

MAURITIUS

Sunny days, white sandy beaches, wonderful hotels and stunning golf courses

ECUADOR

Mother nature at its glorious best

SRI LANKA

The colours and history of this beautiful island

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PLANET GOLF

REVIEW

ISSUE 12

VIEW.COM

EQUIPMENT & APPAREL REVIEWS

Callaway, Mizuno and Oscar Jacobson,

THE MASTERS

Review & Betting Guide

WELCOME

As clouds part and the sun starts to peek through offering us longer warmer days, our thoughts start to turn to holidays/vacations, weekends away, evening golf and of course the first major championship of the year. The Masters always feels like the start of the golf season and as always, we have our world-renowned review and betting guide that ranks on the first page of a google search.

For those of you thumbing your way through holiday brochures and holiday websites, we bring you Jane's wonderful journey through Ecuador and the beauty of the Galapagos Islands. Peter brings to life the colours and vibrancy of Sri Lanka through his camera lens and I visit the stunning island of Mauritius with Charmaine to bring you reviews of stunning golf courses and hotels you won't want to leave.

MEET THE TEAM

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For those of you who enjoy the relaxation of a spa holiday/vacation or weekend getaway we have reviews from Murcia and Mallorca, Spain and Tuscany, Italy. There is nothing better than sitting by a pool or in a clubhouse after a round of golf enjoying a refreshing tipple, with that in mind Vincent brings you the history of gin, a great read to add to your slice and ice!

All this is topped off with reviews of the latest equipment and apparel releases from Mizuno, Callaway and Oscar Jacobson. So, sit back with your G&T while we whisk you around the world and give you an insight into your next must visit destination.

VIEW.COM

EDITORIAL

REVIEW





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STENZEN

REVIEW





PLACE YOUR BETS

As the TV cameras beam images of the emerald fairways from Augusta, Georgia into our homes announcing the first major championship of the year, we bring you our renowned betting guide to help you pick this year's winner

Only time will tell if the Players Championship has slightly stolen Augusta National's claim to herald in the start of the new golfing season, but there is no doubting the buzz around the seasons first major championship. This year looks like it could be a fine vintage for The Masters with all the world's top players coming into form at just the right time and it looks like the action on the course could outshine the emerald fairways, purple azaleas and the many other vibrant flowers that bloom this time of year at the former plant nursery.

Dr Alister MacKenzie's golf course has not only stood the test of time and coped with the

RORY MCILROY

7|1



Cem0030

RICKIE FOWLER

20|1



Franck Biton

PAUL CASEY

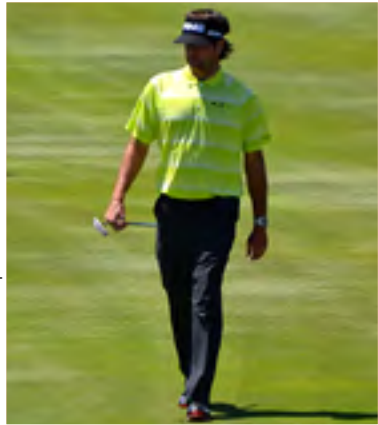
28|1



Volvo China Open/DENKERO.COM

BUBBA WATSON

35|1



Bröder Media Group

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN

40|1



PGA of Australia

BRANDT SNEDEKER

100|1



PGA of Australia

advancements in equipment and ball technology, but it's still the benchmark by which all inland golf courses are judged. Amen corner will no doubt play a major role in producing this year's champion, but one thing is for sure whoever dons the green jacket come Sunday will be a worthy champion.

MY PICKS TO WIN

I have been reluctant to tip **Rory McIlroy – 7/1 – with Ladbrokes** – at The Masters after his disastrous final round back in 2011, not because of his ability but I just feel that mental scarring will take a lot to heal. If Rory goes into the final round in the lead, I am not sure he will win, but if he is in the group just behind chasing – which I think he will be – then in his current form I feel that is his best chance of him donning the green jacket come Sunday.

It seems **Rickie Fowler 20/1 – with William Hill** – is getting closer to winning at Augusta with a runner-up finish here last year which was his second Top 5 finish – he also has two other Top 15s. Rickie has a win, a runner-up and two other Top 5 finishes so far on the PGA Tours wraparound season and will be in confident mood coming into this week.

Right: Augusta's famous par 3, 16th hole, where Tiger Woods hold that magnificent chip shot

I feel it could be time for **Paul Casey 28/1 – with Ladbrokes** – to win his first major championship and he has the perfect golf game for Augusta National. In the past Paul's temperament has got the better of him when he had a bad break, but he has certainly matured over the last couple of years. With a win and a runner-up already this year and being able to hold on to a final round lead winning for back-to-back wins at the Valspar Championship a couple of weeks ago, shows he is ready.

MY EACH-WAY TIPS

I have been thinking about tipping **Louis Oosthuizen 40/1 – SportingBet** – for this year's Masters since January and was slightly disappointed that he played so well at the Valspar to take the runner-up spot, not that it didn't confirm my feelings but because I knew his odds would be cut – which they were. I tipped Louis the year he came runner-up to Bubba at 66/1 and I have always felt there is a green jacket waiting for him.

With two green jackets sitting in his locker, the Augusta National layout is just made for **Bubba Watson 35/1 – with UniBet** – and the way he shapes the ball, put a hot putter in his hand and

there are not too many players who could beat him round this course. Bubba has had a couple of Top 5s this year and played some steady golf, but he is a different player once he drives down Magnolia Lane.

MY OUTSIDE TIP

I think missing out on playing in The Masters last year may just be the spur **Brandt Snedeker 100/1 – with William Hill** – needs to make sure he is challenging this year. Brandt has a decent record here with four Top 15 finishes which include a third-place finish and with a runner-up and Top 5 at The Players already this season he should be in confident mood.

LONGER ODDS

Try **Charl Schwartzel 150/1 – with William Hill**

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.

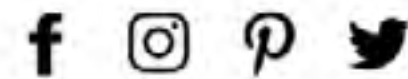
As always good luck and have fun!



LATEST FIRST ROUND BETTING ODDS FOR THE MASTERS FROM LADBROKES

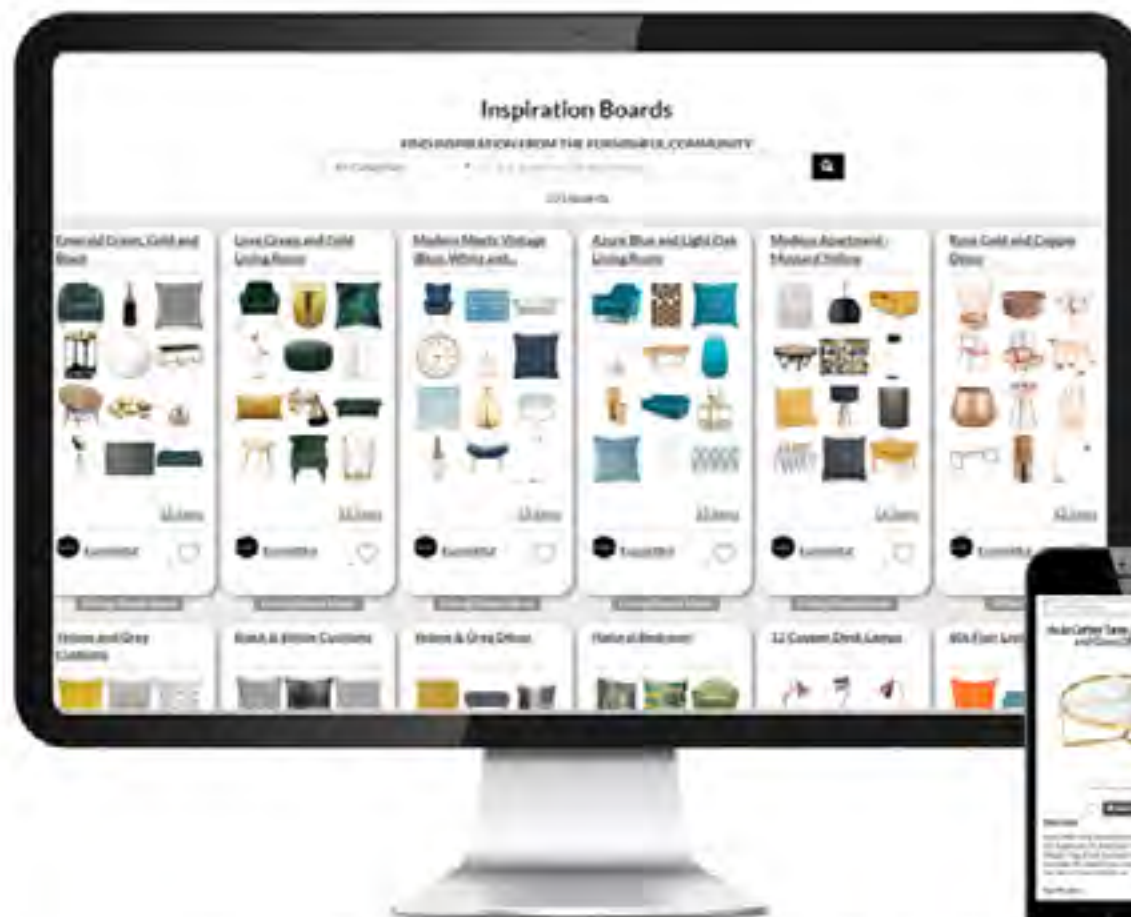
Rory McIlroy 7/1
Dustin Johnson 10/1
Justin Rose 14/1
Tiger Woods 14/1
Jon Rahm 16/1
Justin Thomas 16/1
Brooks Koepka 20/1
Francesco Molinari 20/1
Jordan Spieth 20/1
Rickie Fowler 20/1
Bryson Dechambeau 25/1
Jason Day 25/1
Paul Casey 25/1
Tommy Fleetwood 25/1
Bubba Watson 33/1
Hideki Matsuyama 33/1
Adam Scott 40/1
Louis Oosthuizen 40/1
Patrick Reed 40/1
Phil Mickelson 40/1
Sergio Garcia 40/1
Tony Finau 40/1
Xander Schauffele 40/1
Henrik Stenson 50/1
Marc Leishman 50/1
Matt Kuchar 50/1
Kevin Kisner 66/1
Patrick Cantlay 66/1
Cameron Smith 80/1
Gary Woodland 80/1
Ian Poulter 80/1
Webb Simpson 80/1
Alexander Noren 100/1
Billy Horschel 100/1
Branden Grace 100/1
Brandt Snedeker 100/1
Hao-Tong Li 100/1
Matt Wallace 100/1
Matthew Fitzpatrick 100/1
Rafael Cabrera-Bello 100/1
Tyrrell Hatton 100/1
Charl Schwartzel 125/1
Charles Howell III 125/1
Charley Hoffman 125/1
Eddie Pepperell 125/1
JB Holmes 125/1
Keegan Bradley 125/1
Shane Lowry 125/1

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IMPRESSIONS FROM SRI LANKA



Left: Bath time at the Pinnawela elephant orphanage
Below: Panning for precious stones at a gem mine
Right: Fire eater in Kandy



Left: Hot stuff - fire walking in the rain in Kandy
Right: Crashing waves at the mouth of the Walawe River, near Ambalantota



Left: Fishing boats on the beach near Hikkaduwa

Right: Refreshing
drink on a Walawe
River bird-watching
boat trip
Far Right: Tuk-tuks
are a popular way
to get about



Right: Traditional
stilt fishermen off
Weligama
Below: Tea-picking
on a plantation
in Sri Lanka's hill
country



Above: Peacock
in Uduwalalawe
National Park
Right: Red letter day -
a Sri Lanka post box



See more of Peter
Ellegards work on
instagram
[@peterellegard](#) or
[peterellegard.co.uk](#)



Above: A venerable Austin A40
Right: Outrigger fishing boats near Galle



Soul Searching

Jane Finn finds Ecuador is more than a destination, but a calling of the heart and soul



The allure of Ecuador is undeniable - four continents in one; all within easy reach of the average tourist or the intrepid traveler. There are coastal towns, pristine beaches, and of course, the Galápagos; world heritage designated UNESCO cities like Quito and Cuenca, teeming with life and brimming with possibilities. For those of you that prefer cooler climes you can head to the highlands and the mountain cloud forests, and if you have a truly adventurous soul, the Amazon awaits.

Ecuador, for the most part is largely undiscovered. Traveling within the country by air or bus is easy, affordable and surprisingly efficient. Ecuadorians are hospitable, proud of their heritage and traditions. Respect for people and the environment is the cornerstone of

Ecuadorian tourism.

Life here centres around family. It's a heart-based culture – simple and uncomplicated. Nowhere will you encounter long queues or hordes of tourists. Perhaps that's the reason why you won't find the most idyllic spots listed in the guidebooks. It's only through conversations with the locals or fellow travelers that the best kept secrets are revealed. Here are just a few highlights of our incredible journey.

BIENVENIDO!

From the moment we touched down in Guayaquil we knew Ecuador was perfect for our first foray into South America. How could you not be entranced by a Customs Officer who only wanted to know your profession and how long you were

staying before launching into how happy he was to welcome us as we made our way to his country's national treasure?

MAGIC, MYSTERY AND MEMORIES

The hour and a half flight from Guayaquil to the Galápagos transported us to a place unlike any we've ever visited, and it exceeded our expectations in every way. We opted for a land-based excursion versus a cruise, and I am glad we did, otherwise we never would have experienced the passion and resourcefulness of the people who call these islands home.

