong choosing these finishing holes. Jack Nicklaus has truly created a masterpiece here, which could be hard to beat, but he is having a good try.

From what I am shown by Mark Clouse, Director of Golf at Cap Cana, the plan is to eventually have five courses on this complex. I highly recommend you pack your clubs and get down to the Dominican republic and make sure Punta Espada is at the top of your list of courses to play. As I sit here watching the waves crash onto the rocks by the 18th green cold beer in hand, I know this course is going to live long in my memory. →

THEN YOU HAVE THE FINISH OF THE 16TH, 17TH AND 18TH HOLES THAT BRING YOU DOWN TO AND ALONG THE SHORELINE. AS I WALK OFF THE 18TH GREEN I THINK TO MYSELF IF I COULD ONLY CHOOSE THREE HOLES TO PLAY FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, I WOULDN'T GO FAR WRONG CHOOSING THESE FINISHING HOLES.

COURSE VIDEO

Top: Playing by the sea at the 3rd
Above: Island green at the 10th hole
Right: Coming back down to the sea at the 12th
Far right: Par 3 4th with the sea at your back and water to carry



LA CANA

La Cana golf course is now 23 years old, with fours holes on the beach and the finishing two holes that run right along the ocean front. When I say on the beach if you don't look where you're placing your feet during your set up on the tee you could fall onto the beach, its that close. But before getting to the first of the holes that runs along the beach, I am standing on the par 3, 200 yard 3rd hole; its a great little gem of a hole over a lake with a fountain. But it's when I arrive at the par 3, 154-yard 5th hole, I can't help but be impressed with the tee right on the beach.

Believe me, the sand is that white and the water that blue and clear, it looks like something out of a golf magazine!! The 7th is a par 4, 326-yard dogleg left to a green that sits in some palm trees just before the beach, but standing on the tee like the rest of the course it is surrounded by some beautifully designed villas, so I have to remind myself to keep my mind on the golf. If you never get to play the 17th at Sawgrass then you get a chance to play something very similar.

The par 3, 12th hole here is a 146-yard tee shot to a two-tiered island green. You'll love it.

The par 4, 17th is played like a dogleg right. I hit my tee shot out from the tee on the beach to the fairway then my second shot I play back towards the sea to a sleeper-protected green that's 42 yards long so can play anything from a 4-7 iron depending on its pin position.

What I am loving about this finishing hole is that not only does it soothe the soul with its sheer beauty of this setting, but it also gives you a great chance at a birdie or for the longer hitters out there an eagle finish. And there is no better way to shake hands with your playing partner than with the sea crashing against the sand just inches away with a four on your card.

Looking back down the 18th fairway from the clubhouse balcony with a cold Presidente in hand, it's an amazing view and gets you ready to go and play the PB Dye-designed Hacienda nine holes. These are located inland to the original course, which is made up of the Tortuga and Affecife nines. →



Top: Aerial view of the 7th hole
Right: View from the green to the tee at the 5th
Right middle: 9th green with bunkered boat!
Far right: Sleepers at the 17th



Below left: Aerial view of the island green at the 12th
Below middle and right: Views of the 18th aerial and looking back down the fairway

COURSE VIDEO



CORALES

Driving through the Punta Cana estate takes me back to when I was here back in late 2008. I was taken round the Tom Fazio-designed course, but at that time the grass had just been seeded. Those memories trigger my excitement as we turn up the road and past the practice ground on my left, which is probably where you will be dropped off. But first I have a few people to meet, and as I'm shaking hands I can see the course just behind the pro shop – it's just tugging at me.

I jump in the buggy with my caddie and it's down to the well-appointed practice ground to loosen up, then it's off to the 1st tee. Now, I have to say that if you miss this fairway you should head back down to the range! It's wide and even from the back tees at 433 yards; it's a nice opening hole – the sea is not in full view but you get some tantalising glimpses, and

when the wind blows you will definitely feel it.

The 2nd is the first of the four great par 3s, and there really isn't a weak one on the course, with water coming into play on one and the sea on two. With 239 yards between me and the pin this is no pushover, playing to a raised green protected by five deep bunkers and a waste area that runs all the way along the right hand side.

The 3rd is a great hole and there are two greens here, one on a peninsula in the lake and one that plays uphill. It's a great driving hole and no matter which green is in play, I think you will very much enjoy this hole. The next run of holes are wonderfully designed, but it's the par 5 7th that takes you to the sea and a dramatic finish to the front nine.

If you get a good drive away on the 515-yard 7th you'll be able to have a go at the green, but the special element is that walk up as the sea comes into sight. With the breeze in my face →



Left: Rocks to the left of the 12th green
Below: A fitting finale – the 18th green





THAT WAS ALL THE INVITATION THIS WIND NEEDED, EXAGGERATING THE SPIN ON MY BALL. I MISS THE GREEN RIGHT AND SUDDENLY I'M IN SOME HORRID DEEP **! A HACK, A CHIP AND A HOLED 10-FOOTER LATER, I DRAG MY TAIL TO THE FINAL PAR 3 ON THE COURSE.**



COURSE VIDEO

Top far left: One of the two greens at the 3rd hole
Bottom far left: The tough par 3 11th
Left: Links feel to the 16th which brings you back to the sea

and the salty sea air fresh and crisp, the view makes my heart sing. Apart from my caddie there is no one in sight, and as I stroll up the fairway to the green I feel at peace. I just wish I could bottle this moment, this tranquility.

