

CZECH REPUBLIC

We head off the beaten track to review five golf courses in Ostrava, where fairways become ski slopes in the winter

ALABAMA

Sadness, tears and joy. The highs, lows and hope of the Northern Alabama Music Trail

STAY, PLAY & SPA

Weekend, short stay getaway or spa days? We bring you hotel & spa reviews from Switzerland and the USA

WALES

Monica tours north and south Wales and takes on this year's Women's British Open course

PLANET GOLF

REVIEW

ISSUE 32

VIEW.COM

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

We bring you 24 golf equipment, travel gadgets and ethical Christmas gift ideas

EQUIPMENT & APPAREL REVIEWS

We have the latest releases from Abacus Sportswear, Cleveland, MacGregor, Mileseey, TaylorMade, Under Armour. Along with our Pro Tips from Paul and Shain

WELCOME

As we head towards the festive season we bring you another bumper issue. We start off with our 24 Christmas gift ideas to help give you a nudge in the right direction for that golfer, traveller in your life along with some ethical gift ideas, all with links so you can shop from your sofa!

As we head into winter in the Northern hemisphere, Peter brings the vibrant colours and white sandy beaches of the Bahamas. Jane heads to Alabama and the Northern Alabama Music Trail.

This issue we have two golf destinations for you. Monica tees it up at Royal Porthcawl before the Women's British Open, while also teeing it up at 2010 Ryder Cup host Celtic Manor and a few other world-class courses along the way. I head to the unexpected golf destination of Ostrava in the Czech Republic, which was certainly an eye opener.

In the Play, Stay and Spa section Peter brings you Ross Bridge Golf Resort and Spa in Alabama and the renowned Kulm Hotel in St Moritz, Switzerland.

On the golf front we have equipment and apparel reviews from Abacus Sportswear, Cleveland, MacGregor Golf, Mileseey, TaylorMade and Under Armour and Pro Tips from

Paul and Shain.

I think all that should keep you going while you sit round the fire with a glass of mulled wine.

As I sit here typing, I can't help reflect on the two years of the genocide in Gaza, and while I am encouraged by the humanity shown by the citizens of the world that have taken to the streets in their millions, it is also now clear to see that most Western politicians care more about their funding from the Israeli lobby than the people who have put them in office.

I hope you all remember that when it comes to vote next time in your respective countries. It is time especially in the US and UK for the two-party system to come to an end, and I would urge you all to vote for parties that put humanity and hope first, rather than division and hate. And for those new parties to arrest all those who contributed to the genocide and send them to The Hague for trials on war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Having said that, all of us at PGR Magazine raise our glasses of mulled wine and wish you and your families a joyful, healthy and peaceful festive season and may the new year be filled with love and laughter

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AL RI OT TI ED

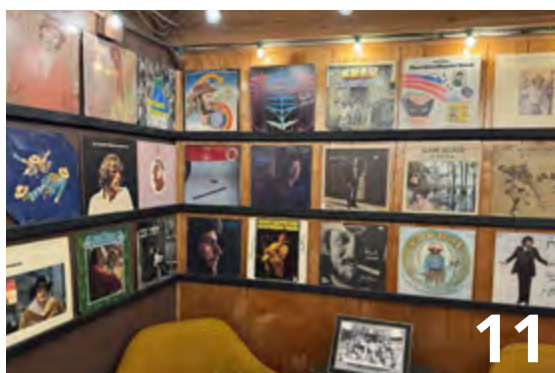
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Interactive links

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

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



- p 4 Christmas gift ideas**
 24 gift ideas, for that golfer or traveller in your life along with some ethical gift ideas, all with links so you can shop with ease from your sofa
- p 7 Bahamas in focus**
 Peter Ellegard points and shoots his Canon camera to bring you the colours, people and history of the Bahamas
- p 11 Alabama**
 "If music be the food of love, play on" – Jane brings, you sadness, tears and joy from the Northern Alabama Music Trail
- p 19 Wales**
 With the Women's British Open being played in Wales, Monica heads west to tees it up on some of the best courses in the principality
- p 28 Czech Republic**
 Staking its claim to become a golf destination, James Mason heads to Ostrava in the Czech Republic and finds some great golf courses as well as beer
- p 36 Equipment and apparel**
 We review the latest equipment and apparel from Abacus Sportswear, Cleveland, MacGregor Golf, Mileseey, TaylorMade and Under Armour
- p 54 Ask the Pro**
 Paul and Shain bring you two different chip shots to add to your armoury and help turn bogeys into pars and improve your percentages around the green
- p 57 Play, Stay & Spa**
 James and Peter bring you reviews of two perfect places to stay, play & spa in Switzerland and Alabama

STENZON

REVIEW



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24 gift ideas

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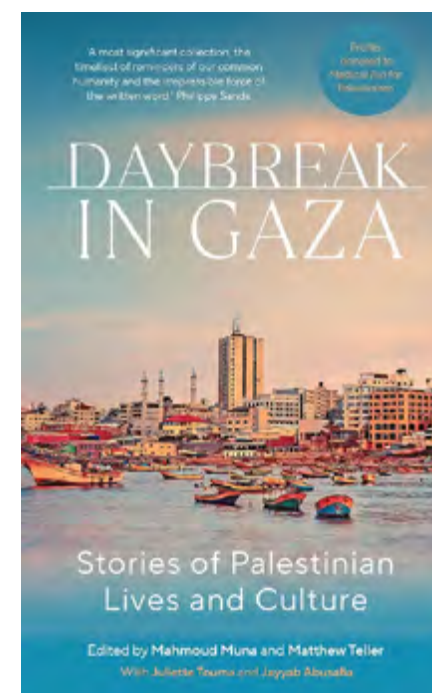
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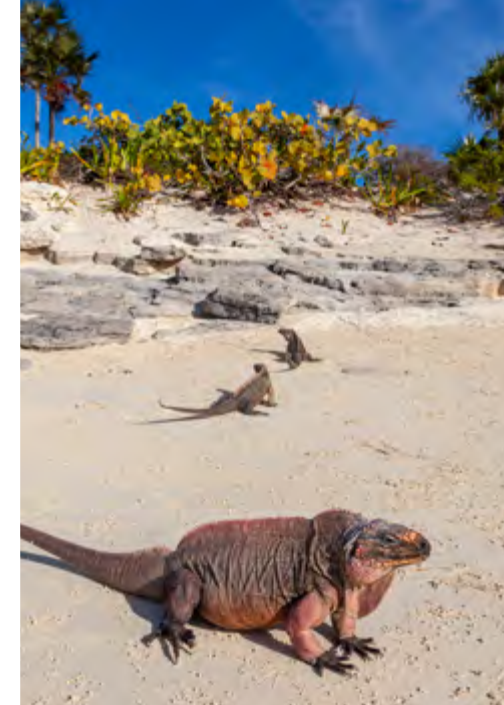
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IMPRESSIONS FROM THE BAHAMAS

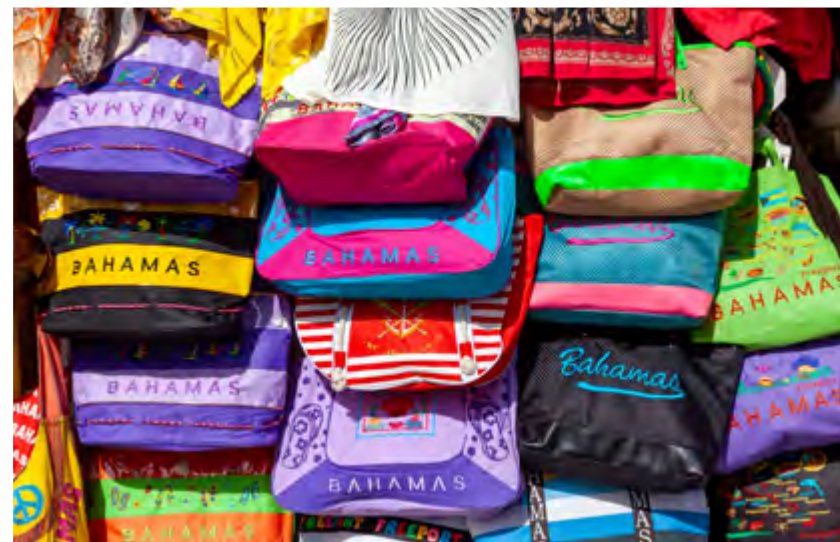


Left: Deserted cay, Exuma
Below: New Plymouth, Green
Turtle Cay, Abaco



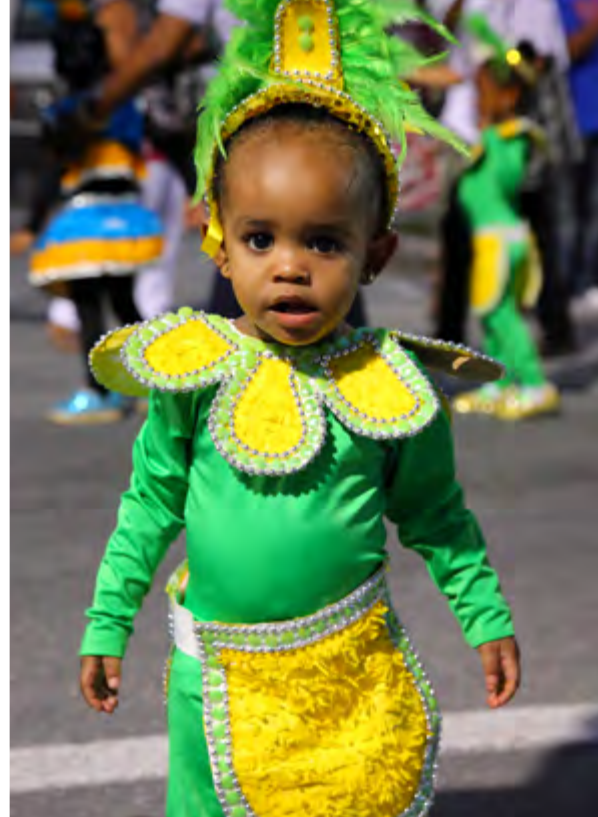
Left: Iguanas
on deserted
cay, Exuma

Left: Port Lucaya
Marketplace, Grand
Bahama
Right: Sunset
over Treasure Cay
marina, Abaco



Left: Bahamas
bags, Port Lucaya
Marketplace, Grand
Bahama

Below and right: Junior
Junkanoo, Freeport, Grand
Baham



Above: Butler
delivering
breakfast, Sandals
Emerald Bay,
Exuma
Right: Junior
Junkanoo, Freeport,
Grand Bahama



Above: Port Lucaya Marketplace,
Grand Bahama



Left: Dolphins at
Sanctuary Bay,
Port Lucaya, Grand
Baham

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE BAHAMAS

Right: Junior
Junkanoo, Freeport,
Grand Bahama
Far right: Sign at
Little Harbour,
Abaco