From our two-bedroom balcony at the quaint Hotel Baltra, we would see the town of Puerto Ayora wake up or wind down. Centrally located



“The hour and a half flight from Guayaquil to the Galápagos transported us to a place unlike any we’ve ever visited, and it exceeded our expectations in every way.”

we could walk to Tortuga Bay – the most beautiful beach in South America or the docks where sea lions curled up on the park benches and fearlessly closed their eyes to sleep, knowing they had nothing to fear from the humans waiting to board their vessels.

We visited North Seymour and were greeted by a sea lion and her day-old pup, hiked the island and spent hours watching the intricate frigates’ mating ritual. We snorkeled at Bacchus Beach and swam with a sea lion before heading to a lagoon and rendezvousing with some flamingos.

Our National Parks guide Daniela Inglesia also took us to the twin craters, the Los Grietas swimming hole and kayaking off German Beach. We crawled through lava tunnels, walked among giant tortoises roaming freely in the highlands and came face to face with marine iguanas and dragon-like lizards that harkened back to prehistoric times. As exciting as these were, our favourite island was Isla Bartolome.

We set sail at dawn with Captain Christian of the Sea Finch on a picture-perfect day. There was not a cloud in the sky. A frigate bird trailed lazily behind the boat and sea turtles bobbed on the turquoise seas. As we approached the island, we were surrounded by a pod of fifty or more dolphins and greeted by a colony of Ecuadorian penguins. The climb to the top of the volcanic cone is 300 stairs straight-up, 600 if you're short like me, but the views are worth it! When we →

Top: A flamingo searching for food.
Left: From the top of the volcanic cone on Isla Bartolome, on a clear day you can see over 50 kms. in every direction.



Left: Locals and visitors gather after dusk at the Kiosks of Renton in Puerto Ayora for lively conversation and reasonably priced food. Below: A giant sea turtle goes for a swim

reached the Pinnacle, we could see the untouched golden beaches far below, the protected breeding grounds of the sea turtles and more than fifty kilometers in every direction. A truly awe-inspiring day.

In Puerto Ayora, we ate at Lo & Lo and the communal tables at the Kiosks of Renton where local fare was served with a flourish by a variety of vendors and a delicious ‘tipico’ meal with an ice-cold beer set you back \$6 USD. Not only was the food good, inexpensive and satisfying, it was the ideal place to strike up a conversation and trade stories with folks who lived in the area and those who had travelled thousands of miles.

As delightful as these evenings were, if you want to delve deep into the local culture and cuisine, Cristina Hassi’s Foodie Tour is a must. It’s the only way to get behind the scenes and gain a real appreciation for the effort and dedication it takes to serve exquisite gourmet dishes in a sustainable and environmentally

friendly way. Galápagos Foodie is a group of professionals that support ecotourism: restaurant owners, chefs, waiters, and hosts who guarantee that you’ll have a night to remember.

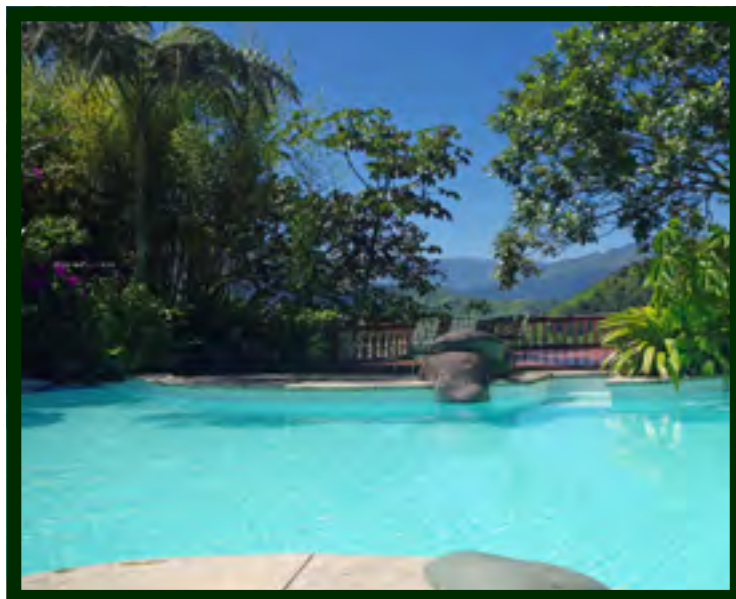
In the course of the evening, we visited five restaurants where we were served their specialty dishes accompanied by Ecuadorian wines, craft beer, or locally grown and roasted coffee, and of course, chocolate. Our evening started out at La Garrapata, the first restaurant in Puerto Ayora whose humble beginning was a café where friends of the owner, Susana Schiess could gather that blossomed into a five-star venue. Chef Andres Panezo welcomed us into his kitchen where he prepared an amazing dish of local seafood in a white wine sauce accompanied by Hierba Luisa, a most refreshing house drink. From there we wandered to Il Giardino, a house that has been transformed into a beautiful outdoor restaurant. Here we sampled tuna tartar that melted in your mouth along with crisp, fried

green plantain. Nothing was rushed. We had time to not only chat with the chefs or owners, but also engage all our senses. Our gastronomic extravaganza concluded around the pool at the Silberstein Hotel where we nibbled on delectable crepes from Aqua while sipping a lovely champagne that was as bubbly and effervescent as our hostess.

Cristina is an anthropologist, a naturalist, an entrepreneur and a visionary. She wrote a thesis about the Cultural Adaptation in the Galápagos and was part of a group of dedicated citizens that promoted “no plastic on the table” so “we can become part of the change, before it’s too late.’ Today, you will not find a single plastic straw or bottle in any restaurant or home in the islands. Christina has taken her ideas to the mainland and now also organizes walking food tours in the Guapulo neighbourhood of Quito. For a night you’ll never forget, we highly recommend her tours. →

“When we reached the Pinnacle, we could see the untouched golden beaches far below, the protected breeding grounds of the sea turtles and more than fifty kilometers in every direction. A truly awe-inspiring day.”





HOW GREEN IS MY VALLEY

More than a few logistics were required to traverse the country from the Galápagos to the rainforests of the Andes. There are no big cities here, just a cluster of small villages, most with their own primary school, medical clinic, a few small tiendas, sometimes an internet café but always a volleyball court where folks gather in the evenings to cheer on their beloved players and spend time with family and friends.

Fortunately, we discovered the Hacienda Primavera, nestled on a hundred hectares high in the El Choco Cloud Forest. Owned by the Escobar family for more than ninety years, in 2000 Senor Pepe opened its doors to guests who want to experience life through a different lens.

Once I stepped out on our balcony at dawn, I realize why we were drawn to this remote

Right: Giant tortoises roam freely in the Highlands of Santa Cruz.

Left: Pool at the Hacienda Primavera, fed by the mountain stream. Cool but oh so refreshing!



“As the sun peeked over the ridge, the stillness of the morning was broken only by the trill of birds and the rushing waters of the Rio Gul far below,”

Left: A day old pup rests safe and secure beside her mother on the lava rock beach on North Seymour Island, Galapagos.

location, three and a half hours from Quito, and about an hour from the Columbian border. What kept running through my mind was silence is not golden but green here in the mountains. As the sun peeked over the ridge, the stillness of the morning was broken only by the trill of birds and the rushing waters of the Rio Blanco far below, and I knew we had found another piece of paradise.

Slowly our home away from home away stirred to life. Emanating from the kitchen were the sounds of breakfast being prepared by Pati and the scent of bacon frying in the pan. As we savoured a sip of coffee made from beans grown on the grounds, we pondered what to do today - sit back and relax by the pool, hike to a waterfall, scale the hills for incredible views of the valley and the small town far below or saddle up and explore on horseback? Other options included a trip to an orchid farm and the Otavalo craft and farmer's market, the largest in Ecuador or Class III or IV whitewater rafting on the Rio Gualchan or Rio Mira

During the next five days with our guide and new friend Alex Valencia Revelo, we did it all. Like not so nimble goats, we made our way to where the coffee plants grow in the shade of →

banana and guava trees and ate tangerines straight from the tree; nothing like the pale imitations we’ve come to accept back home. We rode into the hills and stood under teeming waterfalls that washed all our troubles away. Very quickly we learned the difference between a blue tanager and a blue-gray tanager, how to spot a green toucanette camouflaged by the broad leaves of a guava tree, spotted the elusive cassail, and with every passing day, our Spanish improved.

On this leg of our trip, we gained a better understanding of what the realities of life are like for a large segment of the Ecuadorian population, the farmers who toil day in and day out to supply the country with a cornucopia of fruits, meats and vegetables while maintaining the delicate

balance between man and nature.

LIVING THE DREAM

Our journey would not have been complete without a few days exploring Quito, the world’s first designated UNESCO World Heritage site. Located 2850 meters/9348 feet above sea level, the city is situated on the equatorial bulge. Mount Chimborazo peak is the furthest distance from the earth’s core and the closest point on the earth to the sun, truly a sight to behold.

Quito sits very close to the “Middle of the World”. Twenty miles outside of Quito on the way to the airport, you will find Ciudad Mitad del Mundo that vies with the Museo Intinan as the centre of the earth. You can visit ‘both

equators’ or do as we have and travel beyond the tourist attractions to Hacienda Verde. Here all alone on a plateau, beside a rustic marker, we put one foot in the Southern Hemisphere and gazed at the cliffs that fell away behind us while planting our other foot in the Northern Hemisphere. Without a doubt, our hearts told us that we were straddling that magical and mystical line, far from the madding crowds.

At that moment I thought, there is no place I would rather be than here, I feel Ecuador is a calling more than a destination to visit and when the days grow dark and dreary, I close my eyes and I’m back on that ridge, surrounded by mountain peaks, my heart open to possibilities, and I know we will soon return to Ecuador.

“At that moment I thought, there is no place I would rather be than here, I feel Ecuador is a calling more than a destination to visit and when the days grow dark and dreary, I close my eyes and I’m back on that ridge”

Right: Hacienda Verde at the ‘Middle of the World’ where the Guayllabamba River Canyon connects two biodiversity hot spots: Tumbez Chocó Magdalena and Tropical Andes.



JOURNEY PLANNER

GETTING THERE:

Avianca Airlines to Ecuador

W: avianca.com

Within Ecuador **TAME Airlines**

W: tame.com.ec

WHERE TO STAY

Hostal Baltra (Galápagos Apt & Suites)

W: baltraapartandsuitescondohotel.com-galapagos.com

T: +11 593 5 252 7051

Many hotels, inns and B&Bs are owner operated, as are the tour boats. We highly recommend contacting Galápagos Alternatives to simplify your planning. Their team will work with you to build a fully-customized itinerary including accommodation, transportation & tours.

W: galapagosalternative.com

T: +11 593 99 465 5018

Hotel Silberstein

W: <http://www.hotelsilberstein.com>

T: +11 593 2 292 1739

Hacienda Primavera Wilderness Ecolodge

W: haciendaprimavera.com

T: +11 593 99 370 8571

WHAT TO DO:

Galápagos Foodie Tour

Facebook: **W:** facebook.com/galapagosfoodie

E: cristinahassi@gmail.com

T: +11 593 98 133 7239

Hacienda Verde at Zero Latitude

W: zerolatitude tours.com

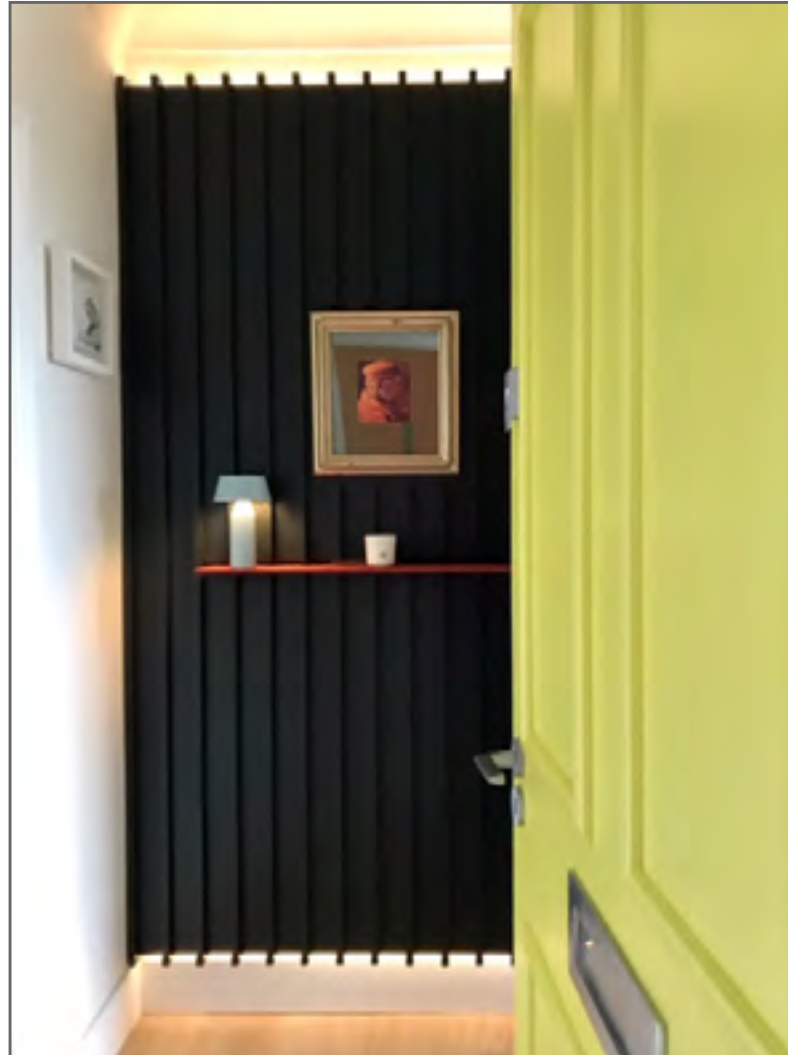
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WHERE TO EAT:

Il Giardino

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Gin & Juice

Back in Vogue around the world **Vincent Kok** traces the origins of this thirst quenching popular tippie



Sitting at the bar after just competing in the first round of the Mallorca Media Cup, I have just ordered my post game drink of Gin & Tonic, apart from the pleasure I get from the combined combination of flavours I also find it extremely refreshing, but what I am noticing is how many of my fellow competitors have ordered the same drink instead of the usual, shandy, beer, wine or

even orange juice and lemonade.