Standing on the 8th tee with the waves crashing on the rocks to my left – depending on which one of the five teeing options you have selected – there is more than 200 yards of rocks and sea to carry to reach the fairway. As I walk up to my second shot I see I have another carry over the sea if I chase the flag. It's a great hole, the crescendo to the back nine – again depending on which tee option you have chosen to play from – it's a 204-yard par 3 over a sea inlet to a green that is 46 yards wide. Stunning/great/awesome/beautiful – I'll let you choose your own adjective once you've played here.

The back nine opens with a tough 496-yard

par 4 that takes you back inland, while the par 3, 11th, which is played over water is, I think, one of the toughest par 3s you will play. It is 265 yards from the back tee to a green that is 38 yards deep and has a nice big step running across it, four bunkers with the green sloping from back to front. I can only wish you good luck.

The next run of holes are all great golf holes, and there really isn't one designed just to get you somewhere and fitted in for the sake of it. However, the piece de resistance to the back nine is the final three holes, known as the "Devil's Elbow", and as I step on to the tee at the 461-yard 16th with the sea back in view, it's time to see what the Devil can throw at me.

With the wind up and blowing in my face I know I am in for a tough test, and after a good drive I am still hitting a good 4-iron into the green. But I come off it slightly and that was all

the invitation this wind needed, exaggerating the spin on my ball. I miss the green right and suddenly I'm in some horrid deep ****! A hack, a chip and a holed 10-footer later, I drag my tail to the final par 3 on the course.

The warm Caribbean wind is still whipping into my face and off of my right, and at 214 yards I decide to bring out my own weapon to take on this section of the Devil's Elbow. With righteous justice I smash my 2-iron to three feet and hole the putt; I feel like Chi Chi Rodriguez as I sheath my putter and stride off to the 18th in buoyant mood to continue my personal battle.

But the Devil has a trick up his sleeve at 501 yards and a dogleg right, with the sea all down the right and as much risk and reward as you want to take on. But this is no par 5 – oh no, Beelzebub has decided it's a par 4!! After I smash my drive I still have 230 yards to go

into the wind and come up just short with my 3-wood. I chip up and lip out with my putt. I am calling it quits – Satan wins. That was no par 4 at that length and into that wind, and I haven't waited six years to be conquered by a technicality!

Coralas has everything, and on a day like today, with some of the low yellow flowering bushes and overcast skies, you really could be playing a links course in Scotland when you play along the Caribbean sea holes – well, apart from the manicuring of the course, and the warm breeze instead of the biting cold of the North Sea. It's a must-play course, and there really isn't a weak hole on the track. I know that like me you will love the battle, so good luck with yours.

JOURNEY PLANNER

GETTING THERE

Direct flights from most major cities to Punta Cana

WHERE TO STAY

Casa de Campo Resort & Villas

T: +1 855 580 4814

W: casadecampo.com.do

Barceló Bávaro Palace

T: +1 809 686 5797

W: barcelo.com/

WHERE TO PLAY

Teeth of the Dog

T: +1 866 719 8883

W: casadecampo.com.do/golf

Dye Fore

T: +1 866 719 8883

W: casadecampo.com.do/golf

Punta Espada

T: +1 809 469 7767

W: puntaespadagolf.com/course

La Cana

T: +1 809 959 4653

W: puntacana.com/en/golf

Corales

T: +1 809 959 4653

W: puntacana.com/en/golf

WHERE TO EAT

The Beach Club by Le Cirque

T: +1 809 523 8364

W: casadecampo.com

La Casita

T: +1 809 523 8364

W: casadecampo.com

Hard Rock Cafe

T: +1 829-831-2912

W: hardrockcafe.com

32
TAYLORMADE Qi10
DRIVER



35
BEN
HOGAN
PTx TOUR



REVIEW

EQUIPMENT & APPAREL



38
TITLEIST SM10



41
PUMA
AVANT

VIEW.COM

FARLEIGH

FRIDAY 17th MAY

PRO-AM 2024

**SIGN UP
TODAY!**

TEE IT UP WITH THE PROS AT OUR 2024 PGA PRO-AM

We are excited to host the Farleigh Pro-Am 2024, again proudly sponsored by One Golf Club.

SCAN TO ENTER



Three Amateurs & One PGA professional
Tea/coffee & bacon rolls on arrival
18 Hole competition with great prizes
Delicious BBQ & a Beer post Golf

**MEMBERS £55 PP / MEMBERS GUEST £85 PP /
VISITOR £115 PP**

SCAN TO ENTER OR CONTACT:
shawn@farleighfox.co.uk or 01883 627711

PROUDLY
SPONSORED BY





BLUE VELVET

With the TaylorMade marketing team in full swing after breaking the 10k MOI barrier, James Mason finds out if the Qi10 lives up to all the hype



TECHNOLOGY

TaylorMade have released their new Qi10 range of drivers and you will be seeing a lot about their 10k MOI, which is basically a new threshold that has been reached by both TaylorMade and Ping in their newly released drivers

Put simply, the higher the MOI = more forgiveness. Higher MOI reduces head rotation on off-centre impacts, helps maintain ball speed on mishit shots and more consistent launch angles. The Qi10 drivers boast a combined total MOI of 10,000 g-cm² (10K).