IMPRESSIONS FROM THE BAHAMAS

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

Right: Swimming
pig, Big Major Cay,
Exuma
Below: Rusting
yacht, Grand
Bahama



Above: Old Jail, New
Plymouth, Green Turtle Cay,
Abaco
Right: Junkanoo dancer,
Nassau

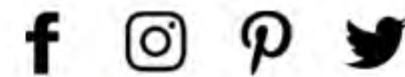


Above: Little Harbour, Abaco
Right: Conch fisherman, Paradise Island, Nassau



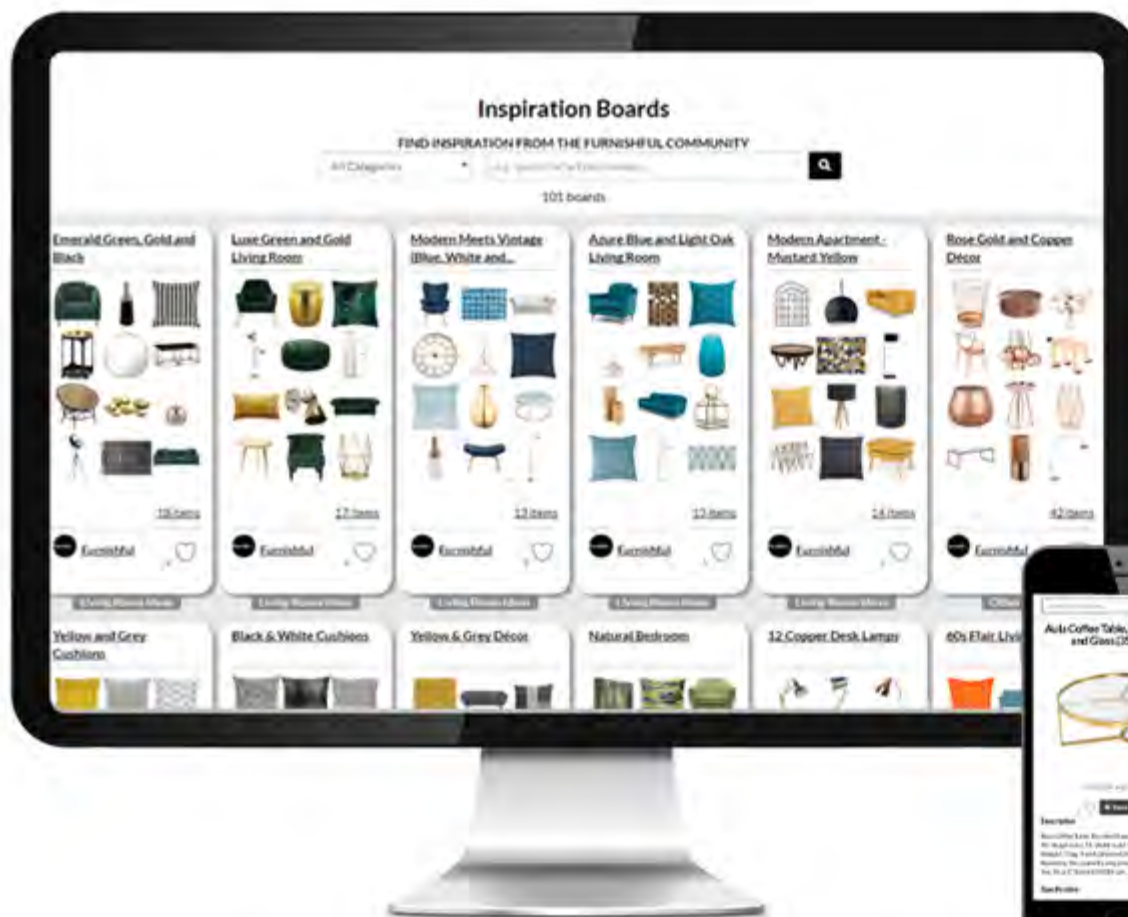
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WHERE THE RIVER SINGS

Join Jane Finn as she journeys from Birmingham to Muscle Shoals, tracing the legendary music trail and discovering the spirit behind Alabama's "Song of the South"

BY JANE FINN

As I crisscross the mighty Tennessee River following the Northern Alabama Music Trail I allow the songs of the South to be my guide and at every intersection I discover the cuisine, culture, history and traditions of the South are anything but simple.

DANCING OUR WAY FORWARD; JUNETEENTH IN BIRMINGHAM

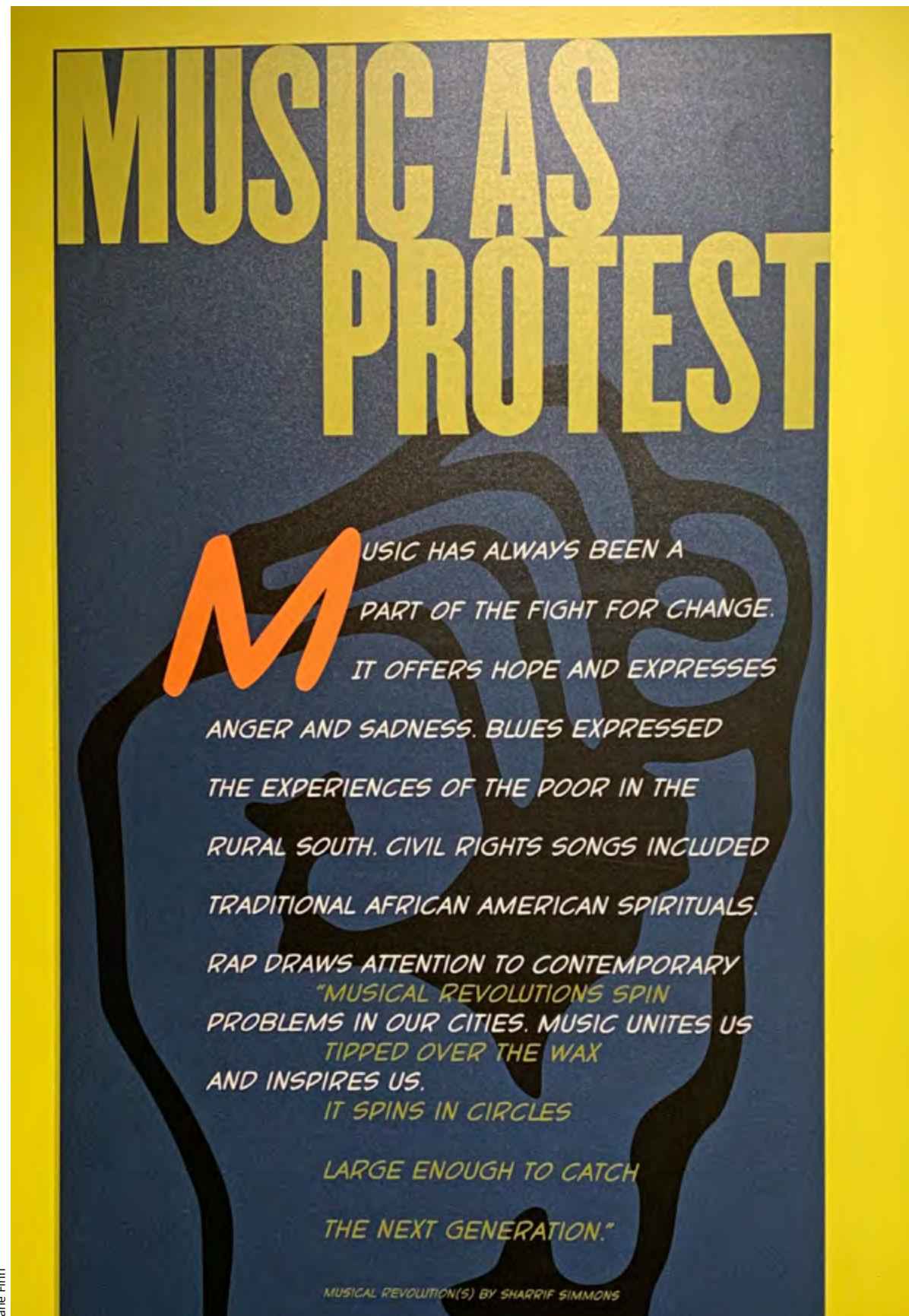
It's Juneteenth. A day of remembrance, reflection and celebration.

The clouds that have hung over Birmingham for the past several days have cleared and the sun beams brightly overhead, so taking a leisurely stroll through Kelly Ingram Park while I acquaint myself with the city's history is a pleasure. Drawn by the rhythmic beat of African drums and the sweet strains of a reggae beat, I soon find myself standing in front of the 16th Street Baptist Church.

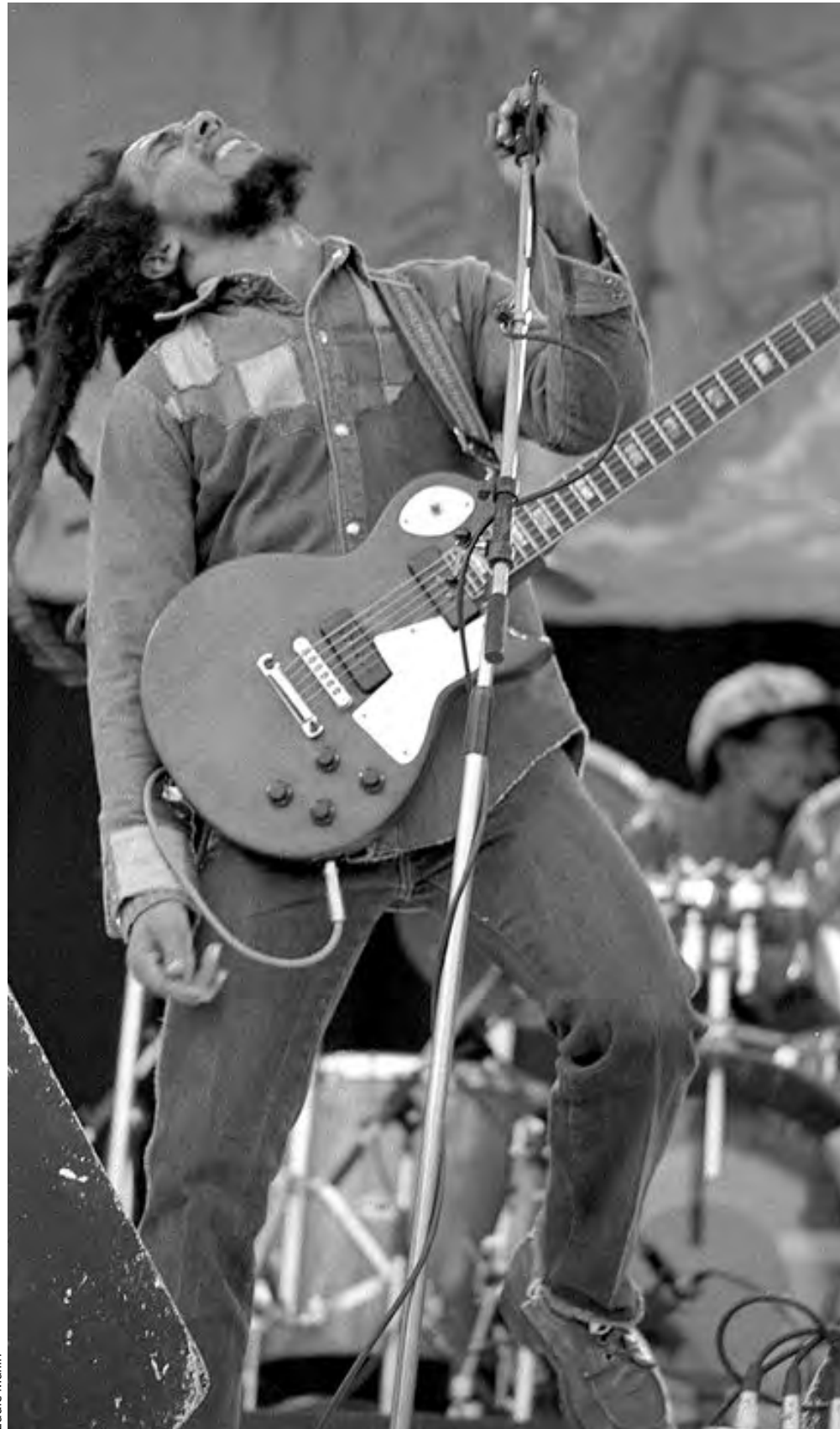
The freedom celebrations are in full swing, but before I get lost in the music, I feel compelled →