Since 2009 the sales of gin in the UK – there are many competitors from England and Ireland competing here this week – have tripled but it was the first time I noticed the immense popularity of the drink in the clubhouse after a round of golf. Having said that, its popularity should not come as a surprise there are few drinks



“There was a lot of trade between the Dutch Republic and England, British sailors and traders discovered the drink and loved it so much they exported it back to England.”

that are more refreshing after a round than a good Gin & Tonic. What should come as a surprise is that it has taken so long for this thirst quencher to become so popular again. During the course of history, the popularity of gin seems to go up and down like a Dow Jones index and we seem to be hitting one of those highs again.

The history of gin dates back to 13th century Belgium. Here they produced a drink called genever, this is derived from the French word for juniper, genévrier, the main ingredient for gin. During the Dutch Golden age a lot of Belgian scientists and writers moved to the Dutch Republic and brought Genever with them. Genever production in the Dutch Republic skyrocketed and Schiedam, my hometown near Rotterdam, became the genever capital of the world.

Because of the booming economy during the Golden Age, there was a lot of trade between the Dutch Republic and England, British sailors and traders discovered the drink and loved it so much they exported it back to England. The drink became very popular in the UK, maybe a little too popular, there was so much genever being imported that William of Orange, king of England at that time, introduced a huge import tax which made genever too expensive. As a result, the British started to produce their own genever. Because the British didn't know how the distilling techniques of the Dutch and how

MY TOP 10 GINS

1. Bareksten

The best gin that I have tried is Bareksten. This Norwegian gin has a full earthy flavor with hints of berries. The distiller uses a lot of botanicals which makes this a full-bodied gin. The unique flavour almost makes it feel like a liqueur and great to drink without tonic. The 46% alcohol also makes it great to mix with a neutral flavoured tonic

W: barekstenspirits.com

E: post@osscraft.no

2. Meyers M1

Meyers is a Belgian distiller founded in 2014. They produce a range of unique gins one of which is made with asparagus. The best one however is the M1 which is made with a little grape shaped fruit called kiwiberry. The berry tastes like kiwi and is native to Korea, Japan and parts of China, but was cultivated in Belgium 10 years ago. M1 is a sweet and smooth gin that has a nice aftertaste and is great to drink straight or with a neutral tonic.

W: meyersgin.be

E: info@spiritsbydesign.com

3. Ableforth Bathtub Gin

Bathtub gins are produced not by distillation but by infusing flavours into the alcohol. Because of the infusion this gin is heavy on the juniper which is mixed nicely with cinnamon and cardamom. Unlike other gins, Ableforth's Bathtub Gin has a light golden colour. This colour combined with the smoothness of the drink makes it a great sipper rather than a mixer.

W: ableforth.com/bathtub-gin

E: hi@ableforth.com

4. Moonshot

Have you ever tried a gin made with botanicals that have been to space? This is your chance. That Boutique-Y Gin Company sent Jupiter, eh, juniper berries, coriander, lemon peel and much more to an altitude of around 14 miles and used them to create this gin. To make this gin even cooler, they have used moon rock from a meteorite. What the influence of this process is on the taste? I don't know but this gin is cool and delicious.

W: thatboutiqueygincompany.com

E: hi@thatboutiqueygincompany.com

5. G-Vine

G-Vine is one of the most unique gins that I tried. Due to the low amounts of juniper it doesn't smell like a gin but when tasting, the slight hints of juniper are present. G-Vine has a sweet taste of grapes, apple and flowers with notes of ginger and it goes particularly well in a Gin and Tonic with grape or apple.

W: g-vine.com

T: +33 5 45 35 32 00



“The so-called Vodka Revolution was started with a brilliant piece of movie marketing. Sparked by the famous James Bond quote: ‘Shaken, not stirred’”

they produced their genever they made a product that contained more juniper berries and as a result the birth of gin began.

The new drink became immensely popular and over the course of the next 60 years, alcoholism and alcohol related problems in England grew, so to stop these problems the British government installed the Gin Act of 1751, raising taxes and making licenses harder to come by. The measures had the desired effects and gin became more expensive and less popular.

80 years later, the stills used for distilling the gin were modified and improved, which made gin easier and cheaper to produce, the popularity of gin started rise again. Additionally, the British Navy, who traveled to malaria infested countries brought along quinine which helped prevent the disease. Quinine tastes awful, so to help the Navy, Schweppes produced an Indian Tonic

Water with quinine. Onboard the ships, this tonic water was combined with Gin, to create the now world-famous drink. These two events made sure gin remained the most popular distilled drink until the 1960’s, when its popularity was challenged by vodka.

The so-called Vodka Revolution was started with a brilliant piece of movie marketing. Sparked by the famous James Bond quote: ‘Shaken, not stirred,’ in reference to the vodka martini in Dr. No. Gin again saw a decline and experienced a slump. Luckily for us a new millennium has seen the steady rise in the popularity of Gin which has yet again become one of the most popular drinks in the world and has led to the opening of many distilleries worldwide. The variety of gins has never been so expansive so to help you choose the best gins from around Europe, here are my Top Ten.

MY TOP 10 GINS

6. V2C

V2C is a London style dry gin produced in Amsterdam. It has a lot of cardamom flavour and is great in the mix with a slice of ginger or a flavoured tonic. The gin is produced by four friends who started out distilling as a hobby but are now considered some of the best distillers in the world.

W: v2cgin.com

E: info@v2cgin.com

7. Sylvius

Sylvius is produced in my hometown of Schiedam and is named after Franciscus Sylvius, a Dutch scientist. He was specialised in medicinal drinks and it is said he was one of the first people in the world to make genever. This gin is a little spicy which makes it great to mix with a neutral tonic

W: sylviusgin.com

T: +3110 246 06 96

8. Tanqueray No. 10

This award-winning gin is somewhat of a golden standard for gins and is one of the gins that influenced the gin explosion around 2009. This gin is very citrusy with lots of grapefruit and is perfect in a Gin and Tonic or gin-based cocktail

W: tanqueray.com

9. Monkey 47

Monkey 47 gets its name from the 47 botanicals used in this gin, as well as the high 47% alcohol. The taste is somewhat like Bareksten but just a little milder and with more notes of citrus. This gin is perfect with a flavoured tonic.

W: monkey47.com

T: +49 (0) 7455 94 68 70

E: info@monkey47.com

10. Beefeater 24

The Beefeater 24 is a unique addition to the range of famous Beefeater gins. The 24 was made using tea which makes it a complex but also very enjoyable drink. It is great in a gin cocktail or with a neutral tonic.

W: beefeatergin.com

T: +44 20 7587 0034

GOLFERS PARADISE

White sandy beaches, clear blue ocean, cloudless skies and emerald green fairways, James Mason finds pinching himself didn't wake him up from this dream golf destination



TAMARINA GOLF CLUB

A swift 20 minute drive from Sugar Beach Resort and a 30 minute warm up on the very good practice facilities sees me standing on the first tee looking down the fairway, I have pushed my tee shot right but lucky for me the fairway is very generous and to my surprise I find myself with a perfect lie and line into the green and two putts sees me making par on the opening hole.

The first impressions are that the course is presented well but I love the way the ball sits on the fairway grass, it's hard to describe but it's quite bouncy and the ball just sits up perfectly like it's begging to be hit.

As we reach the second tee the sky is dominated by what I can only describe as sugar loaf shaped mountains similar to what you see in Brazil, this one is called Mt Rempart. All the fairways have a marker post to aim at and I find myself thinking all courses should have these in the middle of the fairways, they make great targets to aim at.

The first par 5 arrives at the 3rd hole and there are two posts to aim at here, one for your drive and the other for your second shot, which you need to thread through bunkers on both sides of the fairway.

The 5th is a wonderfully designed hole with a risk and reward option. You play over the river to a fairway that then splits, if you fancy

Right: Looking down on the 4th fairway.

Below Left: Aerial view of the water on the 8th hole.

Below Right: Scenic backdrop at the 1st green.



I LOVE THE WAY THE BALL SITS ON THE FAIRWAY GRASS, IT'S HARD TO DESCRIBE BUT IT'S QUITE BOUNCY AND THE BALL JUST SITS UP PERFECTLY LIKE ITS BEGGING TO BE HIT.



going for the green in two aim for the top tier, if you want to take your chance with a chip and putt birdie then take the lower fairway.

The first of the four par 3s comes at the 6th and is played over a small valley with shrubs and plants to an elevated tee, but it's the 13th that will take all the accolades. Played from an elevated tee with the Riviere Rampart running to the left hand side of the green – a big hook could well see your ball taking a dip – with bunkers left and back it's a photographer's dream and one that you will want to pose for photos, so make sure you take your smartphone to the tee with you.

The 18th is a perfect finishing hole played →



Left: Aerial views of the 4th and 7th holes. Below top: Looking down on the 7th green. Bottom: Relaxing in the clubhouse by the 18th hole.

ON REACHING THE GREEN AT THE SECOND I LOOK TO THE RIGHT AND GET MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE OCEAN AND THOSE PURE WHITE SANDY SHORES.



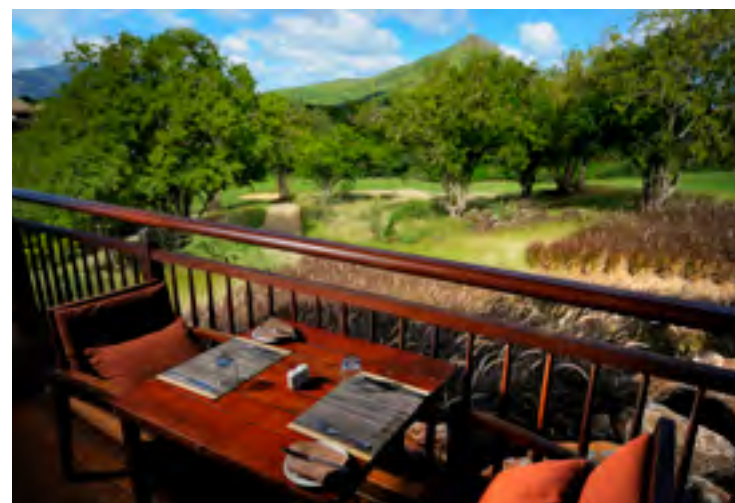
from an elevated tee and if you want the risk and reward option aim at the right-hand bunkers, you will gain a few extra yards from the hill. The green sits below the decking of the clubhouse with the Riviere Rempart behind the green so don't go long.

Sitting in the bar looking back down on the green, I have to say it's been a wonderful day of golf. The course was in perfect condition and makes the most of its setting and offers some stunning views. Tamarina is a good test of golf, with generous fairways, the rough isn't punishing and throw in some wonderful vistas and it all makes this a perfect course for holiday makers and dedicated golfers alike who want to have a bit of fun and enjoy this great game of ours.

ILE AUX CERFS GOLF CLUB

To say I am excited would be an understatement; I have been looking forward to playing this course for many years having read about it so many times in the Golf Monthly travel supplement.

The boat journey takes about 5-10 minutes and as we pull up alongside the jetty the guys are waiting to shuttle me and my clubs up to the clubhouse. A quick check-in sees me on the range warming up, the little pyramid of balls and the well-appointed practice range only elevates my already high expectations. →



A quick chat with the starter and I am ready to smash my drive down the first fairway over the water to a raised fairway, a good drive and you will catch the hill to leave yourself a little wedge into a raised green with bunkers right and left to catch any wayward approach shots.

It's the perfect start, the greens are in wonderful condition and the manicuring couldn't be any better. On reaching the green at the second I look to the right and get my first glimpse of the ocean and those pure white sandy shores.

The third brings up the first of the par 3s and it's a beautifully designed hole played over water and a waste bunker, with water also protecting the green on the right.

My expectations are surpassed and I can't hide my smile as it's one beautifully manicured hole after another, with glimpses of the vibrant azure ocean just teasing the senses. The second of the par 3s on the front nine comes at the 8th hole played to another raised green and anything long will see you in vegetation anything short, right or left will see the ball run away down the slope into collection areas, hitting the green is paramount and I have managed to leave myself a birdie putt that I duly miss.

A strong risk and reward hole brings the front nine to a close, a good driver will give you the chance to take on the water and go for the green in two, the closer to the water on the right you are from the tee will leave you a shorter distance to carry for your second shot, so you could have as little as a wedge – for the longer hitters – to set up an eagle chance.

Like the front nine its another beautiful →



Above: Birdseye view of Ile Aux Cerf
Far Left: Aerial views of the 12th and 14th holes.
Left: View from the 11th green

little starting hole to get the back nine underway, but it's the 11th hole that teases you of what is about to come when you reach your drive, as I can see the ocean which runs down the left hand side of the hole just the over side of the trees and on reaching the raised green the trees disappear and just leave some stunning views that make your heart leap, you will certainly be taking some selfies and group photos on this green, it really is wonderful.