TaylorMade's construction

techniques have allowed strategic mass to be redistributed by extending carbon fibre to the extreme perimeter of the head and aligning it flush with the top of the face, this new design maximising mass savings. This approach has removed excess weight resulting in optimal redistribution of mass for a lower Centre of Gravity (CG) to help with launch angle and spin control while maintaining high MOI.

A new, slightly larger address shape combined with the Infinity Carbon Crown and a high contrast topline help achieved enhanced alignment



The Qi10 uses the third generation of the 60X Carbon Twist Face® technology, delivering a fast face on centre strikes, while also maintaining ball speed on mishit shots. This technology works in conjunction with a redesigned ledge that houses the face in a position that flexes in unison to transfer energy back into the ball at impact.

The Qi10 family of drivers all feature a 4° loft sleeve (+/- 2°) and utilise TaylorMade's Thru-Slot Speed Pocket technology, which is designed to optimise ball speed on low face strikes.



CONCLUSION

Many of you would have read my reviews on the SIM 2 and Stealth drivers and while they were great drivers in their own right, if you had purchased the SIM 1 driver I always felt there was no need to upgrade.

Having tested the Qi10 over five days on five different courses out in Gran Canaria, I can honestly say that if you are now looking to upgrade your driver, then the Qi10 will definitely be an upgrade on all of those aforementioned drivers.

From the very first tee shot I hit with the Qi10 on the second hole at Real Club de Golf Las Palmas to the 18th at Meloneras Golf Club with all its forced carries over ravines with no bail out areas off the back tees, the Qi10 stood up to the test.

Forgiveness, distance, ball flight and looks – the Qi10 has it all and I would definitely recommend you put this driver on your testing list.

CLUB TESTED ▶

TaylorMade Qi10

LOFT 10.5°

LOFT SET UP Std

SHAFT Mitsubishi Tensei Blue

WEIGHT 65gm

FLEX Stiff

RRP £499 / €649 / \$599.99



A FORCE AWAKENS

Just like the great man himself escaping from the wreckage of that horrific car crash, the Hogan name once again rises up. James Mason takes the reincarnation of this classic brand on a tour of the golf courses on Gran Canaria



TECHNOLOGY

Hogan have released their PTx Tour ultimate combo set of irons with a choice of 4-Pw or 5-Pw. The 4-5 irons have a four-piece construction design with the body and face being forged from a 1025 carbon steel. The foam inside the head helps enhance perimeter weighting and gives the iron a soft solid feel at impact. It also has tungsten weighting to move the weight lower to help increase launch angles and distance.

The PTx 6-iron has a three-piece construction and is precession tuned, designed to bridge between the longer irons and the scoring irons.

PTx Tour 7-8 irons also use a three-piece construction and have a lower, more consistent trajectory to help with scoring. Sitting between the 1025 forged carbon steel body and face lies a co-forged titanium insert

which enhances forgiveness, this time moving weight higher to prevent ballooning.

The 9-PW are a one-piece iron, forged from the same 1025 carbon steel to help deliver shot-making performance and control.

All PTx Tour Irons feature the V-Sole design and utilise a high-bounce leading edge and a soft lower-bounce trailing edge. This design gives the clubhead better turf interaction, helping it move cleanly even through the longest rough.

The irons are designed with 4° loft gapping from 4-iron (21.5°) to pitching wedge (45.5°). The tour-approved lofts are ideal for most golfers, but the lofts can be customised up to 2° stronger, lie angles (+/- 2 degrees) and lengths (+/- 2 inches) as can the shafts and grips.

CLUB TESTED ▶

Hogan PTx Tour irons

SET UP 4-Pw

SHAFT KBS Tour

FLEX Stiff

GRIPS Lamkin Ben Hogan Z5 Black

LIE -2°

RRP SET 4-PW £821.53 / €957.50 / \$1,024.99

CONCLUSION

Like all the other equipment in this issue, the Hogan PTx Tour irons were tested over five different courses on Gran Canaria and I have to say I loved every minutes of playing them.

From the moment you pull these Hogan irons out of the box you will fall in love with their looks, but there is so much more to them than those wonderful looks.

That soft feel off the face and solid

strike, along with the ball flight and forgiveness, and the turf interaction from the V-Sole make this a fantastic iron to play right through the bag from the 4-iron to the pitching wedge.

The even better news with the Hogan PTx Tour irons is the price and when you put them up against the other players' irons on the market, there really is no comparison.



GET ON THE GROOVY TRAIN

Wide grooves, narrow grooves, micro grooves, deep grooves and shallow grooves - James Mason puts them all to the test over five days in Gran Canaria



TECHNOLOGY

SM10s have improved ball flight and feel, which has been achieved by a precise shifting in the centre of gravity giving the player more control and stability.