Right: Poster
at the Human
Rights Gallery,
Birmingham Civil
Rights Institute

Jane Finn



“Drawn by the rhythmic beat of African drums and the sweet strains of a reggae beat, I soon find myself standing in front of the 16th Street Baptist Church”



Eddie Mallin

“Very faintly I hear the echoes of songs by Pink – “Dear Mr President”, Bob Marley’s “War”, and the Chicks – “Not Ready to Make Nice”

to visit the Civil Rights Institute to gain a deeper understanding of the day’s significance for those who have gathered across North America to sing, dance, advocate and pray for justice, liberty and inclusion.

As I make my way through a series of interconnecting exhibits, voices from the not-so-distant past speak to me. Their stories of oppression and resistance, resilience and hope are humbling and inspiring, a stark reminder of what freedom truly means, and the sacrifices made to secure and preserve it.

My last stop is the Human Rights Gallery. I take a seat to watch a video depicting global struggles in pursuit of justice. Very faintly I hear the echoes of songs by Pink – “Dear Mr President”, Bob Marley’s “War”, and the Chicks – “Not Ready to Make Nice”. Behind me a poster entitled Music as Protest – reminding me that “music has always been a part of the fight for change”. Suddenly, it all comes together when I look across the aisle to a quote by Justin Dart Jr stating: “Find your truth, then live it” followed by the question, “What do you stand for?” – That statement hits home and it hits hard. And that question is one I frequently ask these days.

Outside, the tempo is upbeat, optimistic and future-focused. Ebony Arrington is playing Slide Tribe enticing spectators to slip seamlessly onto the floor. I’m amazed at how effortlessly strangers can move in a fluid, rhythmic harmony as if they have been dancing together, forever.

My feet are tapping, and my body is swaying to the music, but still, I hesitate to join the throng of dancers because I am unsure of the steps. However, everyone is so welcoming and encouraging, I’m drawn in and put my best foot forward. What I have seen today is not my

lived experience, but I have more awareness of past events and know that if I remain curious, open-minded and open-hearted, I can learn, expand my world view and potentially, make a difference.

FEEL THE VIBE

Huntsville is renowned for the US Space & Rocket Centre. While I admire the innovation and the ingenuity that has taken man to the moon and beyond, for me, Huntsville rocks in more ways than one. →

Left: Bob Marley performing in Ireland in 1980
Below: Birmingham Civil Rights Institute



Jane Finn



Dennis Keim



Dave Finn

Far left: Concert in Big Spring Park, Huntsville
Left: Cigar Box Guitar store owners Jeff & Tara Mello

“As the first musician takes to the stage, a hush falls over the audience when this evening’s host announces tonight is this young man’s first public performance”

The Camp sits at the gateway to Mid-City, Huntsville’s up and coming mixed-use development. It is here that I receive my introduction to the city’s vibrant music scene. A sprawling 140-hectare campus, it’s far more than an outdoor venue, it’s a community hub, renowned for its support of local musicians and artists.

It’s Open Mic night and the venue is packed. An array of food trucks and pop-up stands form a square, creating a lively atmosphere. Under twinkling string lights, families and friends reunite and soon, every picnic table in the open-

air seating area is filled. Locals and visitors alike buzz with excitement and anticipation, wondering whose career might be launched here tonight.

As the first musician takes to the stage, a hush falls over the audience when this evening’s host announces tonight is this young man’s first public performance. I can hear his nervousness in his tentative first notes but within seconds the crowd gets behind him, and he finds his voice.

The evening features both new and seasoned artists, their soulful sounds appreciated by an unwavering crowd. The night closes with a

heartfelt rendition of “Sweet Home Alabama” and judging from the murmurs as people depart, they’re still feeling good vibrations. It’s equally clear they’ll return for more.

GUITAR BAND

Through a conversation with Erica, a passionate local, I learn that Huntsville is home to the world’s longest-running Cigar Box Guitar Festival. Every year, the three-day event in May attracts creative players from around the globe who want to showcase their talents while raising funds for music education. Having missed this

year’s event, I settle for the next best option – a visit to Lowe Mill Arts & Entertainment Complex.

As I enter through Door#15, several artist studios vie for my attention but around the corner I hear a few guitar strums that lead me directly to the world’s only Cigar Box Guitar store. Standing timidly on the threshold, co-owner Tara Mello urges me to take a seat as the show is about to begin. Little do I know I will be recruited as a member of an impromptu band.

The store is crammed with an assortment of guitars crafted from old cigar boxes. Each one

has a unique look and sound, and Jeff, Tara’s husband and business partner assures me they’re easy to play as he thrusts one into my hand.

Glancing around the room, I decide we are certainly a motley crew when everyone admits to having little or no musical talent. However, Jeff is unfazed, fearless, and determined. Within minutes we learn a few simple chords, and soon we are playing “Row, Row Your Boat” and “This Little Light of Mine” like a well-oiled machine. Truly amazing and astounding. Everyone is beaming, proud they’ve mastered something they’d never done before but →



Dave Finn

Above: The cliff rises 100' feet above the Rattlesnake Saloon

would certainly try again!

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

On my third evening in Alabama, I board a bus with thirty others, bound for the Rattlesnake Saloon. Leaving the grounds of the Renaissance Shoals Resort and Spa in Florence, we soon find ourselves in the remote, rustic part of the State known as Tuscumbia County. The area is sparsely populated and the only signage I spy is a marker for the Coon Dog Cemetery. We're supposed to be at the Rattlesnake Saloon by eight o'clock and as the minutes tick by, I'm beginning to think we're lost when we turn into

a large field with an array of outbuildings, but nothing that even vaguely resembles a bar and restaurant.

Suddenly a pickup truck pulls up, and like kids, twelve of us pile into the back for a quick ride to the valley floor and a honky-tonk like no other. The 'bandstand' is built around and under a multi-layered cave, an ancient 'bloodshed' used by Native Americans as temporary refuge during the hunting season. The natural grotto has the most amazing acoustics, amplifying the Crossroad Band lead singer's voice as he leads the crowd in a rousing version of one of Alabama's most cherished tunes – Song of the South. Country music in Alabama is not just

nostalgia, it's a tribute to the changing times and tonight as I dine on simple fare – deep fried beans, chicken tenders and homemade apple pie, I feel like I'm part of the collective. Like this is where, for this evening, I belong.

RETURN TO THE RIVER THAT SINGS.

The Tennessee River is deeply tied to another part of the State's history that needs to be remembered and reconciled. In the 1830s, thousands of Native Americans, living east of the Mississippi were displaced, often violently, and forced to migrate to Oklahoma. Among them was 16-year-old Te-Lah-Nay from the

Yuchi nation.

After countless days on the trail under the blazing sun or braving winter storms, Te-Lah-Nay reached the reservation, but when she knelt by the shore, she declared that the river didn't "sing", and if she stayed, she would surely die. This was the impetus for a solo journey that would take five years for Te-Lah-Nay to return to her ancestral lands.

Her story has been passed down in the oral tradition, through generations, and became the inspiration for Tom Hendrix's tribute to his great-great-grandmother – the Wall of Tears.

There is no website, no marketing, and no promotion for this sacred site, only a small →

"The 'bandstand' is built around and under a multi-layered cave, an ancient 'bloodshed' used by Native Americans as temporary refuge during the hunting season. The natural grotto has the most amazing acoustics, amplifying the Crossroad Band lead singer's voice as he leads the crowd in a rousing version of one of Alabama's most cherished tunes – Song of the South"

wooden marker at Milepost 338, 10 miles northwest of Florence that points to a dirt driveway leading to the family's homestead. Tom believed, as do his descendants, that those seeking peace and solace will intuitively find their way here.

As I approach the Wall of Tears, I feel the energy, love and respect it took to create this monument. Over three decades, Hendrix gathered, over 8,500 stones from the river and surrounding fields. Guided by the teachings of the elders, and rock children, he built two parallel six-foot walls that weave 1.2 miles through the forest - representing both legs of Te-La-Nay's journey. As I walk the path, I

notice how it rises and falls, reflecting the trials and triumphs she experienced on the long road home. Standing alone in the prayer circle, I can sense Hendrix's great-great grandmother's loss but also her joy when she was reunited with her beloved Tennessee River. Tom Hendrix passed away on February 24, 2017, but his legacy is set in stone, forever intertwined with the story of his ancestor's journey back to the river that sings.

I'LL TAKE YOU THERE!

I've never been on a tour as engaging and enlightening as the one I took at 3614 Jackson Highway in Sheffield, Alabama. Stepping through the doors brought a whole new meaning

to The Staple Singers' number one hit in the 70s - "I'll Take You There."

In 1960, Rick Hall had a vision that changed the course of Alabama's music history. He dreamed of bringing Alabama's sound to the world and with grit, determination and the last remaining dollars in his pocket founded FAME recording studio. This would become the future home of the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, affectionately known as 'The Swampers'. So unique was their sound - a blend of rock, blues, and soul that they attracted the likes of Wilson Pickett, Paul Simon, Jimmy Buffet, Cher, Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Stones.