The 12th is a dogleg left and the ocean comes into view again as I play my approach shot to the green with the waves crashing on the beach just behind the green, it really is an idyllic setting.

The course comes to a close with a choice, once you reach your tee shot on the 18th you can choose to play to the old or new greens, one sitting like an infinity green with one of the rivers that runs into the sea as its backdrop or the other that sits just below the clubhouse, I take the third option and play a ball to each, well I am in paradise after all.

THE TEE SHOT ON THE 5TH IS JUST AS INSPIRING, PLAYED FROM A RAISED TEE TO THE FAIRWAY BELOW BUT IT'S THE BLUES OF THE OCEAN THAT DOMINATES THE VISTAS BEYOND, THAT TRULY MAKES THIS A WONDERFUL GOLF HOLE

HERITAGE GOLF CLUB

The journey from Sugar Beach Resort on the West coast has taken about an hour and you can see the change in scenery as we near the south, it's become more green and as we hit the ocean views it's one of those heart leaping moments that you can't help but have a wide smile on your face, Mauritius has certainly impressed me with its beauty.

After checking in with the pro I am back on the range loosening up. Pyramids of balls and bins full of water and brushes to clean your clubs shows that golfers are well looked after here.

I have been informed that I will be starting on the 10th but I will write the review as if I am starting on the 1st as I wouldn't want to confuse anyone. Standing on the first you will notice how wide the fairways are, which is great news for holiday golfers, but I decide that I would push my tee shot into the right-hand bunkers!! The green sits above the fairway in an outcrop of trees and long grass with two

bunkers sitting in the hill on the left and one deep bunker short right.

The wide fairways continue on the par 5, 2nd hole and this is certainly reachable in two, I have left my hybrid second shot just to the left of the green in between the bunker on the left and the back bunker.

The ocean comes into view as you reach the 4th green and look back down the fairway, but apart from the obvious visual distraction's concentration is key here as it's a raised green with lots of complexes and rock formations just short. The tee shot on the 5th is just as inspiring, played from a raised tee to the fairway below but it's the blues of the ocean that dominates the vistas beyond, that truly makes this a wonderful golf hole – those same views are also visible on the elevated tees on the 6th hole.

Elevated tees are certainly in abundance on the front nine as there are more on the 8th and 9th with the front nine coming to a stunning close. As I look out from this elevated tee I →

COURSE
VIDEO



Top Left: Teeing options at the Par 3, 3rd hole. Left: Risk and reward at the par 5, 9th hole. Right: Aerial view of the 18th at Heritage Golf Club.



may not have the ocean as a backdrop but I do have water on both the right and left hand side of the fairway, fortunately a good drive sees me with just a 50-yard pitch shot to the flag.

The back nine gets off to a solid start, but if you look to your right that is the 11th green where water will come into play for your approach shot. The 12th turns out to be my favourite hole, standing on the tee I just love the flow of the hole and how it doglegs left, but the design is like one of those banked curves on a race track it banks round to the left with two bunkers on the hill giving the hole a wonderful aesthetic and as I play my second shot to the green that sits slightly below me, I already want to go back to the tee and play the tee shot again.

The 13th brings up the first of the two par 3s on this nine and both are great holes, the first played over water and the second played from an elevated tee. These sandwich a risk and reward par 5, that doglegs left and runs uphill

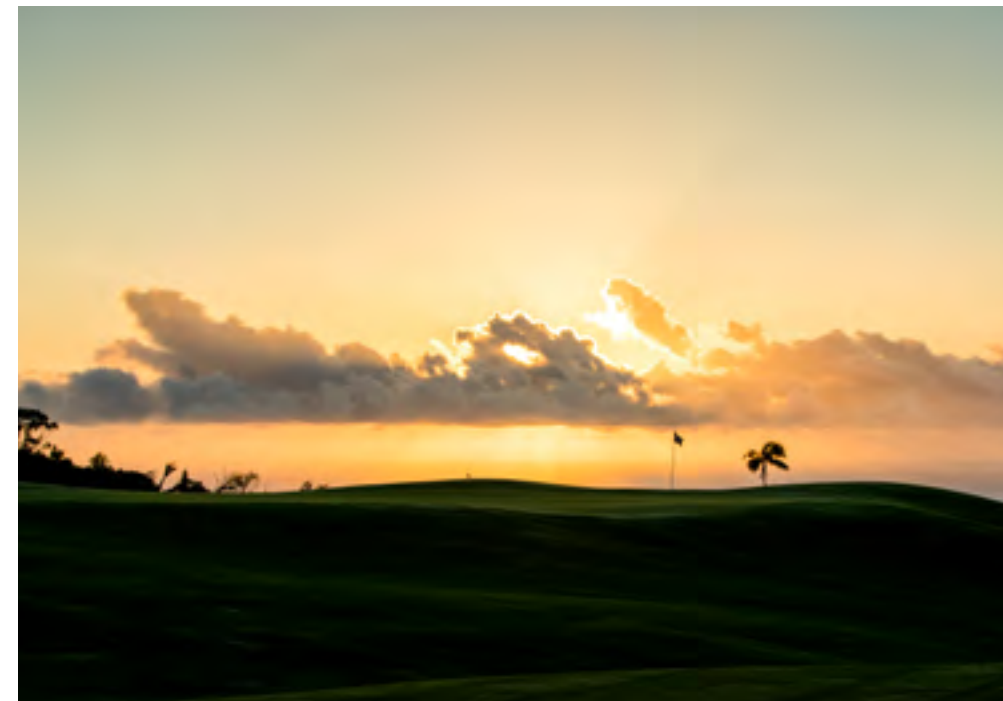
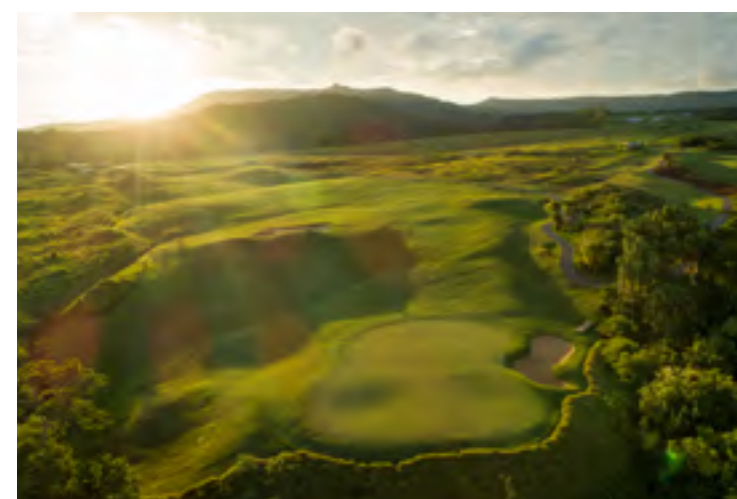
with water running down the left, you can choose how much or little you want to carry to hit the fairway and the more you cut off the shorter your second shot will be.

Like the closing hole on the front nine the 18th is played from an elevated tee and it really is a spectacular view as you look across the course, as I crash my drive down the fairway I look out across the course to the ocean beyond and it really is a fitting finale to what has been a wonderful golf course, you can certainly see why they hold the Mauritius Open here every other year. Looking out from the clubhouse with a cold beer in hand, I am already looking forward to the next time I can tee it up here.

AVALON GOLF ESTATE

I had heard a lot about Avalon Golf Estate, which is one of the newer courses on the island so I was looking forward to teeing it up here today. The journey from the Heritage

Above: Sunrise over the 3rd green. Top Left: The par 3, 3rd hole with the 4th tees in the background. Top right: The drivable 4th hole. Bottom left: Looking across the water to the green on the par 3, 12th hole. Bottom right: Looking down on the 10th green.



Resort took me through the Hindu place of worship and past two beautiful crafted statues of Lord Shiva and Lord Durga who stand like sentinels to the holy lake called Grand Bassin where people from all over the island make a pilgrimage to twice a year. I can only imagine how spectacular and colourful that must look and well worth a stop off on your journey to the course.

A right turn off the main road brings you on to the Avalon Golf Estate and the impressive modern club house. A quick coffee in the lounge and I make my way over to the practice facilities and to no surprise they have everything you need including practice chipping green with bunkers as well as the range itself and while I warm up a group lesson is taking place on the chipping green.

I am playing with a member today and two other journalists, but it's the views from the first tee that give you a hint of what is to come. Avalon sits in the hills above the ocean offering some wonderful views across the island, it's a beautiful vantage point but when the wind blows you realise just how tough a test this course will be.

The first is played from an elevated tee to a wide fairway and at 404-yards it is the perfect opening hole. The course has four teeing options ranging from 6,910-5,358-yards and a little wedge shot sets up a birdie chance that →

I duly miss.

As we make our way from the green to the second green I am glad I’m in a buggy as there are some long walks between greens and tees, I am also glad we have a member of the course with us as picking a line on the par 5, 2nd was tricky and his knowledge helped me hit the fairway, but the green here has more movement than a rollercoaster, a good chip sees me set up another birdie chance which my putter decides to decline!

Their fourth is a spectacular hole and a drivable par 4 played from an elevated tee, designer Peter Matkovich has certainly given the holiday golfer a lot of thought, we all love seeing the pros drive those short par 4s in tournaments and now we get to have a go ourselves, it’s a great fun hole that also offers the Indian Ocean as a wonderful backdrop.

The first of the four par 3s on the course arrives at the 5th and the design of the holes just seem to be getting better and better, with a ravine to your right full of lush vegetation and trees the hole measures 163-yards to a raised green with a bunker carved into the left as the hill drops away. The other stunning par 3 on this nine comes at the 7th and this time plays over a ravine with one pot type bunker sitting in the front, measuring 170-yards, you do not want to be short!

The course continues with one great hole after another, wide fairways, stunning backdrops, immaculate conditioning and manicuring. I have been hitting driver on every tee and averaging around 270-yards so for you longer hitters you will need to be hitting 3-wood on the 13th as I was in perfect position but anything longer and you will be bringing

the ravine into play. It’s another fantastically designed hole using the natural beauty of the land with the green sitting just below the fairway on the other side of the ravine and it’s also a green that has plenty of movement and complexes so getting there is only half the battle.

The run home from here is just the icing on the cake, with a reachable par 5 in two at the 15th and for the longer hitters another driveable par 4 at the 17th and to cap off what has been a well-thought-out golf course a risk and reward finish as a fitting finale. Mr Matkovich I doff my cap and salute you sir, you were given a wonderful piece of land and you certainly made the most of it. Avalon has it all and is yet another must play course on your visit to this beautiful island.



COURSE
VIDEO

Left: The 13th green with the ravine and fairway

JOURNEY PLANNER

WHERE TO STAY
Heritage Le Telfair Golf & Wellness Resort

T: +230 601 5500
W: heritageresorts.mu/mauritius-hotels/le-telfair-resort

Sugar beach resort
T: +230 403 3300
W: sugarbeachresort.com/en

WHERE TO PLAY
Heritage Golf Club
T: +230 623 5600
W: heritagegolfclub.mu

Avalon Golf Estate
T: +230 430 5800
W: avalon.mu

Tamarina Golf Estate
T: +230 401 3006
W: tamarina.mu

Ile aux cerfs golf club
T: +230 402 7720
W: ileauxcerfsgolfclub.com

WHERE TO EAT
Gin'Ja at Heritage
W: heritageresorts.mu

Heritage Le Château
T: +230 601 55 29
W: heritageresorts.mu

HERITAGE LE TELFAIR GOLF & WELLNESS RESORT

Bel Ombre, Mauritius

By CHARMAINE HIBBERT



HOTEL CALIFORNIA

Charmaine Hibbert wishes she could check-out
anytime she liked, but never leave!

We are in the car travelling from Sugar Beach Resort which is on the west coast of the island to Heritage Resort which is in the South of the island and around 30 mins into the journey you can certainly start to see the difference in the regions, the land starts to feel richer and greener and is less populated, we start to follow the beach road which offers some spectacular views and I hope like us you get to take this journey during the day.

James drops his golf clubs off at the Heritage Golf Club and then we head to the hotel which is only 5-minutes away – there is a shuttle buggy that takes residents from the hotel to the course. There are three hotels on the resort Awali, The Villas and we are staying at the Heritage Le Telfair Golf Resort, as we arrive at the gates you can already feel this is going to be a special place.

As our car pulls up outside of reception there is a whirlwind of activity as our bags and cases are whisked away, but it's when I walk into main reception my eyes light up, it's one of the most beautiful receptions I →

Above: The beautiful reception with a stunning view down to the beach. Above Left: The swimming pool with the beach in the background.



Left: Chef at work in the Ginja restaurant.
Right: The decorative splendor of Chateau-de Bel Ombre



have ever seen. Subtle but classic decor, it's not grand like some city-based hotels, but it's the view that takes you straight down to the ocean that has you mesmerised and gives you a calming and knowing feeling that this is going to be a special place to stay.

We are taken into a room given cold towels and a welcome fruit cocktail and suddenly check-in has finished and I have to chuckle to myself, of course that's how check-ins would be done here, relaxed and stress free, the perfect start.

James disappears off to play golf and I am shown around the grounds, the different places, restaurants, the bar and of course the pool and beach and the pick of the bunch is Gin'ja which is an Pan-Asian fusion restaurant that sits right on the beach and is perfectly situated to capture those wonderful sunsets.