Optimising the position of the centre of gravity (CG) is a key to producing the best ball flight, accuracy and forgiveness. In the higher lofts, the CG has been shifted higher and forward toward the face, helping to produce a lower more controlled ball flight.

Titleist uses their patented Spin Milled® grooves in the SM10s engineered through a proprietary cutting process. Each groove has been individually cut based on loft and finish; with narrower, deeper grooves in the 46°-54° wedges. Wider, shallower grooves in the higher lofts from 56°-62°.

Then there are the micro grooves, which are cut between each groove to maximise spin on partial shots around

the green. Each groove is cut to the edge to help maximise spin, while a localised heat treatment has been applied to the impact area to give the grooves more durability.

The SM10 wedge system has six grinds including a new T Grind with Titleist stating they want to give each golfer the tools to unlock their ultimate wedge game. Getting set up with grinds that fit your swing, preferred shot type and your regular playing conditions will give you the best turf interaction, contact and shot outcome.

The wedges come in three options: Tour chrome, Jet black and an all-new nickel design. Bob Vokey is fond of saying: "The player doesn't choose the wedge. The wedge chooses the player." To get the most from these wedges you will definitely need to be fitted for them.



Various views of the Titleist Vokey SM10 Tour Chrome finish



CONCLUSION

With five days of testing in Gran Canaria over five courses with different grasses, from fairways to rough and various colours of sands, we certainly put the new SM10s through their paces and with no real surprise they made light work of every surface and recovery shot we could throw at them.

I loved the way they sat behind the ball, the way they looked, but most importantly the way they performed. The extra help from the micro grooves between each of the main grooves gives you plenty of grip round the green and



Various views of the
Titleist Vokey SM10 Jet
Black finish

when playing fuller shots.

There is a reason that a lot of players on the major tours play with these wedges. Once you have your distances, the Titleist SM10s will help you control your ball around the greens and from 120 yards and in when it becomes the scoring zone, a quality set of wedges is what you need in your hands. I would certainly recommend you put the Titleist SM10 Vokey Wedges on your testing list, but, most importantly that you get fitted for the right wedge lofts and grid for your golf game.



CLUB TESTED 
Titleist Vokey SM10
LOFT 50° 54°
BOUNCE & GRIND 50°/08/F
and 54°/10/S
SHAFT True Temper Dynamic Gold
FLEX S200
RRP £169 / €199.99 / \$189.99



COOL FOR CATS

For the ultimate test, James Mason takes the new Puma Avant Golf Shoes straight out of the box for five days on five courses, back to back



PUMA AVANT GOLF SHOES
RRP £100 €165 \$140

Three colour options for the Puma Avant golf shoe



TECHNOLOGY:

Puma state the new AVANT golf shoe serves the sophisticated yet modern golfer and is available in both wingtip and saddle shoe design, combining classic styling and modern performance.

Both shoe designs use a premium full grain leather upper and come with a one-year waterproof protection. They are also fitted with a full-length PROFOAM EVA midsoles, this helps with cushioning your feet especially helpful if you are going to be playing 36-hole competitions.

The Avant shoe uses radial traction technology with strategically placed ridges and lugs with Puma stating that this will help maintain grip on any surface a player may encounter.

While a Proclip TPU heel counter and performance TPU welt help provide stability and a secure 360-degree fit around the players foot. There is also a comfort collar lining to help improve step and feel.

CONCLUSION

I am sure like me, many of you worry slightly when putting on a new pair of golf shoes for that first round. I can assure you that feeling is even more worrying when you are away on a testing trip and have five rounds of golf to play in five days wearing those new shoes. But, the good news is, there was no blisters or sore toes from any rubbing. The new Puma Avant golf shoes are good to go straight from the box.

The next worry is with a spikeless

shoe grip when I decided to unleash my driver to get a bit of extra distance – and believe me the 230-yard carry from the back tees over the ravine on the 16th at Meloneras Golf Club on Gran Canaria, where we were testing, is a case in point. I am happy to report there was no slippage with plenty of support from the Avants and I made the carry.

Five days of non-stop golf? Yes, we were in carts, but there was still plenty of walking on the golf course and around

the clubhouse etc and racking up over 18k steps each day with a good two-thirds of that being on the golf course – and there was no foot fatigue.

It is safe to say that the Puma Avant golf shoes look great but, more importantly, perform even better.