When Percy Sledge recorded "When a Man

Loves a Woman", his rapid rise in the charts propelled Muscle Shoals into the limelight. While The Swampers didn't seek fame and fortune, over the next two decades, they would lay down the tracks to more than 500 songs and produce 75 platinum and gold recordings. Extraordinary musicians, they also bore witness to the dreams, desires, and drama of legendary stars.

When Rick Hall confronted Aretha Franklin's husband on the balcony of a nearby motel, it led to a split between him and his partner Jerry Wexler. The Swampers chose Wexler and together they launched Muscle Shoals Sound Studio. For next 10 years, both studios would →

Bottom Left:
Wichahpi
Commemorative
Wall of Tears.
Middle: Muscle
Shoals Sound
museum and
recording studio
Right: A collage
of some of the
greatest musicians
to record here

“Two parallel walls consisting of stones, Hendrix gathered more than 8,500 stones, by hand, from the river and surrounding fields to build two parallel walls that weave 1.2 miles through the forest representing the two legs of Te-Lay-Nah’s journey”



Melissa Dixon



Dave Finn



Dave Finn

thrive, attracting singers, songwriters and musicians to their shores. As their reputation grew, more studios set up shop, eventually leading Muscle Shoals to proclaim itself as the ‘Music Recording Capital of the World’.

The original Muscle Shoals Sound Studio closed in the 80s but in 2017 legendary rapper Dr Dre of NWA and now Beats Electronics made a significant investment, in time, energy and money to restore the building at 3614 Jackson Hwy. Today, FAME and Muscle Shoals Sound both serve as museums and active recording studios. Spend a morning or an afternoon in

either, exploring their history through the eyes of a local musician, and I guarantee your spirit will lift as you revel in a trip down memory lane.

ALABAMA’S EVERLASTING SONG

Alabama’s music is a bridge, spanning centuries, crossing divides and welcoming new voices. It connects front porches, church choirs, indie clubs, and music studios to the concert stage. In its melodies and lyrics, stories of sharecroppers, civil rights activists, and rock legends intermingle, creating a sound that is both universal and unmistakably Southern.

Everywhere I travelled, it felt like the past and present were converging. Music in Alabama is a living story, continually evolving, connecting, healing, celebrating and inspiring. Here, the past and present don’t simply coexist; they dance together – binding yesterday to today, and today to the promise of tomorrow.

I don’t know if the Beatles ever recorded in Alabama, but I do know that during my time here, I completed a magical, mystery tour. For those open to the experience, I know you will find the same sense of discovery and wonder along Alabama’s music trail.

“Music in Alabama is a living story, continually evolving, connecting, healing, celebrating and inspiring. Here, the past and present don’t simply coexist; they dance together – binding yesterday to today, and today to the promise of tomorrow”

Right: Muscle Shoals Sound Studio featured on the cover of Cher’s sixth album
Far right: The restored and revitalized Lowe Mill Arts & Entertainment Center, Huntsville



WHERE TO STAY
The Renaissance Shoals Resort & Spa
W:marriott.com
T: +1 256 246 3600

THINGS TO DO
Birmingham Civil Rights Institute
W: bcri.org
T: +1 205 328 9696

The Camp
W: explorethecamp.com
T: +1 256 489 4157

Cigar Box Guitar Store and Lowe Mill Arts & Entertainment Centre
W: thecigarboxguitarstore.com
T: + 1 256 886 8554

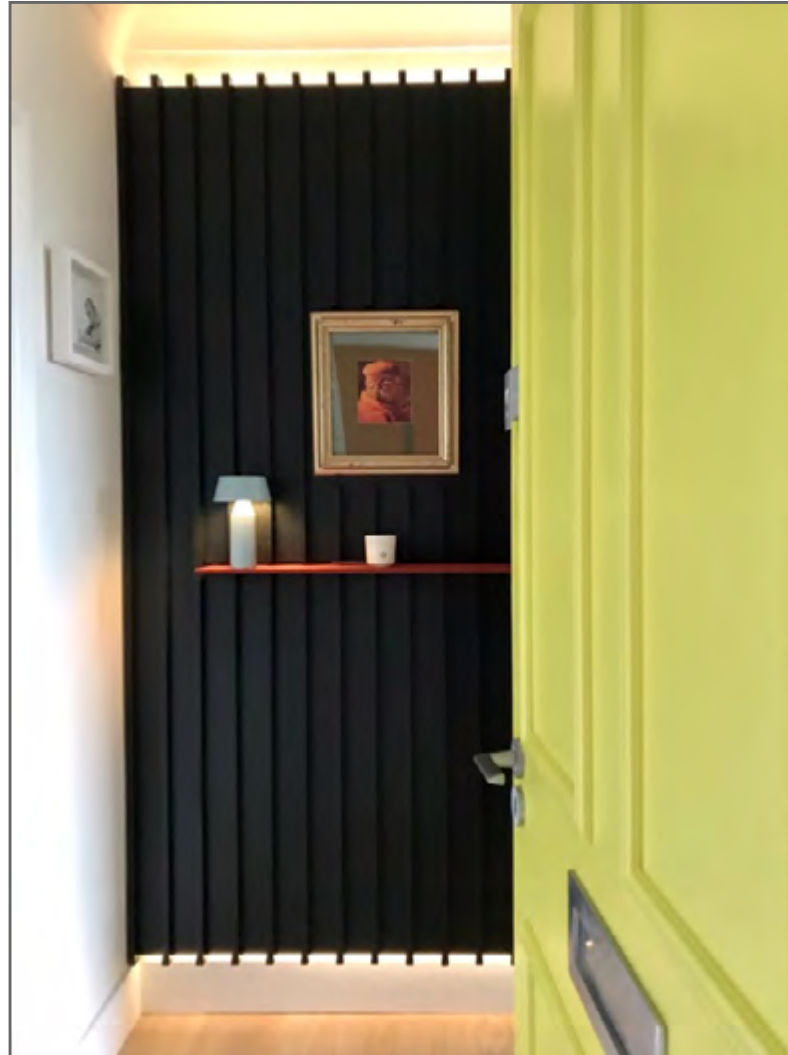
US Space & Rocket Centre
W: rocketcenter.com
T: +1 800 6378 7223

The Rattlesnake Saloon
W: rattlesnakesaloon.net
T: +1 256 370 7720

Wall of Tears
T: +1 256 764 3617
No website: Open daily 8 am- 4 pm

FAME Recording Studios
W: famestudios.com
T:+1 256 381 0801

Muscle Shoals Sound Studio
T: +1 256 978 5151
W: MuscleShoalsSoundStudio.org



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A DRAGON'S LAIR

"My armour is like tenfold shields, my teeth are swords, my claws spears, the shock of my tail a thunderbolt, my wings a hurricane, and my breath death!" Monica Akakpo heads into the Dragon's den to discover if the golf courses of Wales live up to Smaug's boast!



BY **MONICA AKAKPO**
PHOTOGRAPHY: CROWN COPYRIGHT, UNLESS STATED

In May, I hopped on a Wales golf press trip and honestly, it was the best kind of whirlwind. One minute I was standing on the Ryder Cup fairways at Celtic Manor, the next I was fighting the famous bunkers at Royal Porthcawl (host of the 2025 AIG Women’s Open). From there it was north to Royal St David’s, where Harlech Castle watches over every shot, and then out to the edge-of-the-world drama at Nefyn Golf Club. And when the golf was done? The hotels stole the show. Think cosy country charm at The Grove of Narberth, fairytale vibes at Portmeirion, and a warm welcome at the Vale Resort. The best part? Wales is compact, so you get links golf one day and rolling countryside the next. It’s golf, history, scenery and plenty of laughs all packed into one trip — and trust me, you’ll never want it to end.



The many faces of Wales
Top row left to right: Waun Mawn Standing Stones, Pembrokeshire, giant chess at Portmeirion
Bottom row left to right: Puffin on Skomer Island, Harlech Castle, deserted beach on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path

CELTIC MANOR 2010

W: celtic-manor.com

As I wake up I can feel my excitement levels rising and after a hearty breakfast, I am heading to the 2010 Course, better known as the host venue of the 2010 Ryder Cup. As I walk off the 18th green the course lives up to its reputation and was everything and more of what I expected it to be. It offers a thrilling and challenging 18-hole experience. It's a visually striking course

with dramatic water features, strategic bunkering and undulating fairways that will test every aspect of your golf game.

One of the standout experiences on the course was the par-3 challenge hole, where guests are invited to participate in a unique contest. For £15, players take one shot: land closest to the pin to win a complimentary round of golf; miss the green and the amount is credited to your pro shop account. Achieve the rare hole-in-one, and you're rewarded with an astonishing 10-year golf membership. It's a lighthearted yet competitive feature that adds an extra layer of excitement to my round.

Notably, Celtic Manor is not a members-only club. It welcomes visiting golfers year-round, making this world-class experience accessible to the general public — a rarity for a course of such calibre.

Additional touches enhance the visitor experience even further. At the first tee, every guest has their photo taken by a professional staff photographer — a small but thoughtful gesture that adds a personal memory to the day. After the round, the clubhouse offers an ideal setting to unwind, with excellent food, modern facilities and panoramic views of the grounds.

Equally commendable was the resort staff,

whose warmth, professionalism and hospitality elevated every aspect of my stay. From the golf team to the hospitality crew, the service was consistently attentive and welcoming.

With two additional courses — The Montgomerie and Roman Road — which I am yet to play, it's clear that Celtic Manor has more to offer than can be covered in a single visit. But if my first two days are an indication, it's a destination that effortlessly balances prestige with approachability, making it a must-visit for golf enthusiasts travelling through Wales.

Attached is a video of when James played the 2010 course. →

ADDITIONAL TOUCHES ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE EVEN FURTHER. AT THE FIRST TEE, EVERY GUEST HAS THEIR PHOTO TAKEN BY A PROFESSIONAL STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER — A SMALL BUT THOUGHTFUL GESTURE THAT ADDS A PERSONAL MEMORY TO THE DAY



COURSE
VIDEO 

Far left: Stone work at the 14th hole
Top left: Looking out across the 2010 course
Left: View looking back up the 18th hole from the green

ROYAL PORTHCAWL GOLF CLUB

W: royalporthcawl.com

After an early start I must admit I am tingling with excitement as I am off to Royal Porthcawl Golf Club – home of this year's Women's British Open and one of the most famous and respected courses in Wales.

From the moment we arrive, I can see why it's such a big deal. The weather is perfect: blue skies, sunshine, and just enough wind to make

things interesting. The views are amazing, with the Bristol Channel stretching out on one side and beautiful sand dunes on the other.

The staff are really welcoming, and even though it's a private members' club, they make us feel at home.

And starting my day seeing the AIG Women's Open trophy up close and personal, how could things get any better. The AIG representative has brought the trophy down especially for us. We have a chat with some of the ladies' members about why Royal Porthcawl was chosen to host this year's tournament, and it was clear how much pride they have in their course.