I am then shown my room, I couldn't even hide my delight as I walked in, straight in front of me is the bathroom with a deep soaker tub big enough for two, a huge walk-in shower and of course a walk-in closet with ironing board and safe. The mini bar and coffee maker are situated in a small hall just before you walk into the main bedroom. The king size bed takes centre stage but hardly dominates the room that also has a desk, a wonderful large comfy sofa, wall mounted TV, a massive coffee table and opposite the bed, wall to wall windows that open up to a patio with a small garden, two sun loungers, table and just 20 yards from the beach, I am not sure my smile could get any bigger from the reception, but it just has.

Once my personal assistant leaves – everyone is allocated a person to look after them – you know me all too well, it's a face dive onto the bed, the smell of crisp, clean Egyptian cotton hits the senses and after quickly unpacking I decide to spend the rest of the day on the patio soaking in that wonderful vitamin D with the sound of the hypnotic waves making me slowly fall in and out of consciousness.

James calls me to say he has booked the steak house – of course he has – for 8pm and to meet in reception at 7.50 for our buggy to take us there. The restaurant is in the golf course clubhouse and we both of course order steak and as we clear our plates we both agree they are cooked to perfection – although I am not sure cooked is the appropriate word for how James has his steak – I have mine medium and it was wonderfully succulent. →

We head to the bar for a night cap and listen to a live singer and guitarist, which was the perfect end to the night.

It's an early start as James is off to play golf again and it's my time to work and experience the rest of what Le Telfair has to offer. But first its breakfast and we decide to sit outside on the poach of the breakfast room, coffee and juice are brought to the table but the breakfast is buffet style. James heads to the fruit and I head to the hot foods and egg station – there is so much on offer continental with a vast array of cheeses and cold meats, fresh bread, patisseries and every juice and yogurt you could think of or want to sample and it seems someone has fallen in love with my fresh bread and pineapple jam after their bowl of fresh fruit!

After scouting out the fully equipped gym, fitness centre and kids centre the hotel also boosts tennis, yoga, table tennis, beach volleyball, beach football, beach tennis, mountain bikes, mini rope park, speedminton, pitch and putt, bocci balls and badminton. For those who love water based activities there is windsurfing see-through and normal Kayaking, pedal boats, glass bottom boat trips, snorkelling, water-skiing, Aqua-gym, fishing and paddle boarding and to top it all there is also buggy, quad bike or 4X4 and many more activities that you can add as an extra charge.

It's time for me to hit the wellness centre for my appointment, you will notice I said wellness centre and not spa, because at the Heritage resort they believe in a whole-body approach which can also include diet and wellbeing as well as the spa treatments.

On entering I am asked to choose a colour that matches my mood and after filling out the forms I am asked what I am looking to gain from my treatment, I am going for relaxed and revitalised but I also want a no holds barred deep massage.

I am introduced to Natisha who leads me to a room that is lit in a light blue which is the colour I chose when I first entered centre. The massage that has been chosen for me is the Mauritian massage and boy did Natisha go to town on my body. The background music was perfect, but I don't really remember too much of it once those hands got to work. Every now and again Natisha would ask me – through my gasps and grunts – if it was to hard or deep and I would manage to get out the words, no its ok through gritted teeth. Certain parts of my body – lower back, neck and calves – were screaming for me to tell her to stop but I know I need this.

All too soon the massage is over the hour has gone very quickly and I am now relaxing in the courtyard with a chilled glass of fresh fruit flavoured water, it's a strange feeling as your muscles start to relax and where they were screaming only minutes ago, they are now singing with joy as a sense of calmness descends. Natisha sits with me and informs me the relief body oils that she used were from their seven colours range and with that she departs to bring joy to someone else.

It's our last night on the island and I have certainly had a wonderful time here, and what better way to spend the last night than in the Pan-Asian fusion restaurant Gin'ja and watch the moonlight dance across the waves as they gently crash on the beach. I was shown around the Heritage Le Chateau earlier in the day and it was a hard choice between the two, but how can you not spend your last night in Mauritius on the beach.



Top and bottom right: Vitality pool and couples' massage at the Wellness Centre.

Bottom left: Looking into my room from the garden with the patio in the foreground.



SUGAR BEACH RESORT

Flic en Flac, Mauritius

By CHARMAINE HIBBERT

After getting through customs and finding my case missing – strangely enough James’s golf clubs turned up ok – I log my details with the baggage handlers and I am finally in the car on our way to Sugar Beach Resort. The journey takes about an hour and twenty minutes which gives me some time to take in the Mauritian landscape.

An hour or so into our journey I get a glimpse of the sea and I can feel my heartbeat start to race with excitement and a smile splits my face – I think those childlike feelings hit us all when we see the ocean especially if like me you live in a city. As we make our way through the town along the coast road, those pictures of pure white sand beaches that have only been images on a screen are now real and I can’t wait for my feet to actually feel the sand between my toes.

We pull up to the barrier at Sugar Beach and a security guard comes out to speak to our driver and then lets us in. As we pull up outside the main entrance, you can see through the reception area to what looks like a long infinity pool.

Our bags are taken, well I should say the other journalist bags were taken – fortunately I still have my hand luggage packed with essentials for this type of emergency. We are then led to a desk where we can sit down while we are checked-in. Our rooms are not ready so we are told to help ourselves to breakfast and to come back up once we had eaten.

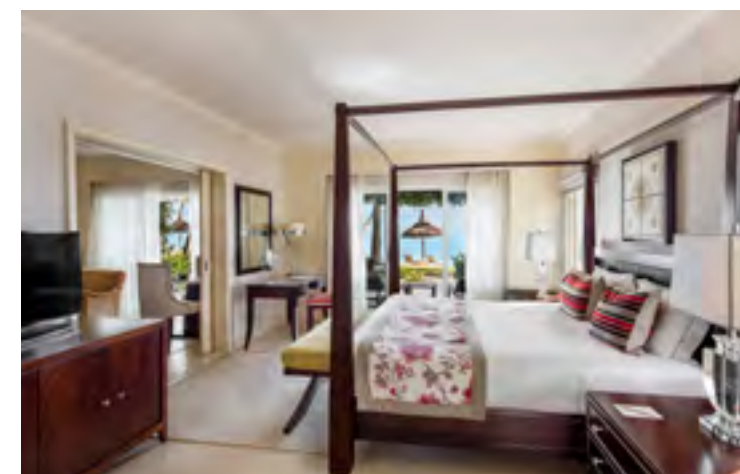
The breakfast area – which also doubles as the main restaurant – has a buffet style breakfast each morning with all the usual options of cooked food, fresh fruit, fresh juices, continental style breakfast with an assortment of cold meats and cheeses, fresh bread and pastries and of course the egg station where you can order eggs cooked to your style. →



Above: The main hotel and swimming pool at night. Below: One of the well appointed rooms.

LIVING A BEACH LIFE

Charmaine Hibbert discovers the joys of a quiet pool area and life next to a white sandy beach with clear blue waters





We then head back upstairs to reception and I am informed my room is ready. I am escorted by a German student who is studying here as part of her degree course. The apartments are designed in a colonial style with white wood slates and are two stories in design with the ground floor apartments having a garden and the first floor having balconies.

My room is on the first floor and after showing me around the student leaves me to it and as soon as the door is closed I face dive onto the king size bed that dominates the room. The linens are crisp and clean and the bed is firm with plenty of pillows. I then head to the bathroom which has a bath with shower attachment and then it's off to the balcony which has two sun loungers a table and fantastic views of that white sand with the pure clear blue ocean lapping the beach.

I am also perfectly placed for the quiet zone swimming pool, which I think is a perfect option to have with plenty of sun loungers placed around the peripheries of the pool. I decide I will explore later but at this moment in time I want to get online – there is free WIFI throughout the hotel – and chase down my missing suitcase.

My afternoon is spent exploring what the hotel has to offer, which includes motorised and non-motorised water sports, pool-based activities on offer, many of which are complimentary, volley or water polo, fun boats, kayaking, snorkelling, diving, windsurfing, laser sails or water skiing.

If you want to use your holiday to maintain or get back into a fitness regime Sugar Beach offers a range of fitness activities with a fully equipped gym, group classes which include aerobics, step or aqua gym classes, jogging or focus on toning and flexibility with bodyblade and stretching classes, there is also badminton and mini football, tennis, table tennis or bocci ball.

This all works with the wellbeing centre, which has yoga and Tae Bo classes. For those looking for spa treatments there is the Cinq Mondes Spa in Mauritius that is set amongst tropical gardens offering body rituals, beauty services, herb-infused treatments, private steam room, heated and cold plunge pools and a hammam complex.

There are three restaurants including Buddha Bar Beach so you can



Left: Time to relax by the beach with a cool drink. Above top: One of the lounges. Above bottom: Looking back to the main hotel.

enjoy lunch, snacks or dinner by the beach, but the main restaurant is Citronella's Café where we had breakfast earlier. Now I don't like writing negative reviews and normally I would just pull the feature, but with the rest of the resort being so good it would be remiss of me to do that, but the main restaurant gets very busy and being missed by our waiter for water once wouldn't be a problem, but when this occurred every night even after we brought this to the attention of the manager it is a problem. My advice to you would be to take your own water to dinner with you, no big deal, but annoying when you realise that you have to do that three nights into your holiday.

I don't want to leave this review on that negative so I will say this, apart from the restaurant waiting staff – not the cooks – the rest of the staff throughout the hotel are attentive to every detail and more than ready to help. The hotel is set in a beautiful location with a fantastic beach and facilities and the rooms are well designed and decorated and I would happily recommend the hotel to you.



32 CALLAWAY FLASH DRIVER



34 CALLAWAY APEX 19 HYBRID

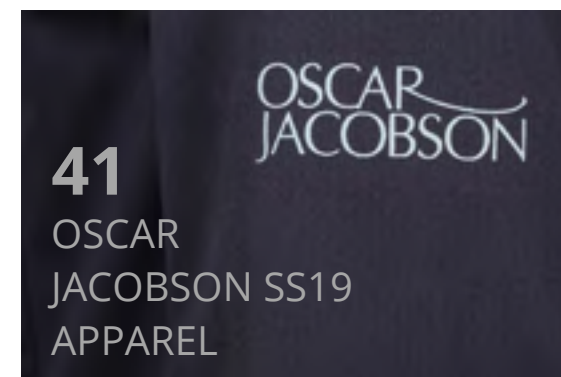


36 MIZUNO JPX919 TOUR IRONS

REVIEW



38 MIZUNO RB TOUR



41 OSCAR JACOBSON SS19 APPAREL

EQUIPMENT & APPAREL

VIEW.COM

THE **JPX919**
SERIES



P A C K E D W I T H Y O U R P O T E N T I A L



CHROMOLY
BORON INFUSED STEEL
1025E MILD CARBON STEEL

#NOTHINGFEELSLIKEAMIZUNO

FACE OFF

Artificial Intelligence Vs wet and windy Kent golf courses, James Mason puts the Callaway Epic Flash with its AI designed face to the test.



TECHNOLOGY

Callaway have used Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their latest driver design and this self-learning computer software has come up with a new face technology that Callaway have called Flash Face. It was only a matter of time before AI was used in golf club design and when a computer can do 15,000 face architecture iterations instead of the usual 8-10 improving on each iteration as it goes along I am sure we are going to see a leap in golf club technology coming down the line.

What the new Flash Face technology means for you is faster ball speeds on impact from the sweet spot and centre region of the face. How it works is that the Flash Face's unique, internal mapping consists of dozens of subtle ripples flowing from heel to toe, working together to elevate the club's COR (Coefficient of Restitution)

This new technology works with Callaway's jailbreak technology that they updated in the Rogue drivers and these internal bars stabilise the crown and sole and again help increase ball speed off the face. They are also using a new lighter Triaxial Carbon Crown Material T2C so weight can be redistributed raising the MOI (Moment of Inertia) →



CLUB TESTED
Callaway Epic Flash
Sub Zero Driver
SHAFT Even Flow Green 50
FLEX Stiff
LOFT 9.0°
WEIGHT 59g
SET UP +1° NEUTRAL
RRP £499.00 / €579.00 / \$699.99
VIDEO REVIEW [📺](#)

Left top to bottom:
 Crown, toe and sole
 views of the Epic Flash
 driver



Above: Illustration
 showing the Epics
 Flash face design.

which promotes forgiveness on off-centre strikes.

There is an adjustable 16-gram perimeter weight that sits in the sole at the back of the club head, you so you can adjust to help promote a draw, fade or straight ball flight. This works with Callaway's hosel adjustments that has eight loft and lie options, with S giving you the stated loft which can be adjusted down by -1° or up but 2° and with N and D on the other cog giving you a Neutral or Draw bias options.

CONCLUSION

Winter days in Kent may not be

the ideal testing conditions for a new driver but what I did notice was distance, trajectory and feel off the face. To be honest each new driver will give you a yard or so gain just because of the new technology that goes into them, but with cold conditions, I certainly noticed more than a few yards in distance gained and I really loved the ball flight.

The forward weight below the face and the lighter back weight on the track system that are used in the Sub-Zero driver are to help promote a low spinning ball and that is certainly noticeable the way the ball fires off the face and

blast through the air, it really is a great ball flight with lots of power.

Lastly are the acoustics at impact and with the jailbreak system that joins the crown and sole, it really is a solid powerful sound at impact. I loved the Rogue driver last year and I have to admit I really didn't get on with the original Epic Driver, but I loved testing this club and the results were very impressive. Make sure you get the Epic Flash in your hands before you make a final decision on buying a new driver this year.