PRO TIP



PAUL BABBAGE
PGA Professional
Farleigh Golf Club
T: +44 1883 627711
W: farleighfox.co.uk
E: paul@farleighfox.co.uk

SOCIAL MEDIA
Instagram: [paulbabbagegolf](https://www.instagram.com/paulbabbagegolf)
Facebook: [Paul Babbage](https://www.facebook.com/PaulBabbage)

ALGARVE COACHING TRIP WITH PAUL BABBAGE 2024

4-NIGHT ITINERARY:
Day 1 - arrive - Welcome dinner
Day 2 - 3 hours coaching (driving range & short game), followed by lunch, then 18 holes
Day 3 - 3 hours coaching (driving range & short game), followed by lunch, then 18 holes
Day 4 - 3 hours coaching (driving range & short game), followed by lunch, then 18 holes and a Farewell dinner in the evening
Day 5 - depart

FULL DETAILS CONTACT:
E: natalie@front9travel.com
T: 01342 653093
W: front9golf.com

FOUR-FOOT PUTT DRILL

It's a putt that we should make nearly every time, but how many times have you seen even top players on TV miss a four-foot putt and the commentator says he moved his head too soon. **Paul Babbage** takes you through the steps you need to take, so you can become more consistent over those short putts

Video watch: Practice this routine to become more confident and consistent over those short but important putts, that turns bogeys into pars and pars into birdies



Step one: What is a four-foot putt? Make sure to measure short putts to know when you are in the range of short putts that you are much more likely to make

Step two: Mental calmness is very important over short putts. Take a breath, do not let yourself get distracted by anything outside the putt itself



Step three: When making your stroke, keep your head down and don't look up to see where the ball has gone. This will help you gain a more consistent, solid strike

PRO TIP



SHAIN JOHNSON
PGA Professional
Farleigh Golf Club
T: +44 1883 627711
W: farleighfox.co.uk
E: shain@farleighfox.co.uk

SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram: [@shainjohnsongolf](https://www.instagram.com/shainjohnsongolf)
Twitter: [@shainJGolf](https://twitter.com/shainJGolf)
YouTube: [shainjohnsongolf](https://www.youtube.com/shainjohnsongolf)

WELL CONNECTED

Something that I don't see in amateur golfers enough. This drill I use on everyone from beginners to scratch golfers. You'll have seen this drill all over social media using a ball which is great. But, I prefer using balloons as I can fit them perfectly and comfortably for each individual

Step one: By placing the balloon in between the forearms. This keeps the body more connected both arms and legs helping you to keep your swing compact and connected



Step two: Often, we see the famous "chicken wing" popping up in the lead elbow when swinging through. That's due to the arms overworking and getting ahead of the body instead working together

"In the video I demonstrate how to use balloons and how they will help you achieve a consistent swing"



Video watch: Using a balloon when practicing is a great way to make the perfect ball to fit between your forearms, helping you achieve that connection between arms and body



Step Three: I have used this technique many times throughout my career, and I always tend to come back to it. I strongly recommend trying this. Consistency is key in golf and this drill will help you achieve a connected, compact and consistent swing

PRO TIP



RICARDO SANTOS
DP World Tour Professional

SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram: [@Ric4rdosantos](#)

RICARDO'S TOUR RECORD

WON

Madeira Islands Open
Princess by Schüco
Swiss Challenge

RUNNER-UP

D+D REAL Czech Challenge
Hauts de France Golf Open

TOP 5 FINISHES

Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship
Banque Populaire Moroccan Classic
D+D REAL Czech Challenge
Hauts de France Golf Open
Pas de Calais Golf Open
Joburg Open
Oceânico Developments Pro-Am
Challenge
Oceânico Group Pro-Am Challenge
Prague Golf Challenge
Rolex Trophy
Telenet Trophy
Volvo China Open
Ypsilon Golf Challenge by Alex Cejka

SIGNIFICANT TOP 10 FINISHES

Africa Open
Dutch Open
Foshan Open
Omega Dubai Desert Classic
Rolex Trophy
Soudal Open

GET INTO THE GROOVE

It's the shot the gets the crowd cheering and the shot we all want to play, **Ricardo Santos** talks through his key swing thoughts and process for the 50-yard backspin pitch shot

Video watch: As always, practice makes better in golf; it never makes perfect. In golf we are, and always will be, chasing perfection. But keep practicing this drill and using these techniques and you will improve with each practice session



Step one: Have your alignment open both your stance and body to your target and place the ball back in your stance towards your back foot



Step two: Don't try to flip or use your wrists in the swing; keep them compact with your body



Step three: Keep the club connected with your upper and lower body working together to give you better contact with the ball

LONDON CALLING

Well Kent & Surrey Golf Alliance really, but why let that get in the way of a good headline!

KASGA (Kent & Surrey Golf Alliance) is a charitable golf society with over 70 members. We support the charity CALM who are tackling men's mental health and suicide. [Find out more by clicking here...](#)

We are looking for companies who wish to get involved in sponsoring us, partnering with us or wish to donate prizes for our charity raffles. All money we raise goes to CALM via our JustGiving page. [click this link here](#)

Any support would be appreciated and will help us to raise more money and awareness for this worthy cause.

Our Events for 2024 are

- Farleigh Golf Club – 13th April 2024
- Leatherhead Golf Club – 15th June 2024
- Sweetwoods Golf Club – 17th August 2024
- Le Touquet, France – September 2024 Date TBC
- Clandon Regis Golf Club – 26th October 2024
- Marquee Course TBC – 13th December 2024



Website: kasga.co.uk/#Get-in-touch

Instagram: [@kasga2020](https://www.instagram.com/kasga2020)



STAY, PLAY & SPA

REVIEW



VIEW.COM

KANUCHA RESORT

OKINAWA, JAPAN

By Peter Ellegard

YEN FOR THE SEA

After a 80km drive, a two-and-a-half-hour kayak trip and a change of clothes, **Peter Ellegard** finds himself at the stunning Kanucha Resort in the northern region of Okinawa, known as Japan's Hawaii

Right: View of the resort and beach



My first view of Kanucha Resort is not quite what I expect. I'm on Okinawa, often called Japan's Hawaii for its climate and beauty and the main island of a chain making up Japan's southernmost prefecture, also called Okinawa.