The course itself is stunning but tough. The signature hole is giving me a real challenge. My ball has landed in one of the famous bunkers, and these are not ordinary bunkers they're deep with tall, steep sides. It takes me six shots from the same spot to finally get out! I couldn't help but laugh, but it also showed me just how challenging this course is going to be for the competitors teeing it up in The Open.

One interesting rule here is about golf buggies; you can only use one if you have a medical condition, and you must show proof. One of my colleagues had a recent knee injury, so she is allowed a buggy, but the rest of us are walking. Honestly, walking makes it even

better because you really get to take in the views and the details of the course.

Royal Porthcawl is more than just a golf course, it's part of golf history. It has hosted some of the biggest events in golf, yet it still feels like a hidden gem for those who haven't played it.

If you ever get the chance to play here, take it. You'll get world-class golf, incredible views and a warm welcome. Just make sure you practice your bunker shots, as you might need them!

Attached is a to a video of when James played the course before the Senior British Open. →

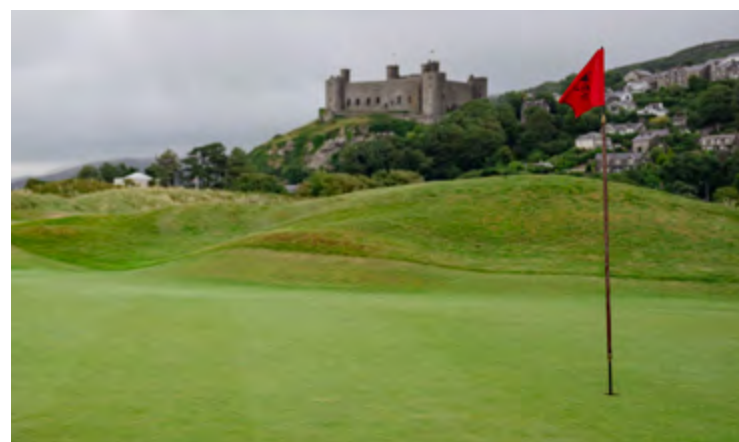
COURSE VIDEO

Bottom left:
Looking down the
fairway at the 2nd
Below: Sunset over
the 1st green
Bottom: The
famous deep
bunkers at the 14th

THE COURSE ITSELF IS STUNNING BUT TOUGH. THE SIGNATURE HOLE IS GIVING ME A REAL CHALLENGE. MY BALL HAS LANDED IN ONE OF THE FAMOUS BUNKERS, AND THESE ARE NOT ORDINARY BUNKERS THEY'RE DEEP WITH TALL, STEEP SIDES. IT TAKES ME SIX SHOTS FROM THE SAME SPOT TO FINALLY GET OUT!



AND THEN THERE'S THE MOUNTAIN. SNOWDON, THE TALLEST MOUNTAIN IN WALES, SITS OFF IN THE DISTANCE, AND IT ADDS TO THE WHOLE FEELING THAT I'M SOMEWHERE SPECIAL. BETWEEN THE CASTLE, THE DUNES AND THE MOUNTAIN, IT'S LIKE PLAYING GOLF INSIDE A POSTCARD



ROYAL ST DAVID'S GOLF CLUB

W: royalstdavids.co.uk

What stands out straight away is the entrance. The car park isn't next to the clubhouse like you'd expect. Instead, it's set a little further out, and to get to the course, you have to walk across a live railway line. I'm not joking. One

minute you're grabbing your bag out the boot, the next you're waiting for a train to pass. It's such a unique and unexpected start to the round, and I love it.

Royal St David's is a championship links course, and while it sits right along the coast, I don't really see the sea while i'm playing. It's tucked away behind the dunes. But what you do see, almost everywhere you turn, is Harlech Castle. That view never gets old. I'm standing over a tee shot with a medieval fortress rising in the background. It gives the course a sense of

history and drama you don't find just anywhere.

The course itself is really well laid out. It's traditional links golf with lovely fast greens and not too many hills, so it's very walkable. It challenges you more with shot placement and strategy than with steep terrain. Every hole gives you something to think about, but never feels unfair. It's the kind of course that rewards good golf and lets the setting do the rest.

And then there's the mountain. Snowdon, the tallest mountain in Wales, sits off in the distance, and it adds to the whole feeling that

I'm somewhere special. Between the castle, the dunes and the mountain, it's like playing golf inside a postcard.

Now let's talk about the signature hole, the 15th. It's a long par 4 that plays straight towards the castle, and it's every bit as dramatic as it sounds. You've got to hit a solid tee shot and hold your nerve all the way in, with the view of the castle getting bigger as you go. It's the kind of hole that stays with you long after you've finished the round. →

Photos showing various views and aerial views of Royal St David's Golf Club and Harlech castle

NEFYN GOLF CLUB

W: nefyn-golf-club.co.uk

Top left: Looking back down the 2nd fairway
Middle: Back tee at the 12th hole!
Bottom left: Stopping off for a pint at the Ty Coch Inn at the 7th hole
Right: Aerial view of Nefyn Golf Club

If you ever fancy playing golf on the edge of the world, Clwb Golff Nefyn Golf Club is the place to do it. The course has 27 holes in total, with an 18-hole championship layout and the famous nine-hole Point Course. The Point is usually closed during the busy summer months because it's so scenic that walkers flood the area just to take in the views. But today, it's open, and I have the rare chance to play it.

The weather is beautiful. Clear skies,

sunshine, the kind of day that makes you think golf is going to be a breeze. Then the wind shows up and reminds me exactly where I am — a cliffside course with nothing but sea air and stubborn greens. It's challenging, unpredictable and brilliant all at once.

One of the most interesting things about the Point Course is that there's a public footpath running through it. So you're standing over a shot while people are out for a walk, snapping photos, walking their dogs or just admiring the views. It's a bit surreal at first, but there's something special about sharing the space. It gives the round a real sense of character.

Hole 2 is a different kind of experience. Narrow, windy and a little unforgiving. The

kind of hole that makes you question all your club choices. But once you accept that the course is in charge, it actually becomes a lot of fun.

Hole 7 definitely stands out. Perched above a seaside pub tucked at the bottom of the hill. We leave our clubs at the top and head down for a quick pint before continuing. Where else do you get to take a beer break mid-round with the ocean at your feet?

Now let's talk about Hole 9. This is special. It's a short par 4, but don't let the distance fool you. The green sits right in front of the clubhouse. And when I say in front, I mean right there. People are having lunch, sipping drinks, chatting with friends and watching you

play. Add a pedestrian path just a few feet away and suddenly you've got a full audience. It's exciting, a little nerve-wracking, and definitely a memorable way to finish a round.

Clwb Golff Nefyn is one of those rare places where everything just clicks. It's stunning, it's friendly, it's full of personality. Whether you're tackling tricky holes, grabbing a pint mid-round or trying not to embarrass yourself in front of the clubhouse crowd, it's all part of the fun.

If you ever get the chance to play the Point Course, take it. Just don't forget to enjoy the view... and maybe practice your final approach. People are watching. →

HOLE 7 DEFINITELY STANDS OUT. PERCHED ABOVE A SEASIDE PUB TUCKED AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL. WE LEAVE OUR CLUBS AT THE TOP AND HEAD DOWN FOR A QUICK PINT BEFORE CONTINUING. WHERE ELSE DO YOU GET TO TAKE A BEER BREAK MID-ROUND WITH THE OCEAN AT YOUR FEET?



© James Mason, planetgolfreview



© James Mason, planetgolfreview





JOURNEY PLANNER

GETTING THERE

Direct flights from most major cities to Cardiff

USEFUL INFORMATION

Golff Cymru/Wales Golf

T: +44 1633 436040

W: walesgolf.org

WHERE TO STAY

The Grove of Narberth

T: +44 1834 860915

W: grovenarberth.co.uk

Portmeirion

T: +44 1766 772440

W: portmeirion.wales

The Vale Resort

T: +44 1443 667800

W: valeresort.com

The Celtic Manor Resort

T: +44 1633 413000

W: celtic-manor.com

WHERE TO PLAY

Celtic Manor 2010 course

T: +44 1633 413000

W: celtic-manor.com

Royal Porthcawl Golf Club

T: +44 1656 782251

W: royalporthcawl.com

Royal St David's Golf Club

T: +44 1766 780361

W: royalstdavids.co.uk

Nefyn Golf Club

T: +44 1758 720966

W: nefyn-golf-club.co.uk



GROVE OF NARBERTH

Pembrokeshire, Wales

By MONICA AKAKPO

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

During her packed itinerary **Monica Akakpo** managed to find some peace and solitude in the rolling green hills of Pembrokeshire



There are hotels, and then there's The Grove of Narberth. Nestled in the rolling green hills of Pembrokeshire, this place doesn't just give you a bed for the night. It gives you an experience. The kind that lingers long after you've checked out.

I am staying at The Grove as part of a golf press trip across Wales, and I genuinely don't think I've stayed anywhere quite like it. From the moment I arrive, it feels different. It doesn't have that usual hotel vibe. It feels personal. Warm. Like someone has invited me into their home, not just handed me a key card.

The Grove is an independently owned country house hotel with just 25 individually styled rooms and suites. Every corner has a story, and you can feel the care and detail that's gone into restoring this 18th-century house. The cottage I'm staying in smells of fresh flowers and has that soft, comforting stillness you rarely get in a hotel. It's cosy, beautifully designed, and so peaceful that I actually don't want to leave my room.

This evening, our team are having dinner in the restaurant. I arrive around 8pm and end up sitting at the table chatting, laughing and sipping cocktails until almost midnight. It's one of those rare evenings where everything feels just right. Even though there are other guests, it feels like the whole place belongs to us. Nobody is rushing us. The staff are kind, thoughtful, always there when you need something but never hovering. It feels effortless.

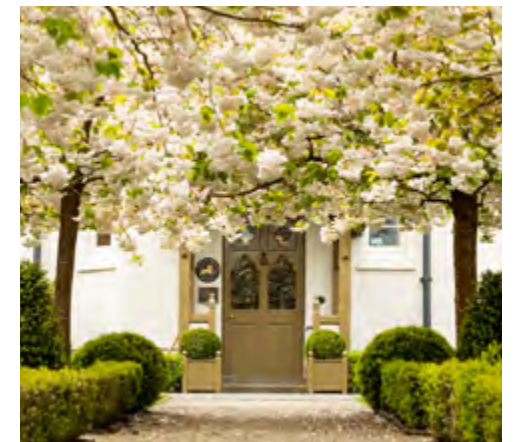
This morning I have an early start. Golf waits for no one and breakfast is at 6:30. The staff are already a step ahead. They asked us to pre-order last night before dinner and they have everything ready when I come down. Full spread, piping hot and served with smiles. It's these small thoughtful touches that really stay with you.