HITTING THE APEX

James Mason tests the new Apex 19 hybrid with jailbreak technology

TECHNOLOGY:

The Apex family has a well-deserved reputation and Callaway have added the Apex 19 hybrid to this family and utilises the Jailbreak technology. Two steel Jailbreak bars link the crown and soul together and are positioned vertically behind the 455 Carpenter Steel Face Cup. This helps stiffen the body on impact and helps generate enhanced ball speeds and distances across all areas of the face. →

Callaway state they want to give accomplished golfers and the best in the game the ball speed benefits of the Jailbreak technology, while maintaining a look and feel associated with long irons, while the compact head design comes with a classic dark PVD finish.

The Apex Hybrids transition perfectly from your irons and have a neutral bias for those who like to shape their shots, while still retaining a controllable flatter ball flight.

Apex Hybrids are available in 2H (18°), 3H (20°), 4H (22°) and 5H (24°) and are fitted with the Project X Graphite shafts as standard.

CONCLUSION:

The new Apex 19 was tested down in Kent on several windy cold days, so not ideal conditions if you are trying to measure distance, but for feel, trajectory and having to play longer shots in the winter these are ideal conditions for testing a hybrid.

The first thing you will notice at address is the look, it certainly has an iron look about and is the perfect transition between your longer irons and woods and the face certainly looks more like an iron than a wood, which I really liked.



There is no adjustment on this club and I was getting a nice strong ball flight with a slight draw which I felt was perfect and I was averaging around 190-yards with this and considering that ball isn't flying as far as it would in the summer I feel that is a very good yardage.

Having a hybrid in the bag is a must and I like a strong club that has the potential to replace my 3-wood if I need it to, so I can get another wedge in the bag. I found the Apex 19 a no nonsense easy to hit club from the rough or fairway with great distance and with the Jailbreak technology it gives you a solid sound at impact and should definitely be on your testing list when you decide to replace your current model.

CLUB TESTED

Callaway Apex 19

HYBRID 3

SHAFT Project X Catalyst 70

FLEX Stiff 6.0

LOFT 20°

LIE Standard

RRP £249.00 / €299.00 / \$349.99

VIDEO REVIEW 

TOUR DE FORCE

Testing trips to Mallorca and Mauritius see James Mason reviewing the Mizuno JPX919 Tour irons, which had journalist from all over Europe, Hong Kong and South Africa purring over their beauty and performance



TECHNOLOGY:

The range comprises of three models these are the JPX919 Tour, JPX919 Hot Metal and JPX919 Forged. They have been engineered and forged from different materials, I tested the Tour model which uses the 1025E Pure Select Mild Carbon steel in its forging process.

The JPX919 Tour has a compact design and with the topline having been narrowed by 10% from the JPX900 model it certainly has a mean, lean look and is a shot-makers dream. The club has a frame that opens up at the heel, the design of the frame is to enhance stability and launch at impact whilst still keeping that distinct Mizuno feel and sound. The frame also helps with forgiveness, creating a tight dispersion rate on off centre strikes.

The Tour irons use a Pearl Brush chrome-plated finish helping to enhance durability and soften its precise lines in bright sunlight. Like its sister model the MP18 series of irons, these can be inter-matched with the other models of the JPX919 line, so you can have a split or short set. I would recommend Mizuno's free custom fitting as you will then be paired with the correct shaft and JPX919 combination that suits your golf game and your swing.



CONCLUSION:

When Mizuno bring a new iron to the market you already know it's going to be a quality product and with uncontracted players playing these clubs on the major tours around the world, players that make their living playing golf, then that's the best endorsement you could ever want.

With the Tour model, the crisp lines, the way the club sits behind the ball, the sound and feel at impact are all what you would expect from a Mizuno iron. The bonus comes in the frame that gives the club extra stability and forgiveness and when you throw those components into the mix, then you do see why the world's top players are putting this club in their bag.

CLUB TESTED

Mizuno JPX919 Tour
IRONS 3-PW

SHAFT Rifle Project X 6.0

FLEX Stiff

LIE -2°

RRP £135 per iron

VIDEO REVIEW 

Above Left to right: Toe, cavity frame, top line and sole views of the Mizuno JPX919 Tour irons



TUNNEL VISION

After 12-years of wind tunnel testing Mizuno
release their latest golf ball, where better to test it
than on Kent's links courses

TECHNOLOGY

This will be the first time that Mizuno have introduce a ball to all their markets including the US market and it is aimed at single figure amateur golfers and elite professionals. 12-years testing in the wind tunnel at Mizuno’s Technics laboratory has developed a 360-cone dimple pattern known as the Cone Profile Dimple (C Dimple).

The C-Dimple has created more trigger points to keep air flow close to the ball’s surface for longer, this helps reduce drag and strengthens ball trajectory. The 360 cone dimples design was discovered to be more effeciant at producing a controllable, penetrating ball flight, in both drivers and irons.

Construction of this four-piece ball blend the graduated hardness Butadiene Dual Core, a high-energy Ionomer mantle layer and a high-traction Urethane cover for responsive spin rates around the green.

The RB Tour has a very soft compression offers lower driver spin to suit those who have a swing that has a more downward angle of attack, while the RB Tour X is geared more towards mid driver spin for those who have a flatter to upward strike angle.



	RB TOUR	RB TOUR X
Compression	V Soft	Soft
Driver Spin	Low	Mid/low
Greenside spin	High	High
Construction	4 piece	4 piece
Dimples	360	360
Cover	Urethane	Urethane



CONCLUSION

Testing golf balls in Kent during the winter certainly puts any new cone dimples pattern to the ultimate test, especially with the wind whistling off the Dover Straits. Get it wrong and the ball can just balloon, lose all distance and if you have a slice or hook will just exaggerate it.

The good news is that both the new Mizuno RB Tour and RB Tour X balls not only withstood the wind and gave me a bullet like penetrating ball flight it also showed the cone dimples design certainly helped hold the ball on its line in testing conditions. My preference was for the RB Tour as I liked the low spinning ball and with the low spinning driver I was using I was certainly surprised by the amount of distance I was getting on a cold windy winter’s week in the Garden in England.

There are a lot of premium balls on the market and to find one that suits your golf game is a case of trying them and finding out what ones perform best for you, if you like a low spinning penetrating ball flight I would certainly recommend you put the RB Tour to the test especially if you use Mizuno clubs. I tested this ball using the Callaway Epic SZ Flash driver, Callaway Apex 19 Hybrid and the Mizuno JPX919 Tour irons.



OSCAR
JACOBSON

OSCARJACOBSON.COM

A stitch in time

The Masters announces to us all that the new golf season is upon us, so too is Oscar Jacobson's new Spring/Summer collection. James Mason puts them to the test in the garden of England, Kent.

You can always tell when it's the build-up to the Masters and the new golf season when Oscar Jacobson's new Spring/Summer collection arrives at your door. Opening the boxes certainly had me smiling and my fashion-conscious daughter nodding in approval.

TECHNOLOGY:

Polo Shirts

There are five polo shirt collections this summer, firstly the Chap and Chester range, which are a sporty performance design shirt and feature elastane stretch and anti-wrinkle materials. The 100% cotton Darcy that is a durable and vibrant polo. There is also the Leonard Course, Boston Course and Aston Course designs that use the Japanese Toray fabric that offers anti-penetration and air permeability. This super fine FieldSensor® yarn also offers the benefit of UV protection (UPF30) and humidity control, whilst feeling cool on your skin. →





CHAP-COURSE-POLOSHIRT
£49.99 \$65.50 €70.00



IWAN-HALF-ZIP
£129.00 \$168.99 €185.00



JONATHAN-THERMAL-HALF-ZIP
£59.99 \$78.50 €85.00



MARSHALL-HYBRID CARDIGAN
£135.00 \$176.00 €185.00

Performance pullovers

When I needed to use another layer, I tested the Waldorf mélange sweater, which is woven in Italy from Egyptian cotton and has a half-zip design with metal logo on the chest.

Outerwear

The Ross Course Hybrid jacket has a Primaloft filled body and knitted, stretchy soft-shell sleeves. There is also the Liner Pin Waistcoat, a low weight vest in a semi dull woven fabric with light padding.

Performance trousers

The two trousers tested were the Dave and Nicky, which both use a Performance wool blend and features a stretch fabric along with stretch waistband and knee lining for extra comfort. The Nicky trouser is round-pressed with flap pockets at the back.



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£49.99 \$65.50 €70.00



IWAN-HALF-ZIP
£129.00 \$168.99 €185.00

CONCLUSION:

With Oscar Jacobson apparel you know you are getting a quality product and their years of experience and expertise. I do like the way they blend street style with golf so their apparel is not just confined to the golf course, but you feel comfortable wearing them to a restaurant or a nightclub – which is a must when you're on a golf tour and you have limited baggage allowance.

I am glad OJ have added inside pockets to the Ross Course Hybrid and the Liner

Pin Waistcoat, something I felt that was missing in their previous jackets. I also liked the style of the flap pockets on the Nicky trousers, a nice stylish touch.

As psychologists will tell you looking good, helps you feel good and with golf being all about confidence, golf fashion is a big part of the game now. I know Oscar Jacobson's new Spring/Summer collection will certainly make you look and feel fantastic, it's down to you to work on your golf swing.



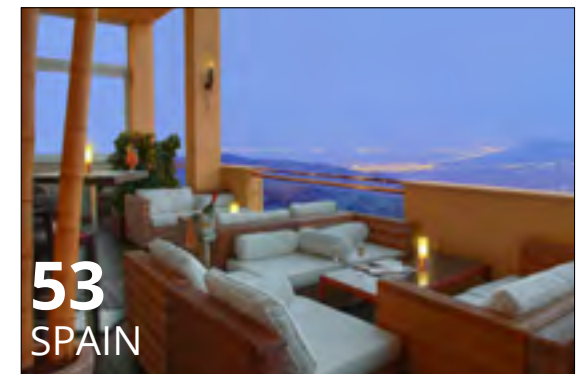
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STAY, PLAY & SPA

VIEW.COM

ARGENTARIO GOLF RESORT & SPA

Tuscany, Italy

By JAMES MASON and CHARMAINE HIBBERT

TUSCAN NIGHTS

When you hear the words Tuscany, you imagine beautiful countryside, rolling hills and gastronomy that makes the taste buds tingle with anticipation. **James Mason** and **Charmaine Hibbert** discover it also offers great golf and fitness bliss





Above: The 3rd hole with the town of Orbetello and its lagoon as a backdrop. Below: The practice ground next to the 1st tee.

ARGENTARIO GOLF REVIEW



The golden hour is lighting up the Argentario course as shadows dance across the fairways and the bright yellow orb in the bright blue sky belies a chilly start to the day, but after climbing the steps up to the first tee this dogleg left 360-yard hole looks glorious from this elevation, the sound of my driver impacting on the ball echoes through the trees and I have managed to put it in the perfect position to attack the flag.

Unfortunately, my second shot isn't as well executed as my drive and I have to make a chip and putt par. The second tee is a bit of a trek, but once you arrive at the par 3, its well worth the walk. Another elevated tee not only sees you looking down on the green but also the →

Top right: Relaxing by the pool. Bottom right: The beautiful decor in one of Argentario's guest rooms.



ARGENTARIO HOTEL

As the clouds disappear I knew I was in for a wonderful couple of days, the skies over Rome as we start to descend are clear and blue and as I walk out of the aeroplane and down the stairs the warmth hits me. A quick exit though the electronic barriers and I spot our chauffeur from the Argentario Resort holding his placard.

Within minutes we are on the motorway and I am stunned at how little traffic there is, it's 13.30 on a Monday afternoon and we are cruising down the motorway making rapid time and taking in the beautiful Tuscany scenery. As we cross the Diga bridge the 1.5 hours journey has flown by.

We enter through the electronic gates and pull up outside the hotel, the modern design of the building just oozes elegance, but James of course is too busy looking at the latest Jaguar range that is lined up outside – it transpires the hotel has an affiliation with the company that has offices in the local area.

On entering the reception, you can →



town of Orbetello and its lagoon as a backdrop.

Elevated tees seem to be an occurring theme on this course as next up is the par 5, 3rd hole, again with that stunning backdrop, the fairly narrow fairway is framed by mounding and fairway bunkers – depending on your strategy there is also a stream to carry with your drive.

David Mezzanine and Baldovino Dassu have utilised the typography of the land for maximum impact both challenging your golf game and astatically, two more par 3s arrive at the 5th and 8th with the latter played again from an elevated tee and the 8th being a tight tree lined hole. For those playing competitions it's the 7th and 9th holes that can wreak a card, with the placement of your tee shot being all important with the fairway running above a ravine that sits all the way along the left of the 7th fairway and the green sitting on a little →

“David Mezzanine and Baldovino Dassu have utilised the typography of the land for maximum impact both challenging your golf game and astatically,”



Above: Sunset over the 9th green looking towards the 10th fairway. Below: Water protecting the Par 3, 17th green.



Above: Time to relax after my spinning session. Left: The beautiful dark wood panelling at the Aper bar.

see the elegant modern vibe is continued inside with a very airy reception area and a magnificent spiral staircase that takes you down to the restaurant, bar, spa, swimming pool and gym areas which are arranged over different levels.

A swift check-in sees me walking down an ambient mood calming corridor where the walls are adorned with wonderful black and white historic golf photography, some of which are very amusing and some are of iconic golfers through the ages.