After an 80km drive from the capital, Naha, to the subtropical forests and mangroves of Okinawa island's northern Yambaru region, my tourist office companion Hinako and I don lifejackets and help launch our double kayak into the blue waters of a small, sandy cove.

Our guide, Ryo, then leads us on a two-and-a-half-hour paddling trip along the coast and back, stopping off at a promontory where he brews up tea and offers us snacks before we relaunch our kayaks and the resort comes into view a couple of bays further along.

What strikes me is how big it is, with rows of buildings stretching up the tree-covered slopes beyond the beach. I can also make out some of the holes of its golf course with several that come right down almost to the water.

We don't arrive by sea, however. After a quick change out of our swimming costumes in a pop-up tent back at the cove, we continue by road to check in conventionally. I'm met with a tropical fruit welcome drink and my luggage is transferred to a golf buggy that takes me to my room.

ROOMS

There are nine accommodation blocks, all with balconies, as well as individual cottages. My room is on the top floor of the four-storey block closest to the sea and I have a wonderful →

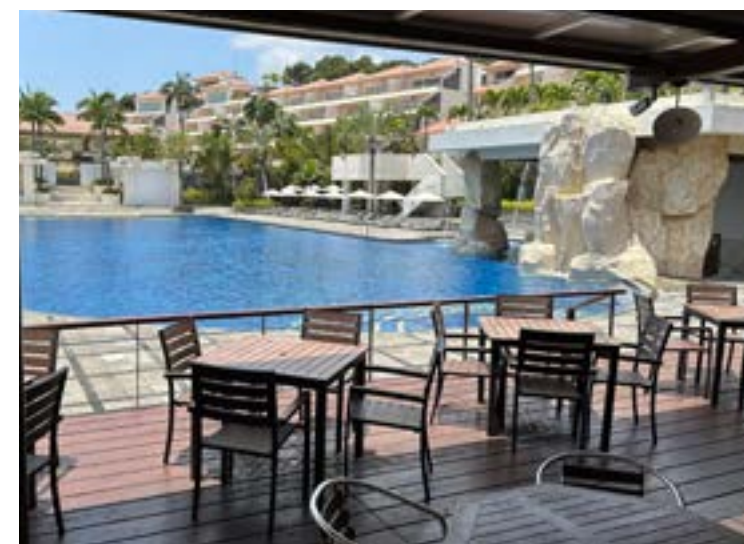


Left: Kanucha Resort lobby

Below left: View over rooftops to the Pacific

Below right: Poolside terrace

“Our guide, Ryo, then leads us on a two-and-a-half-hour paddling trip along the coast and back, stopping off at a promontory where he brews up tea and offers us snacks before we relaunch our kayaks”



view over palm trees to the nearby beach and the Pacific Ocean.

The room is huge. The twin beds look out to Oura Bay through floor-to ceiling sliding glass doors, beyond which is a secluded balcony complete with hot tub. I'm trying it out before you can say Jack Flash, soaking up the glorious vista in the late afternoon despite the heavy cloud cover.

Back in the room, there's a sofa at the foot of the beds to sit on and gaze out at the ocean, with another sofa along a side wall. The dark wood furniture includes a desk and chest of drawers, complementing the wooden floor and panelling on the wall behind the beds.

What I take to be a dressing gown on each bed turns out to be a long, stripey nightshirt. I try one on and make a very passable impression of Wee Willie Winkie!

The toilet is one of those all-singing, all-dancing ones you find in all Japanese hotels featuring an electronic pad for flushing the loo and spraying various jets of water on and up your bottom. The instructions are in Japanese, but the pictures give a graphic idea of what

each button does. There is a separate wet room with a screenless shower and a bath.

The resort has 295 rooms and a host of different types to choose from, including suites and cottages sleeping from two to 12. Some rooms have four-poster beds.

An optional Premium Service offers upgraded rooms, bathrobes, travel amenities and free use of a rental buggy to get around the resort. I decide against renting a buggy as my room is close to most facilities.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

Kanucha has plenty of dining options, with seven restaurants spread around the resort as well as a bar in the hotel.

The Kusu Kusu Japanese restaurant is set away from the main hotel building. I walk there for dinner, although others are driving their buggies or taking the shuttle to it. It is simply furnished with wooden floors and furniture and very popular.

After a 20-minute wait I am ushered to my table. I go for a starter of Mozuku seaweed with vinegar followed by Okinawan Agu pork

and noodles with a citrus ponzu sauce, washed down with a local beer – and it's delicious.