The Grove is perfectly located for a golf trip, with brilliant courses like Tenby, Trefloyne and Ashburnham all within easy reach. And the area itself? Just stunning. Green fields, quiet country roads, and the charming little town of Narberth only a short drive away. It's the kind of place that instantly calms you down. No traffic noise, no stress. Just pure Welsh countryside and a sense of space that clears your head.

If you're planning a golf trip and want somewhere special to stay, somewhere that feels less like a hotel and more like a retreat, The Grove of Narberth should be high on your list. It's a little pocket of calm and comfort and trust me, once you check in, you will wish you had booked an extra night.

The Grove of Narberth
Molleston, Narberth
Pembrokeshire
Wales, SA67 8BX

T: +44 1834 860 915
W: grovenarberth.co.uk



STARRY-EYED SURPRISE

Sitting at the airport in Ostrava after a six day visit James Mason tries to sum up how surprised he was, that not only did this off-the-beaten-track destination have golf courses, but how good the standard of them was



BY JAMES MASON

I am sitting at the airport waiting for my flight back to London and reflecting on my week in Ostrava. Firstly, I have to be honest I didn't realise that golf was popular in the Czech Republic and that the golf courses are of a very high standard with some wonderful practice facilities. A special mention must go to Golf Arena Trinec – W: golfarenatrinec.cz/en – and their aim at getting juniors into golf and working with schools and young players. The facilities are amazing and the people there and those who sponsor the facility are doing wonderful work. The future of golf in the Czech Republic is certainly in good hands. Check-out their website.

The gastronomy has been lipsmackingly scrumptious and of course all washed down with some very tasty local beers. The selection of hotels I stayed in have also been to a very high standard, from the extraordinary modern sculptures and wonderful spa facilities at the Miura Hotel to the medieval history of the Zámek Zábřeh castle and its beer and wine baths and massages!

Also give yourself some-time off the golf course and explore the rich history of the area. If you only get a chance to visit one place then make sure you visit the Industrial heritage site at Dolní Vítkovice. The architecture truly has its own brutal beauty and I am so glad they kept the site alive. It now houses restaurants, coffee shops, bars and holds concerts and conferences.

The people of Ostrava are friendly and welcoming and the pace of life here is very laid back. I always feel visiting new destinations and experiencing new cultures enriches the soul, not only experiencing new things, but also realising that human beings, no matter where they are from or live are all so very similar. Don't let the politicians tell you otherwise.

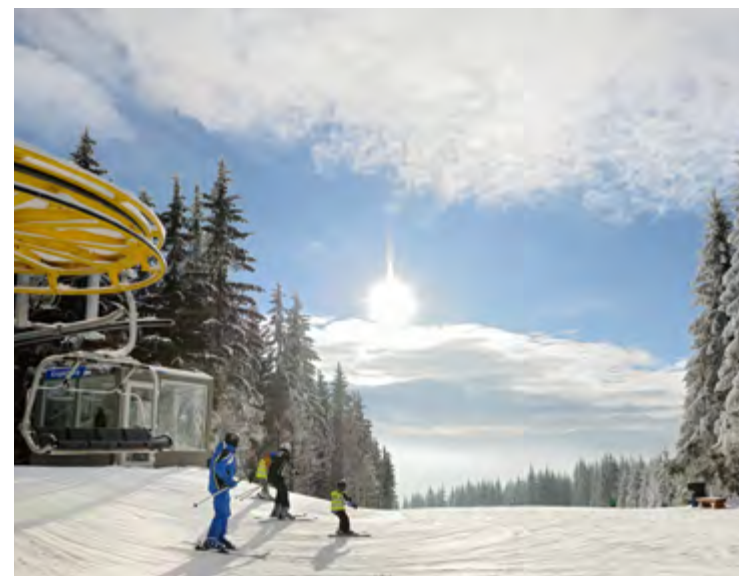
If you are looking for somewhere new to play golf on some wonderful designs, and experience somewhere new and off-the-beaten-track, then get yourself over to Ostrava in the Czech Republic, you will be glad you did. →



Above: The brutal beauty of the industrial heritage site at Dolní Vítkovice
Bottom left: Facilities at the Golf Arena Trinec
Bottom right: Some of the amazing statues at Miura hotel



Left: The New Town Hall Tower at sunset
Bottom left: Amazing views at Stezka Valaška Pustevny
Bottom middle: There is plenty of skiing in Ostrava, where many golf courses become ski resorts in the winter months
Bottom below Masarykovo náměstí is the central square in Ostrava



JOURNEY PLANNER

WHERE TO STAY

Mercure Hotel

W: all.accor.com/hotel

Miura Hotel

W: miura.cz

Prosper Golf Resort Čeladná

W: prosper-golf.cz

Zámek Zábřeh

W: zamek-zabreh.cz

WHERE TO PLAY

Šilheřovice Golf Course

W: golf-ostrava.cz

Golf & Ski Resort Ostravice

W: golf-ostravice.cz

Prosper Golf Resort Čeladná

W: prosper-golf.cz

Golf at Ropice Golf Resort

W: beskydgolf.com

WHERE TO EAT

Hogo Fogo Bistro

W: hogofogo.cz

LAPECO Ostrava

W: lapeco.cz

Olive Restaurant

W: oliverestaurant.cz

Tee House Čeladná

W: teehouseceladna.com

Pochutnej si Bistro

W: pochutnejsi.cz

THINGS TO DO

Industrial heritage at Dolní Vítkovice

W: dolnivikovice.cz

Cable lift to Pustevny

W: pustevny.cz

THE GOLF COURSE HAS A WONDERFUL HISTORY AS IT WAS ONE OF THE ONLY GOLF COURSES OPEN IN THE OLD CZECHOSLAVAKIAN COMMUNIST ERA



Kantors Creative Club

GOLF COURSE ŠILHEŘOVICE

W: golf-ostrava.cz

It's competition day at Šilheřovice golf Park and after a quick warm up I am standing on the elevated tee of the par 5, 1st hole with a beautiful chateau to my right and a fountain and a very large tree in the middle of the fairway. I decide to go to the right of the tree between the lone tree in the fairway and the forest on the right. It's tight but my ball is now sitting in the fairway. A chip and putt birdie and I am on my way.

The opening hole is followed by a tough 2nd hole and then another slightly elevated tee at the 3rd. The first par 3 arrives at the 4th and is followed by three wonderfully designed holes.

The 2nd shot to the 5th is played to a new green that has lots of contours, while the 6th is played through a funnel of tree that I clip with my tee shot, but manage to hit my hybrid close and make birdie. Then the second par 3 on the front nine comes at the 7th and is played over a pond to a green that slopes from back to front and is protected by bunkers.

The back nine comes to a close with another beautifully designed slightly uphill par 4, with the back tees on the other side of the stream. I manage to hit the fairway and then play to the green which is surrounded by trees. Some of the trees on this course are over 500 years old, so trying to avoid those is part of my strategy as I make my way round!

The first of the par 3s on the back nine arrives at the 12th and is played uphill, to a green that has water at the back. The water feature at the back of the green is part of one of the original properties on the estate. The 14th starts a run

of holes that thread their way through the trees, with the last of the par 3s on the course coming at the 16th.

The course closes with a short tight par 4 with the green sitting in the trees and gives you a great chance to finish with birdie. I did enjoy playing the course; and it has some great golf holes and playing through the trees you really need to be on your game. The golf course has a wonderful history as it was one of the only golf courses open in the old Czechoslovakian Communist era.

But the greens were not in great shape due to a recent disease and the course could do with some much-needed manicuring and signposting to guide you round, as I and others on this trip lost our way several times. All that shouldn't put you off playing here. It is close to the city and is a great start to any golf trip to Ostrava. →

COURSE VIDEO

Top left: Looking back up the fairway from the 5th green
Top right: Looking back down the fairway at the 8th hole

Top bottom right: Looking back down the fairway at the 14th hole
Right: Chateau to the left of the 1st fairway
Bottom right: Tee shot at the par 3 7th hole



Kantors Creative Club



© James Mason, planetgolfreview



© James Mason, planetgolfreview

COURSE VIDEO

Top left: Aerial view of the 9th and 10th holes

Bottom left: Aerial view of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th holes

Right: Aerial view of the Golf & Ski Resort Ostravice

GOLF & SKI RESORT OSTRAVICE

W: ostravice-golf.cz

It is day two of my trip to Ostrava and as we arrive at the Golf and Ski Resort Ostravice, I can see this is already going to be a step up from yesterday. Unfortunately, it is raining and the mist is covering the surrounding Beskydy Mountains, which no doubt would offer up some spectacular views as you make your way around.

As I walk onto the elevated tee I feel like I am walking on a spongy carpet and I seem to

bounce over this beautifully manicured tee box, and I am thinking to myself if the tees are this perfect, how good are the greens going to be. I soon find out walking onto the 1st and they feel firm underfoot and as I hit my putt it comes up short, but that is due to the amount of rain that it has had overnight and continues to come down while I play. But the surface is perfect and I can only imagine how fast they must be able to get them in the summer months.

The course goes from one strength to another and the 2nd is the first of the par 3s. Again, it plays from an elevated tee with water on the right and bunkering on the left. Such a pity about the mist covering the mountains, as the views must be amazing from here. Water is a feature on the next couple of holes with the

next par 3 coming at the 6th which you play from another elevated tee to a raised green, with the 9th being played uphill and brings you back to the clubhouse.

The back nine starts with another elevated tee shot where you drive over a stream and through a gap in the trees and have to avoid bunkers on the left of the fairway. It really is a tough opening shot to this part of the course. The 11th keeps the tough well-designed holes going and is played to a raised green. The first par 3 on the back nine arrives at the 13th and is played uphill to a raised green which is accessed through a gap in the trees. I don't normally like uphill par 3s as I feel amateur golfers should be able to see the hole in case they hit a hole-in-one but I think this is a great hole.

As the course starts meandering its way back to the clubhouse and threading itself through the tees with lots of elevated tee shots, there is a realisation that I am not seeing all that the course has to offer. Walking off the 18th I have really enjoyed playing the course. It is a great design and Chris Johnson has certainly made the most of the topography here, but with the mist covering the Beskydy Mountains I also know I am missing out on some spectacular views that would certainly make this course a must play when you are here. Hopefully one day I will get another chance to play this wonderful golf course, while also being able to enjoy the surrounding beauty of the mountains. →

I FEEL LIKE I AM WALKING ON A SPONGY CARPET AND I SEEM TO BOUNCE OVER THIS BEAUTIFULLY MANICURED TEE BOX, AND I AM THINKING TO MYSELF IF THE TEES ARE THIS PERFECT, HOW GOOD ARE THE GREENS GOING TO BE



PROSPER GOLF RESORT OLD COURSE

W: prosper-golf.cz

Day three of my press trip to Ostrava and the rain seems unrelenting, but nothing is going to stop me playing the old course at Prosper Golf Resort, which held the Czech Open on the European Tour from 2009 to 2011. The course was designed by Miguel Ángel Jiménez in 2001 and sits close to the Polish and Slovakian borders. Standing on the 1st tee looking up the fairway it is another golf course that threads its way through the trees. I crash my drive down the fairway and I am on my way. The course opens up with a par 5 and has a small stream running across the fairway and a long green that sits in the trees.