As always, the big moment arrives when I open my room door, but I shouldn't have been surprised by how beautifully appointed and well designed my room is. Spacious, modern with dark

wood, creams and beiges complementing each other, there's a deep two-person soaker tub and dark stone enclosed rain shower, which within minutes I am standing in just letting the warm water soothe my being.

After an inspection around the beautiful grounds and a view of the new villas that are being built with their stunning views out across the golf course and the town of Orbetello and its lagoon – these should be ready for occupancy from May 2019, although some are private residences. We are sitting on the clubhouse terrace overlooking what is the 9th green enjoying some light snacks and a coffee in the afternoon sun, James is of course sampling a local beer →

Right: The magnificent cellar at the Val delle Rose Winery.



Below top: Locker room at the Espace Wellness Center.
Below bottom: Overview of the golf course looking out to the lagoon.

peninsula.

The back nine comes to a close with a beautifully designed par 5, which I actually feel should be the finishing hole, as the green sits just below the deck of the clubhouse. The green is only reachable in two for the longest of hitters at 585-yards and you really need to be going into this amphitheatre of a green with a wedge as the narrow green is also protected on the right by water.

While the front nine is quite open the back nine meanders through olive trees and offers an altogether different challenge as this nine is protected by the Monte Argentario. Back-to-back birdies have seen me start this nine well and after crashing my drive down the 13th I am standing in the fairway and realise the lone oak that sits on the right is the inspiration for the golf club's logo. Its a tough green that is raised and depending on the flag position can be a three-club difference between front and back pin placements. →



“After a great session on the bike, I am now chilling out in the steam room. I much prefer a steam to a sauna but there is the option of both”

called Enki which he is raving about and brewed nearby in Grosseto, but as I have a spinning class to go to drinking alcohol is not on the agenda for me until dinner.

I change and head down the gym and pool area on a mission to explore before the start of my class, the pool looks so inviting and you can swim between the indoor and outdoor pool via a pass through in the glass surround. The gym is well equipped with bikes, treadmills, X-Trainers and a weights section, there is also an area for classes which is where I am heading for my spinning class, I am informed there are several classes you can take which include Acquagym, Aerobic Dance, Callanetica and of course spinning.

After a great session on the bike, I am now chilling out in the steam room. I much prefer a steam to a sauna but there is the option of both. Feeling

relaxed and refreshed and after a sneaky little snooze in the relaxation room I am heading back up to my room to get ready for dinner.

After a couple of pre-dinner drinks at the bar, I have ordered the rack of lamb which I am told is locally sourced like all the food that is served here, and the chef even has his own allotment for herbs. We are in Tuscany and as you would expect the food and wine are exemplary, cooked to perfection with the wine chosen by the maître d', a perfect complement to each course.

Val delle Rose Winery

After a hearty breakfast and more chilling out around the pool and steam room we are heading to the Val delle Rose Winery, it's about an hour or so trip from the hotel and another wonderful chance to soak in the beautiful vistas →

The two par 3s on the back nine sandwich the 16th, which is a wonderfully designed golf hole. To be honest I didn't realise how tough this hole could play until I reached the green, I hit driver to this dogleg right fairway and went straight for the pin over the bushes and small tree on the left with a 7-iron leaving myself a birdie putt. As I reach the green not only do I realise how wide and narrow the green is, but it also has a severe step between two tiers and I certainly wouldn't want to be putting up or down that tier if I had miss placed my approach shot.

The course comes to a close with my only criticism, don't get me wrong the dogleg right hole where you have to carry a stream with two large bunkers awaiting should you run out of fairway is a fitting finale, but you also have some very tall trees that need to be carried. Yes you can go left or right of them, which is what I have done, but I do feel it would be a much better hole without them.

Below: The iconic oak tree on the 13th



I don't hit a bad tee shot, but with those trees being 200-yards from the back tee its certainly not at its apex to carry them and yes if you are playing one of the forward tees then its not too much of a problem, but I do feel they take away from what is a fantastic finishing hole.

Sitting on the terrace above the 9th green enjoying a cool beer in the warm sun, I have to say Argentario golf course is a wonderfully designed golf course surrounded by stunning vistas in a beautiful part of the world and I am gutted that I am only getting to tee it up the once.

It has been a long hot summer in Europe – at the time of playing – like many courses this has taken its toll on the greens here with some disease, but it certainly didn't effect my enjoyment of the design and I am sure by the time you get here the greenkeepers would have been able to sort the problem out and I am know like me this is a track you will want to play again and again.



Above: Looking at the 9th green this time with the 10th tee and clubhouse in the background. Right: The hacienda style Val delle Rose Winery.



of the Tuscany countryside.

As we head off the motorway I can see the vines of the vineyards stretching out before me and we pull up outside, what I am later informed is the new winery building having expanded from the old buildings that I can see from the steps of the new. I am surprised as the architecture of the new building looks like a vast hacienda type building that I am about to find out has a massive secret sitting below it.

As I listen intently to Lisa Pianigiani who is our tour guide, I am struck by the lack of staff at the facility in fact our group and Lisa are the only people on the property today. Of course, the part I am looking forward to the most is the wine tasting and we certainly manage to taste a good many of the wines that Val delle Rose produce. It is a tour I recommend you take and as the sun sets over the hills and the orange and yellows engulf the vines, I reflect on my day so far and I can say with the exercise in the morning and now the wine tasting I seem to have this work life balance thing sorted.

MediSPA

The MediSPA not only offers you the

usual treatments but is a wellness centre that gives advice on food education and exclusive treatments designed for you to achieve your desired weight, shape and physical-mental wellness, and how to maintain this once you have left the resort.

Things you need to know:

The Argentario resort, not only has an 18-hole golf course – which James will be reviewing in the other section – but there are 2 padel courts, 2 tennis courts, a 5-a-side football pitch and jogging paths, heated indoor pool, an outdoor pool, tubs with cervical cascades, thalassotherapy, Kneipp pools and hot tubs. During summer there's a terrace with 2 swimming pools, one of these pools is for children.

Argentario Golf Resort & Spa
W: argentariogolfresortspa.it
T: +39 0564 810292

Val delle Rose Winery
W: valdellerose.it
T: +39 0564 409062

A two hour flight sees James Mason and Charmaine Hibbert
stepping back in time at the luxurious Castillo Hotel Son
Vida and playing two wonderfully designed golf courses

CASTLE ROCKS



EARLY START

Golf Son Quint

Its 7.30 and my alarm is screaming in my head, it was a heavy night with lots to drink but today is the first day of the Mallorca Press Cup and a very healthy breakfast of fruit and muesli – not sure I could have faced a full fry up – and I'm on the shuttle bus that takes you from the Castillo Hotel Son Vida to both the Golf Son Quint and Golf Son Muntaner golf courses.

A good warm up on the newly designed range, a bit of chipping and putting and I'm now smashing my 3-wood down the fairway. It's a great little opening hole that is played from an elevated tee, the hole slightly doglegs to the left so you can just let your tee shot drift into the fairway, well that was the plan, but I end up in the semi-rough on the left. I play a low hooking 5-iron under some tree branches and put it on the bank of the right hand bunker and make a chip and putt start.

The first of the par 3s arrives at the 3rd, played slightly downhill with two bunkers left and right protecting a green that has a variety of complexes, all the par 3s on the course are great golf hole, Ramón Espinosa and Kurt Rossknecht have certainly done a wonderful job. The 12th at 213-yards will be talked about with its carry over water that has a fountain sitting in it, but for me the uphill 14th at 131-yards was the pick of the bunch, I just liked the way it sat in the trees.

The course runs through a valley and surrounded by hills and looks out to the sea, you can also see Palma from certain points on the course, the fairway sculpturing was perfect and after a deluge of rain, the greenkeepers have done a wonderful job and the course is in fantastic condition.

The finishing holes bring the course to a fitting climax and for me this starts on the par 5, 13th hole, I thread my tee shot through →

The course runs through a valley and surrounded by hills and looks out to the sea, you can also see Palma from certain points on the course



FIT FOR A KING AND QUEEN

What better time to get away as it starts to get cold than in November and as I make my way to Gatwick airport the taxi driver told me he was chipping ice off the car windscreen before he came to pick me up, the thought of some winter sun certainly appealed to me at this moment in time.

I am heading off to Mallorca and while James plays in the Media Cup I will be checking out the Castillo Hotel Son Vida, the transfer from the airport to the hotel takes less than 20 minutes and as we pull up outside I am already impressed by the design as it looks like an old castle that has been renovated.

There is a full history on the hotel's website but Castillo Hotel Son Vida dates back to the 13th century when King Jaume I declared the hills behind Palma city fertile ground. Since then the castle has changed hands many times, in 1995, the hotel was purchased by the Schörghuber Group, renamed Castillo Hotel Son Vida, and designated as one of the leading

hotels of the world. In March 2007, the hotel became a member of Starwood Hotels & Resorts' Luxury Collection and finally the hotel is now part of the Marriott Luxury Collection of hotels, with many influential guests included politicians and celebrities from around the world including Prince Rainer of Monaco and Grace Kelly, Aristotle Onassis.

After a quick check-in I find myself on the 3rd floor and about to open the door, the classic décor has already impressed me with a number of beautifully appointed pieces adding to the elegance and aesthetic of the hotel. As I open the door I was not really surprised how large and elegant my room is but what does surprise me is how big my stone balcony - with beautiful views over the garden - is.

Apart from the king size bed, there are two large comfy chairs and desk – from where I am now writing this feature – and the bathroom has a deep soaker tub and large separate shower with beautiful stone tiles, there is also plenty of closet space and of course mini bar, →



Left: The fountain at the par 3, 12th hole at Golf Son Quint. Top right: Relaxing next to the pool at Castillo Hotel Son Vida



Left: Looking down on the 10th green and out to the front nine.
Below: Par 3, 7th at Golf Son Muntaner

the trees and a good 3-wood sees me just shot of the green but I miss the chip and putt birdie. The 15th is a great driving hole and in drier conditions you can certainly use the hill and the run on the ball to get very close to the green.

A good wedge in at the par 5 17th sees me miss another birdie chance and a 4-iron into the last sees me miss yet another. As I shake my partners hands I have to smile, yes my putting wasn't at its best today, but the course more than made up for my shortfalls. Espinosa and Rossknecht have designed a course that isn't too demanding – who wants to be beat up by a course when you're on your holidays – uses the topography of the land well and produced a pleasant test of golf, that I know you will enjoy and more importantly you will want to come back for more.

Golf Son Muntaner

Its day two of the Mallorca Media Cup and →

COURSE VIDEO 

The outside pools are also perfectly placed to take in those wonderful views with tress adding to the tranquillity



large TV and safe.

We are meeting for lunch in Es Castell Restaurant and as I walk in you can't help but notice the beautiful uninterrupted views of Palma, the cathedral and the sea and as I sit right by the window I make a mental note this is where I want to sit every morning for breakfast.

After a relaxing lunch, I take a stroll around the grounds, the outside terrace is a wonderful place just to soak up the views and let the stresses of life slowly disappear. The outside pools are also perfectly placed to take in those wonderful views with tress adding to the tranquillity, there is also a poolside bar and I could certainly see myself during the summer months just chilling by the pool indulging in a few cocktails.

After a good night's sleep I head down to breakfast and find my spot right by the window, the orange sun highlights the few clouds in the sky as it rises over Palma, I just sit and watch it slowly climb in the sky with a freshly squeezed orange juice.

Breakfast is buffet style with fresh fruits, a selection of cold meats and cheeses, mueslis, yogurts and of course hot food and I have to give special mention to the scrambled eggs which were cooked to perfection. →

Above: Stunning views of Palma from the terrace. Below: One of the many room designs. Bottom: My breakfast view looking down to Palma and the sea



today we are playing at Golf Son Muntaner. The practice facilities here are stunning and its great to see so many local children taking group lessons and having fun.

After a good warm up I send my drive down the dogleg right fairway cutting a little off the corner and giving myself a nice little wedge in. The green sits just below a little hill and that should be your aiming point as anything left and you have a bunker and water to contend with.

That water runs all the way along the right hand side of the 2nd fairway – which is a par 5 – and with out of bounds on the left for your second shot it certainly concentrates the mind. The 3rd runs back in the opposite direction so again the water is on your right hand side and runs along side the green making your second shot a tough option with a bunker protecting the left part of the green.

The first of the par 3s arrives at the 5th and is played uphill with bunkers protecting back and front, depending on the pin position you will need to carry that bunker and at 214-yards from the tips its lucky there are four teeing options to choose from.

The 6th is a stunning driving hole played from an elevated tee, with the dreaded water yet again on your right, this time with a water fountain feature. The risk and reward shot is to smash

your drive over that right hand bunker! Ready set float! Fortunately I did make the carry.

Elevated tees are a feature at Golf Son Muntaner and the front nine comes to a close with another, it's a wonderfully designed hole played downhill to a green that sits just below the clubhouse.

The signature hole comes at the par 3, 13th that has cameras behind you on the tee and one at the green so you can capture a great shot on film for posterity, but its from here that I feel the course really steps it up another gear. If you love to hit your driver then you will love the run home, but you have to be straight or you can find a lot of trouble. Back-to-back par 5s at the 15th and 16th give you a chance to gain a few shots, but I have to admit my favourite hole – and believe me there are a lot of great holes here – is the 18th.

Standing here on the tee looking down that thin avenue between the trees from this elevated position will either scare you or challenge you to hit your best shot. Holing out for a chip and putt par, I soak up the course as I look around and appreciate just what a great job Kurt Rossknecht has done again, I lift my well-earned cold beer in your direction sir, another wonderfully designed golf course in your collection.