After my round of golf on the hilly course I join my hosts for lunch in the clubhouse Chinese restaurant, Ryukyu. Again the food is wonderful, as I have come to expect everywhere I go in Okinawa.

Another Japanese restaurant, Kanucha, is in the main building and has a live show kitchen. In addition, there is the Kuuwa Kuuwa BBQ Terrace restaurant, the Paradis and Open Terrace Café for casual dining and the Beachside Terrace Lanai.

SPA AND WELLNESS

The resort has extensive spa and wellness facilities, although sadly I didn't have time to use them myself. The Kanucha Pro Lab Spa is proclaimed to be Okinawa's first "inner beauty spa" and offers facial, body and head treatments.

There are also chiropractic and foot reflexology treatments available, and a sauna in a tent.

And if you still need relaxing after all →

"The room is huge. The twin beds look out to Oura Bay through floor-to ceiling sliding glass doors, beyond which is a secluded balcony complete with hot tub. I'm trying it out before you can say Jack Flash, soaking up the glorious vista in the late afternoon"



Left: Kanucha Suite
Far right top and middle: Paradis restaurant
Far right bottom: Okinawa dishes in the Kusu Kusu restaurant
Right top to bottom: Every room has sumptuous furnishings, Kanucha Junior Suite outdoor spa pool

those, you can also take part in yoga sessions held on the beach, in the rainforest-like space of its indoor pool, where you can also do yoga on stand-up paddleboards, and even air yoga, suspended from the ceiling in material slings.

ACTIVITIES

Besides the picturesque and hilly golf course that surrounds the resort, which you play in a buggy for four players and their bags, guests have many other activity options at Kanucha.

There are three pools: a beach pool, a garden pool and the indoor pool that is lit up at night. Guests using the sandy beach are permitted to swim in a specially cordoned off area.

Activities that cost extra include a water park in front of the beach, jet skiing, banana boats, snorkelling, diving, fishing, e-biking, tennis, wake boarding, parasailing, glass-bottomed boat trips, water-powered fly boards, jet packs and hoverboards. Kayaks can be rented and you can go on guided kayaking tours at dawn and through mangroves by day and at night.

For families, there is a games room and children's water park. You can also rent a karaoke room, and there are many experiences to try, such as gel candle making and being a sushi chef.

Beyond the resort, there's ziplining, pineapple picking, buggy adventure tours and trekking in Yanbaru's pristine forests. Just half an hour north of Kanucha, the rainforested Yanbaru National Park was created a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2021.

Guests should note that no tattoos are allowed in all the resort's facilities.

CONCLUSION

I have always had a yen for the sea, and Kanucha Resort fits the bill wonderfully for me with its setting on a beautiful bay in a subtropical paradise. It also sums up Okinawa's moniker as the "land of immortals", because of the longevity of its population. Time just seems to stand still.

Kanucha Resort

156-2 Abe, Nago City
Okinawa 905-2263, Japan

T: +81 570 018880

W: kanucha.jp

Right and far right:
Sauna tents
Right below: Indoor
pool



Right and far right
bottom: Kuuwa
Kuuwa BBQ Terrace
restaurant
Far right top: Dining
with a Pacific view



WYNDHAM GRAND

Quinta do Lago, Portugal

By JAMES MASON

GRAND DESIGN

With so many wonderful golf courses to choose from in the Algarve, finding the perfect accommodation in the right area is key, and when you put Grand in your name you certainly need to live up to that standard. **James Mason** finds out if the Wyndham Grand lives up to its moniker



Top: Grand entrance to the hotel
 Right: Jacuzzi and indoor pool
 Far right: The outdoor swimming pool at night



My eyes are closed as the warm bubbles from the Jacuzzi do their work. I have just had the most amazing massage and could hear myself snoring and those snores waking me while the masseuse made my back and legs sing then cry after playing golf with Ricardo Santos at Quinta du Lago's North course.

But let me take you back to my arrival. After a very quick flight to Faro from London Gatwick and just a 15-minute journey from the airport, we were disembarking our transfer and entering the lobby at the Wyndham Grand.

The reception and lobby area are all decked out with Christmas decorations which brings a big smile to my face as I love Christmas. As we had an early flight, breakfast was still being served, so while our rooms were being prepared, we headed down to the restaurant. It may be November, but the weather here is still warm, and we decided to sit outside with a wonderful view of the pool.

Caravela Restaurant offers a buffet-style breakfast, and walking round there are the standard hot foods bacon, sausage, mushrooms, eggs in

whatever style you wanted and then lots of fruit, pastries, breads, cheeses and cold meats. After several trips, my breakfast feast was finished off with of course a coffee latte and pasteis de nata – custard tarts – which turned out to be the theme for every breakfast during my stay!

Rooms

Heading to the room I had Charmaine's final words in the back of my mind of 'don't forget the pillow dive!' I am shown into the room by one of the concierge staff and have to say I was taken aback. A large dining table – with more pasteis de nata waiting for me - with room enough for eight, a well-equipped kitchen and a lounge with a large TV and floor to ceiling glass doors take me out on to my own private patio.