The 2nd is a tight driving hole through the trees and there is water to the right of the green. The first par 3 arrives at the 3rd hole and plays 213 yards from the black tees, but there are five teeing options for you to choose from. The green is surrounded by bunkers and has a step running through the middle of it. Par here is a great score.

I then cross a small road to get to the tee at the 4th hole again played uphill with perfectly placed bunkers! The green is raised with runoff areas at the front and again sits in the trees and runs across you and it has another step in it. The 5th plays downhill and you really need to be on the right of the fairway as there is a bunker sitting right in the middle of the fairway. From the black tees you really need to fly over the garden of the house on the right. The 7th is a wonderful par 5, played downhill with water protecting the front of the green. It starts a run of great holes to bring the front nine to a close, culminating with having to play your second shot to the 9th over water close to the hotel to another raised green.

The back nine, like the front nine, opens up with a par 5, but this time it is a beast of a hole weighing in at 576 yards, with that stream again crossing the fairway and then plays uphill to a raised green that has a tier near the front – so you really don't want to be short.

Get your camera phones ready for the par 4, 12th hole that plays from an elevated tee down

the hill and then back up to a raised green, which has three tiers. It is an amazing golf hole, but I know I am still missing out because of the cloud cover over the mountains.

The first par 3 on the back nine arrives at the 15th and what a par 3 it is. Played from an elevated tee to an island green, it also has a stone wall water feature incorporated into it. It is a wonderful golf hole and I am sure you will have your camera phones out again for this one.

The second par 3 arrives at the 17th and then the course climaxes with the 475 yard par 4, that is only stroke index 12 on the scorecard! The hole is again played from an elevated tee and then the green has water long right and protected by bunkers left and right at the front. It really is a tough finishing hole to another wonderfully designed golf course. →



THE FIRST PAR 3 ON THE BACK NINE ARRIVES AT THE 15TH AND WHAT A PAR 3 IT IS. PLAYED FROM AN ELEVATED TEE TO AN ISLAND GREEN, IT ALSO HAS A STONE WALL WATER FEATURE INCORPORATED INTO IT. IT IS A WONDERFUL GOLF HOLE



COURSE VIDEO

Top left: Water protecting the front of the par 5, 7th
Top right: The stunning par 3, island green at the 15th hole
Left: Looking back down the fairway from the raised green at the 12th

THE BACK NINE CONTINUES WITH THE OPEN LINKS STYLE DESIGN, BUT STARTS TO SUBTLY CHANGE ON THE 12TH WITH A STREAM RUNNING DOWN THE LEFT AND WATER PROTECTING THE FRONT OF THE GREEN



All photos © James Mason, planetgolfreview

PROSPER GOLF RESORT NEW COURSE

W: prosper-golf.cz

After an amazing lunch and a couple of beers I am heading out to the 1st on the new course and you can see the contrast straight away, the course is more open with hardly any trees, with the main hazards being out of bounds and water along with bunkering. Designed in 2004, it is loosely based on what is known as a parkland links style. The front nine opens up with a short par 4 that has a bunker in the middle of the fairway, water on the right and

a three-tier green. The green on the par 5, 2nd hole has water and so many contours that par is not guaranteed even if you manage to hit this green in two.

The first of the par 3s arrives at the 4th hole and while it is not an island green it has water hazards front, back, right and left. It may only weigh in at 112 yards but hitting the green is paramount. Water features on the 5th which is followed by the second par 3 on the front nine and is a totally different prospect to the first par 3 at 236 yards and is protected at the front by a large bunker on the left and a smaller bunker front right. The back nine comes to a close with three par 4s with water featuring on two of them, but doesn't really come into play.

The back nine continues with the open links

style design, but starts to subtly change on the 12th with a stream running down the left and water protecting the front of the green. The first of the par 3s on the back nine arrives at the 13th and is played through a chute in the trees, over water and a ravine. That is then followed by the par 5, 14th which is played back through those trees, with some wonderful views of the surrounding Beskydy Mountains, which are beginning to peep through as the mist is starting to finally clear up.

The second par 3 on the back nine arrives at the 15th and again is played through a chute in the bushes, trees and a ravine to a plateau green with lots of contours. Hitting the green here certainly doesn't guarantee par. I would say the 16th is the new course's signature hole and

to be honest from the tee it doesn't look like much, and you really need to get the ball up the hill to then hit the downslope. You then play downhill to an island green, which is protected by water, with the green lying across you. It really is a wonderfully designed golf hole.

The 18th on the new course runs parallel to the 18th on the old course and again plays from an elevated tee, and at 472 yards it is another tough finishing hole with water coming into play down the left and in front of the green and then again to the right of the green. The new course has a totally different feel to the old course, until you reach the 12th hole, but I feel the new course complements the old course perfectly and gives the resort two great courses for you to enjoy. →

COURSE VIDEO

Top left: Water protecting the 18th green

Top right: Looking back from the 4th green

Bottom right: Looking down on the 16th green from the fairway

ROPICE GOLF RESORT

W: beskydgolf.com

It's the last golfing day on this trip and you guessed it, it's still raining! But I smash my drive up the 1st fairway, and as I make my way to my ball I am once again surprised how dry it is underfoot. The drainage on the courses on this trip has been amazing. After putting out I look back down the perfectly manicured fairway and take in some of the amazing views. I have a feeling I am in for another great day.

The 2nd plays from an elevated tee with the fairway framed by mounds and doglegs to the left. I just miss my birdie putt, but that is definitely my bad as the greens here are in amazing condition, running firm and true, although a bit slow due to the amount of rain over the last few days.

The first of the par 3s on the front nine arrives at the 3rd hole and weighs in at 218 yards from the black tees, but again there are five teeing options to choose from here. The hole is played from an elevated tee to a raised green that sits below you, through a chute in the trees and over a ravine. It's a wonderfully designed golf hole. The 4th is a risk and reward par 5 as the green is sits below the fairway, but is protected by water and at 500 yards, you can take on that second shot over the water if you get a good drive away.

The 6th just keeps the well-designed holes going, played through a funnel of trees to a fairway that opens up again. The second of the par 3s on the front nine comes at the 7th and is again played from a slightly elevated tee and anything right you'll be praying that you catch the bunkers or you will be down the hill with a tough shot back up to the green.

The wonderfully designed par 5, 8th follows

again played from an elevated tee, with bunkers on the corner of this dogleg left hole. The back nine closes with a tee shot to a narrow fairway and then you play over steep dip in the fairway to a green that has a bunker short waiting for anything that is short and rolls back down the dip into that bunker.

The course is actually a 27-hole venue and so you can combine any of the nines you want to play for your 18 holes. We have chosen the Ocelová (blue) for our front nine and after a coffee break I am now heading to the 1st on the Železná devítka (red) nine. The reason I love hilly courses is the amount of elevated tee shots that you get to play. The 1st tee on this nine is no exception and again the tees and fairways are perfectly manicured. The course is open to the elements and thankfully it is only raining as I make my way round! Because I am sure when the wind blows here across the course it will certainly make it an even tougher prospect.

There is water on the left of the 2nd fairway

which has a fountain feature, but you will have to severely carve it right to bring that into play. The first of the par 3s on my back nine arrives at the 4th and weighs in at 194 yards, but like the front nine there are five different teeing options. The 7th is a dogleg right, short par 4 where you play your second shot over water. The second par 3 on this nine comes at the 8th and has water down the left and protects the front of the green, which also has a stone wall and has bunkers back left and right.

This nine closes with water down the left and then you play your second shot through the gap in the trees and up to the green, but there is a lone tree sat right in the middle and you have to decide if you are going to play a fade or draw around it. I play a draw and make the front of the green. Looking back down the fairway from the green, I smile. It has been another great day's golf in Ostrava. I may not have had the best of luck with the weather, but the courses and hospitality have been amazing.

COURSE VIDEO

Main: aerial view of Ropic Golf Resort

Top right: The green, bunkers and dip at the 9th hole on the Ocelová nine

Bottom right: Water protecting the green on the Železná nines, 7th hole

LOOKING BACK DOWN THE FAIRWAY FROM THE GREEN, I SMILE. IT HAS BEEN ANOTHER GREAT DAY'S GOLF IN OSTRAVA. I MAY NOT HAVE HAD THE BEST OF LUCK WITH THE WEATHER, BUT THE COURSES AND HOSPITALITY HAVE BEEN AMAZING



© James Mason, planetgolfreview



© James Mason, planetgolfreview

38
CLEVELAND
HIBORE XL
DRIVER



41
TAYLORMADE
MILLED GRIND
WEDGES



44 MACGREGOR
GOLF JUNIOR SET



EQUIPMENT & APPAREL

REVIEW

46
MILESEEEY
IONME2



49
ABACUS
SPORTS
WEAR



52 UNDER ARMOUR



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CZECH MATE

A driver that does exactly what it says in the name? James Mason heads to the Czech Republic to put the new Cleveland HiBore XL driver to the test



TECHNOLOGY

The new Cleveland HiBore XL Driver comes packed with technology to help the average golfer gain more consistency, better dispersion, enhanced launch angle and increased forgiveness.

A.I. SHAPING AND FACE

The HiBore XL features an AI design-assisted chassis which has been purpose built for enhanced forgiveness, while also improving sound at impact. The driver also incorporates one of the largest ball striking areas on the market, helping golfers not only gain distance but also helping to tighten your ball dispersion

MAINFRAME XL

The variable thickness face pattern maximises flex at impact to enlarge and reshape the sweet spot. This improves energy transfer across the face, and by repositioning weight low and deep in the clubhead helps add forgiveness, consistency, and ball speed, even on off-centre strikes

ACTIVWING

The unique airfoil design helps stabilises the clubhead by harnessing aerodynamic forces to stabilise the clubhead during your downswing, helping guide the clubface back into the optimal strike position, making it easier for you to hit the sweet spot

NEW ADJUSTABILITY OPTIONS

HiBore XL includes a 12g adjustable weight located on the rear of the club giving you the flexibility to change the club's swing weight to your personal preference. You can also adjust the hosel sleeve from 9° to 12° in 0.5° increments, which gives you 12 possible loft options, helping you to find the right setup for your golf swing.





CONCLUSION

One of the reasons I have enjoyed testing Cleveland drivers and irons over the years is they do exactly what they say on the tin.