Left: One of the treatment rooms at the refurbished Son Vida Spa. Below: Elevated tee at the sunning 6th hole at Golf Son Muntaner

I have to say he really did work wonders on my neck and shoulders. As always, I could feel myself drifting in and out of sleep

COURSE
VIDEO 



Son Vida Spa

Son Vida have spent over £2 million on updating their spa facilities and now offer an extensive range of treatments and also boost a Gym, Indoor Pool, Treatment Rooms, Wet Area, Relaxation Area and a Hair Salon.

James has instructed me that I need to take the sports massage – there is also a golf massage – but we felt this was the best compromise of the two to showcase what the hotel can offer. Waiting in the spa reception area was my masseuse Veselin who introduces himself and we head to one of the treatment rooms, the first thing I notice are the wooded slated windows which you have the choice of leaving open so you can soak up the views or you can have them closed, I choose to have them closed.

Veselin started by asking me if there were certain spots I wanted him to concentrate on and being a writer and stuck at a computer quite a lot my shoulders and neck always seem stiff, so I asked him to pay particular attention to that area. He started with my legs, then back and then up to my shoulders and I have to say he really did work wonders on my neck and shoulders. As always, I could feel myself drifting in and out of sleep and all too soon I could hear Veselin say he would step out while I change and take some water.

I did lay there for a few minutes contemplating if I could just go to sleep right there, but I slowly got myself together and had a glass of water and to my surprise Veselin had stayed outside waiting for me. I thanked him for a wonderful massage and made my way back to my room. I had a few hours before I needed to get ready for the evening meal, so yes you guessed it, I jumped into bed and with my body now feeling wonderfully relaxed I drifted off to sleep.

These trips end all too soon, I certainly could have done with Veselin's soothing hands at least one more time and just sitting around the pool soaking up those views, but it's time to depart and with the airport only a 20 minute journey away it wasn't long before I was checking in for my flight.

It has been a wonderful few days and the Castillo Hotel Son Vida certainly lives up to its reputation and high standards, I am sure with the new spa facilities you will no doubt be bumping into many a celebrity and VIP guest in the future.

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LA MANGA CLUB RESORT

Murcia, Spain

By JAMES MASON and TERESA BARNETT

PAR EXCELLENCE

On two separate visits **James Mason** and **Teresa Barnett** both return eulogising about facilities on offer at the wonderful La Manga resort





Sunrise over the South Courses 18th green

LA MANGA GOLF COURSES

SOUTH COURSE

No rest for the wicked and I am straight off the 18th on the North course and teeing it up on the 1st on the South. Standing on the back tee there is water running down the right and a bunker on the left that is perfectly placed in the landing area and at 430-yards I already feel this could be the tougher of the two courses. I make the fairway and play my ball into the middle of the green and watch as it starts to roll back down the green that turns out to run from back to front.

Like the North course the 2nd here is also a par 3, but this is no gentle short hole with water down the right and weighing in at 215-yards it is a tough little hole and I am already glad that I

warmed up by playing the North course.

The 504-yard hole par 5 4th hole has water to the right of the landing area ready to accept any wayward drives and then there is a little stream that runs up the right hand side of the fairway and feeds into a wide pond in front of the green making for a great risk and reward hole.

The back nine comes to a close with a dogleg left par 5 measuring in at 550-yards and offers you a great chance to go into the back nine with a birdie.

The back nine opens up with another dogleg left with bunkers left and right. The 11th has water down the left and then from the landing →

LA MANGA RESORT

La Manga Club, at three times the size of Monaco with over 300 days of sunshine each year sits in rolling hillsides, the scent of lemons from the groves dotted around the resort fill the air

In the run up to Christmas I always seem to gain a few extra pounds and unfortunately not the currency kind. I’m generally active but come the end of October, those long winter nights, shorter daylight hours and distinct chill in the air results in my fitness regime being consigned to my mind. I sometimes dream about deadlifts, the weight and increasing my reps but it ends there and that is where La Manga Club steps in.

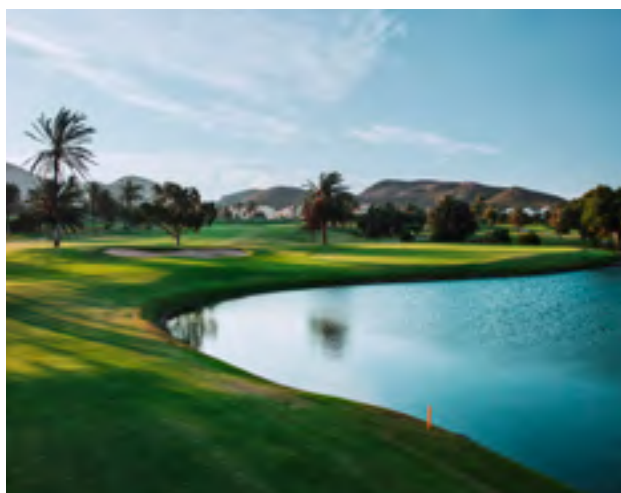
Just a 20-minute drive from Murcia-San Javier airport or an hour from Alicante, La Manga Club, at three times the size of Monaco with over 300 days of sunshine each year sits in rolling hillsides, the scent of lemons from the groves dotted around the resort fill the air. The Club also planted 200 pine trees in 2017 and was recognised and certified as being one of the collaborative companies to the Calblanque Regional Park, Monte de las Cenizas y Peña del Águila. This was an initiative promoted by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment that seeks to promote and facilitate the →

Aerial view of the Hotel Príncipe Felipe





Top left: 2nd green on the South Course. Top right: Aerial view of the 6th hole, South course. Bottom left: Water on the South Courses 12th hole. Bottom right: More water on the South Course this time the 16th hole.



COURSE VIDEO

zone you then have a decision to make. Do you go risk & reward and aim at the flag fly the water that protects the green or lay up and go for a chip and putt?

I elect to fly the water, there is a bank behind the green so don't be afraid to go long as the chances are the ball will come back down the bank onto the green.

I don't want to pick out any of the other holes as I feel the 11th starts a great run of well-designed and challenging holes where water comes into play on all but the 13th and 14th holes. The 18th has water both sides of the fairway and the green is surrounded by four big bunkers making it look like a green jewel in a desert from the fairway and at 494-yards it is all risk and reward and a fitting finale to a great golf course. →

Surrounded by four big bunkers making it look like a green jewel in a desert from the fairway and at 494-yards it is all risk and reward and a fitting finale to a great golf course.

Left: Soaking in the wonderful La Manga scenery while relaxing by the pool



enjoyment of this natural setting in a sustainable way. In addition to the pines, thousands of palm trees line the golf courses adding to the many varieties of flora and fauna, I feel with every breath I take while I am here that my body is rejuvenating.

For most, La Manga Club is synonymous with celebrity, luxury and sport, with golf, tennis and football springing to mind. The resort is classed as one of the best sports and leisure destinations in the world and was nominated for four awards at the World Travel Awards (the 'Oscars' for the tourism industry) winning two, Best Sports Resort and the Best Resort and Villas of Europe. The beds have been slept in by the likes of Sir Cliff Richard, Liam Neeson, Tom Jones and the stunning Selma Hayek. Juliet Binoche, Matt Damon and the delectable David

Beckham have walked these corridors. It is the dream getaway for any fitness enthusiast and has played hosted a who's who of national and international football teams including Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, Lokomotiv Moscow, Liverpool, Chelsea and Bayern Munich.

Tennis stars from all over the world come here to play as La Manga Club has hosted high profile events including the Federations and Davis Cups, and remains an official winter training base of the LTA. With two paddle courts and 28 full tennis courts – 20 clay, 4 artificial grass and 4 hard courts – every surface to practice on is catered for. All ages and abilities can have coaching at the tennis academy which has weekly tournaments and social activities. Unfortunately I could not channel my inner Serena, mainly because my hand-eye coordination is as bad as my singing and there was no need for →



Tennis stars from all over the world come here to play as La Manga Club has hosted high profile events including the Federations and Davis Cups



Below left and bottom right:
Relax by the Jacuzzi and
stunning views at the La
Manga Spa. Below right: Heat
massage at the spa.

anyone else to witness what a total disaster on the court I would be.

Golf is one of the main reasons to stay at the La Manga Club – see James’ reviews. Every level of golfer is challenged by the three 18-hole championship courses known as North, South and West courses designed by Arnold Palmer, Robert Putman and Dave Thomas respectively. The legendary Severiano Ballesteros designed the Pitch & Putt Par-47 course in 1980 and was La Manga Club’s golf touring professional from 1980 to 1985. However, if tennis, golf and football are not enough to satisfy your needs, you can opt to cycle, run, trek and scuba dive on the Mar Menor. I wanted an active weekend and my friend Lara wanted a relaxing trip, lying in the sun on our terrace with a book. We both made it to the leisure centre, Lara opted for a swim I popped into the High Performance Sports

Centre where cardiologists, nutritionists and physiologists put elite athletes and the super fit through their paces, as I unconsciously pinched my spare tyre I realised it was not the place for me but the well-equipped gym was.

It’s not all sport, the wellness centre alone is worth the visit, heated pools, sauna, steam bath, therapeutic showers and hydromassage beds, we followed this up with an Indian head massage. This 5,000-year-old practice left me relaxed but invigorated and with enough energy to make it back to our suite for a nap. A treatment at the spa is a must.

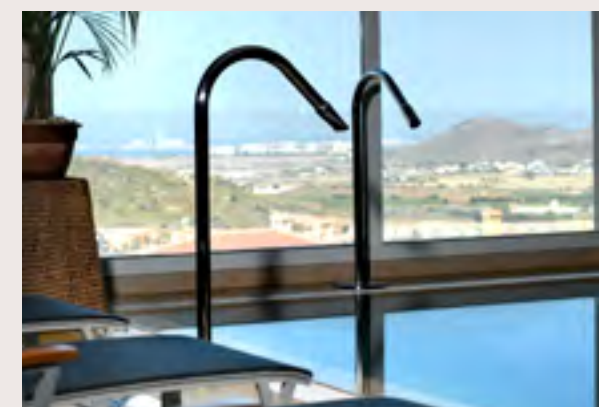
All the walking, talking, lifting and lounging left us in need of sustenance and I’m not talking about a salad. We dined at La Bodega on the first night, the chicken in garlic, prawns and octopus were delicious and the service impeccable. We were tempted to return the following night but restaurant Asia was a must on →

NORTH COURSE

After a hearty breakfast I am looking at the sunrise over the 18th on the South course. I couldn’t wait to get out on the course, it’s just before 7am when I finally tee up my ball on the 1st on the North course. The hole is played from an elevated tee looking down the fairway, it may only be 336-yards, but the tee shot needs to be threaded through a gap in the tree line so I would make sure you warm up on the fantastic practice facilities before you hit the course. →

Above: Sign to the 1st and 10th tees on the North Course. Below: Aerial view of the North Course.

COURSE VIDEO 



The course has a gentle start and the par 3 2nd hole is a beautiful little hole at just 115-yards. This is the start of some wonderful views out to sea and at this time in the morning with the sun just gently rising in a clear blue sky it really is a great time to be playing.

The 4th is another great par 3 that plays from an elevated tee to a green that is 193-yards below you and with the orange sun climbing in the sky and the hills that surround La Manga just makes you want to play great golf.

I am really impressed by the presentation of the course, the greens are in great condition and the fairways and tees are immaculate. I am really enjoying the Robert D. Putman designed track and the palm trees that he imported here from California really make the routing of the track very pleasurable.

I hadn't realised that the green outside my room in the hotel was the 9th on the North course, it is a great finishing hole to the front

nine, your second shot is played to uphill over a ravine to a two-tiered green and I make sure I take an extra club just in case someone is watching!!

Like the first hole the 10th is played from an elevated tee and runs parallel to the 9th and 1st holes, the trees are not in play from your tee shot here and at only 320-yards some of the bigger hitters may fancy their chances of driving this green, but beware it is guarded by bunkers at the front and front left and right of the green.

There is more water on the back nine and I really enjoy the stretch of holes from the → 14th to the 18th with my favourites being the 14th and the way the green sits in the trees, and the par 3 16th with its upside down saucer type green that has some great complexes in it. Like the 9th hole the 18th green sits in its own little amphitheatre and is a great finishing hole to a wonderful course.

I am really impressed by the presentation of the course, the greens are in great condition and the fairways and tees are immaculate.

Below: Flags surrounding the 18th green on the North Course



Above: One of the many room designs available at La Manga Resort

our list. The ambience and the food lived up to expectations; we followed this up with a few cocktails at the hotels piano bar.

Where to stay

The array of accommodation will suit the budgets and tastes of all. The 4 star Las Lomas apartment complex is ideal for families and includes breakfast. There are also luxury villas and apartments to rent, perfect for a group of friends but for short stays I would recommend the 5 star Hotel La Manga Club Principe Felipe, I am currently writing this review from one of the Royal Executive Suites, it is the epitome of understated luxury with breathtaking views of the North course. The bed could easily sleep four and the bathroom was large enough to skate in, but a word of warning, if like me you are vertically challenged, remember your munchkin status before filling the marble bathtub and sliding in. The turn down service provided more than a piece

of chocolate each night; a positive quote was left on my pillow to ponder on while I drifted off to sleep.

Christmas is over and I have definitely gained a few more pounds, the English weather leaves me in no mood to exercise but the prospect of returning to La Manga Club with its warm weather and excellent facilities gives my spirit a lift.

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