There are two bedrooms: one with twin beds and one with a queen-size bed. Once the concierge leaves, I head to the queen-size bed and take the nosedive into fresh cotton pillows and a nice firm bed. There's a little corridor that leads to the large bathroom that has floor to ceiling wardrobes on the right and a bench and luggage rack on the left. →

Facilities

You have access to all of Quinta do Lago's facilities which include the high-performance sports hub, The Campus – offering, cycling, football, padel and swimming. There is also the Hakuna Matata club for children between the ages four and 12 and Quinta do Lago's two world-class South and North golf courses. The gym has some wonderful views out to the gardens, and you have a choice of cardio equipment and free weights.

Restaurant

It is our last night and after my massage and chill out by the pool, with trips to the sauna and steam rooms and that wonderful Jacuzzi, we are having some pre-drinks in the Grand bar and lounge, and I am looking forward to eating once again at the XXL by Olivier. Now Olivier is none other than renowned chef Olivier da Costa and last night we enjoyed one of his signature dishes, the Monkfish Picanha, which was amazing and tonight we are enjoying the Entrecôte with Chimichurri sauce with French fries. Both meals are accompanied by some wonderful local wines.

Conclusion

The food is amazing, especially the evening meals at XXL by Olivier. The Wyndham Grand has a perfect setting, the rooms are well appointed giving you lots of options whether you are a single, couple, family or group. Even better news is that you can actually buy these rooms and then rent them out through the hotel, which undertakes all the hard work and organisation for you. That way you can guarantee the dates you want and earn an income when you are not there, especially if you are like me and hate the UK winter months.

Whether you are a golfer or non-golfer, group or solo traveller, the Wyndham Grand is the perfect base to explore or play golf in this part of the Algarve.

Wyndham Grand

Quinta do Lago
Portugal

T: +351 289 000 300

W: wyndhamhotels.com



Top to bottom::
Various views of the
hotel rooms, facilities
and restaurant



Left: Sunset over the 13th green
Below left: Aerial view of the 6th hole
Below: Dusk over the par 3, 17th green

QUINTA DO LOGO, NORTH COURSE

I am standing on the 1st tee of Quinta do Lago's North course and watching European Tour winner Ricardo Santo smash his drive over the trees on the left-hand side of this dogleg left 374-yard hole. I don't hit a bad drive and have left myself a nice wedge in, but Ricardo is some 50 yards past me!

Ricardo's birdie putt does a full 180° and we both walk off with par. The first things I am noticing is the pace of the greens are not as fast as they look and the many subtle contours and complexes that have been designed into the green and the manicuring of the fairways/bunkers etc. The course is in amazing condition.

The first of the par 3s arrives at the 2nd and from the black tees, the water on the right comes more into to play and at 214

yards and with the wind against us today it takes a solid strike with my hybrid, while Ricardo is pulling a medium iron!

It seems the opening hole was to lull you into a false sense of security. After the tough par 3, it is now the first of the par 5s on the front nine and standing on the tee looking down the fairway and seeing how it gradually rises I know this is going to play all of its 572 yards. I am on the green in three and make my birdie putt, but taking in all the slopes on this green this and the amount of movement and different areas they have designed for various pin placements, par here is a good score especially when the pin is on the back portion of the green.

As we make our way round, the standard of the redesign by Beau Welling and former European Ryder →





The 12th really does start a run of wonderfully designed golf holes. The 13th is a straight hole but the way it funnels through the pines embracing the rolling topography of the fairway making its way down the hill will, I know, leave a lasting memory



Cup captain Paul McGinley which was undertaken in 2009 at a cost of €9 million is really starting to shine. The second par 3 on the back nine is a gem, played from an elevated tee, with a green that slopes back to front and lies across you.

Unusually for modern golf courses the 9th hole doesn't bring you back to the clubhouse, so it's straight into the back nine. The 12th brings up the course's signature hole. The 407-yard par 4 has water on the left and trees and a bunker on the right. The landing area is larger than it actually looks but depending on pin position you will no doubt be playing over that water as it protects the green. And if you are not the longest of hitters you will still have to play over that water

to the bailout out area on the right!

The 12th really does start a run of wonderfully designed golf holes. The 13th is a straight hole but the way it funnels through the pines embracing the rolling topography of the fairway making its way down the hill will, I know, leave a lasting memory. Both par 3s at the 14th and 16th are played from elevated tees. There's raised greens at the 15th and 17th. The 487-yard, par 5, dogleg right 18th plays to a green that sits below you in a little amphitheatre and is a fitting finale to a wonderfully designed golf course that offers both the casual golfer and the more experienced low handicapped golfers a great test of golf, in a beautiful setting,

Above: Signature hole at the dogleg left 12th
 Top right: Raised green at the 15th
 Bottom right: The amphitheatre at the 18th green



ENQUIRES@DIGITALMAGAZINEDESIGN.COM
 DIGITALMAGAZINEDESIGN.COM
 +44 (0)7860 724 897



AT YOUR DIGITAL SERVICE

Digital Magazine,
 Web Banners or
 Promotional Material

Template or
 Custom Design

eBook,
 Interactive PDF,
 Flash, JPG, TIFF,
 PNG, PSD

Documents from
 8 – 100+ pages