Cleveland market their drivers and irons at the mid to high handicapped golfer and use all their technology to help them improve and enjoy the game of golf.

The HiBore does exactly that, it has a high launch angle, it improves forgiveness and dispersion. Put this club in the hands of a low handicapped player – I play off a 4.9 handicap – and I only missed one fairway over the whole testing trip to the Czech Republic, testing the club on five different courses. The only time I had a problem was when I adjusted it down to 9°, so I just went back up to 10°.

I didn't have to tee the ball up like I do with my regular Callaway driver, the HiBore did it all for me. It got so monotonous that my playing partners would shout "boring" as another ball sailed through the air and landed on the fairway.

I loved every minute of playing with the Cleveland HiBore XL and if you're a mid to high handicap golfer or a golfer that just wants to hit more fairways then get this baby in your hands. You'll enjoy the shouts of "boring" as much as I did!

CLUB TESTED ▶

Cleveland HiBore XL Driver

LOFT 9° – 12°

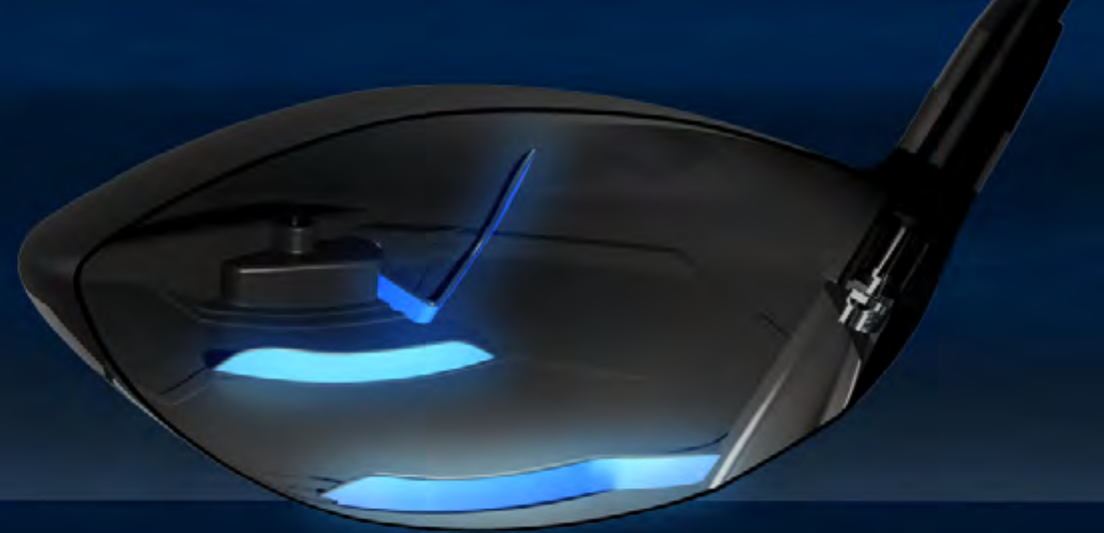
LOFT SET UP 10°

SHAFT Project X Denali

WEIGHT 50gm 6.0

FLEX Stiff

RRP £369 / €419 / \$399.99





A GROOVY KIND OF LOVE

American Golf now gives golfers a choice between the RAW finish and a chrome finish for TaylorMades Milled Grind wedges. James Mason heads to the Czech Republic with the chrome-finished wedges in his bag



TECHNOLOGY

The TaylorMade Milled Grind Chrome Steel Golf Wedge is a custom design to American Golf and doesn't use the RAW face, so for those who don't like the rusty look of the MG4 once you start to use them, then this is the perfect combination for you.

The Milled Grind Chrome Wedges feature the all-new Spin Tread technology, which is designed to improved spin levels in wet conditions. TaylorMade claim the deep laser etching between the grooves provides a channel for the water to escape from at impact, allowing the wedge to perform well in all types of weather conditions.

Milled Grind soles help with precision, while the milling process maximises consistency and helps maintain tolerance levels. The machine-milled face and grooves help enhance spin, giving you more consistency and control from various lies.

Weight has been placed higher in the club head to help enhance feel, while also raising the centre of gravity (COG). All this helps with the control of your golf ball launch angle, and helps produce higher spin rates.

The wedges also incorporate a classic full sole design with constant trailing edge relief. This Tour-proven 4-way camber with versatility is designed for most swing types who commonly play with the face square to the target

Features :

- MILLED GRIND SOLE / STRATEGIC WEIGHT POSITIONING
- MACHINE-MILLED FACE AND GROOVES
- CLASSIC FULL SOLE DESIGN
- 2-Year Guarantee
- KBS 105 Steel Shaft
- Lamkin Crossline 360 Grip





CONCLUSION

For those who like their wedges to keep that chrome look then American Golf's personalised, TaylorMade Milled Grind Chrome Steel Wedges are perfect for you. You get all the benefits of the deep laser etching between the grooves while keeping that chrome finish.

I love the spin and control that I get with these wedges and I have the originals in my bag with the RAW face finish, so I already knew how good these wedges are around the green. And to be honest I liked the fact that I could clean the face and grooves after each shot and they would be back to looking new – well until you start to make that nice impact mark in the middle of the sweet spot due to your play and practice.

What American Golf have done is given you a unique choice. You can go with the RAW finish or you can now choose the chrome finish that doesn't rust up with all the benefits of that TaylorMade spin thread technology. Both are great wedge systems. As they say, the choice is yours.

CLUB TESTED ▶

TaylorMade Milled Grind Chrome Steel Wedges

LOFT & BOUNCE 52° SB 09°

LOFT & BOUNCE 56 SB 12°

SHAFT KBS Tour 105

FLEX Wedge

RRP £109 / €125 / \$146.99

AMERICAN GOLF LINK [Click Here](#)





KIDS WANNA ROCK

You want to get your child's journey into golf off to a good start and that all begins with the right equipment. Gone are the days of cutting down adult clubs. Many manufactures now put all the R&D work for adult clubs into junior clubs. William Brown puts the MacGregor DCT Junior golf set through its paces



TECHNOLOGY

The MacGregor DCT Junior Set is designed specifically for boys aged 6-8 years, and is the perfect starter set for your budding young golfer. Optimised for the body type and strength of young golfers. The clubs have a sleek and contemporary look, which should appeal to young golfers.

They are shorter and lighter than adult clubs, making them easier to swing and control.

While the shafts are more flexible, allowing for a smoother swing to help generate more power with less effort.

The set includes an oversized driver that has 15° loft and is designed to help junior golfers get the ball airborne. The club length is 36" and comes complete with head cover. The 7 iron and 9 iron utilise a cavity back design helping with forgiveness on off centre strikes and ease of use. The club lengths are 30" and 29" respectively.

The set is completed by the Mallet putter at 28" which has an alignment aid to help get your junior golfer lined up and build confidence in his putting stroke. The set also comes with a portable and lightweight stand bag, which has dual straps, plenty of pockets and automatic pop out legs and includes a rain hood.

CONCLUSION

Checkout 7-year-old William's review of the MacGregor DCT Junior Set on the video below

CLUB TESTED ▶

MacGregor DCT Junior Set

AGE GROUP 6-8 Years

LOFTS 15° 38° & 41.5°

SHAFT MacGregor

FLEX Junior

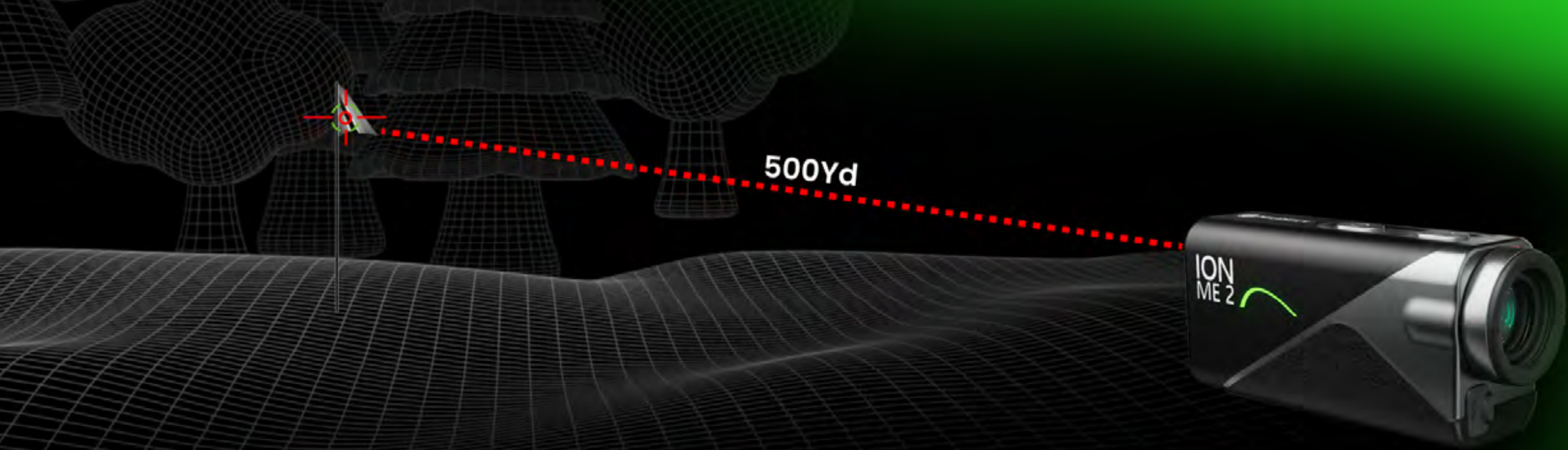
RRP £159.99 / €185.99 / \$159.99



EASY TARGET

Heading to the Czech Republic, James Mason packs the Mileseey compact IONME2 rangefinder in his bag to see how it performs over five different courses on a recent testing trip





500 Yd

Flag-Lock

±0.5 Yd

Accuracy

0.1 S

Response

TECHNOLOGY

Mileseey golf have released the IONME2, a compact high-performance rangefinder.

The pocket-sized device – think of a slightly larger packet of throat lozenges and you get the idea – combines accuracy with lightweight agility.

One of its standout features is the rain and fog mode, which allows the IONME2 to adapt to changing weather conditions, helping it to perform consistently in unpredictable climates.

Mileseey have also introduced

a ball-to-pin mode, which is a triangulation system that allows users to measure the distance between two points — such as the ball and the pin — even when viewed from a distance or when you're in an obstructed position. It's a feature that I am sure will go down well in winter when using a buggy and cart path only rules are in play.

The PinPoint green mode is for when you are on the green putting, and is designed to give you a precise distance to the pin and slope of the putting surface. This takes all the

guesswork and all that pacing to check the distance of each of your putts away.

You can navigate between the different modes and settings in the viewfinder, and you can also customise the brightness control options and select between yards and meters.

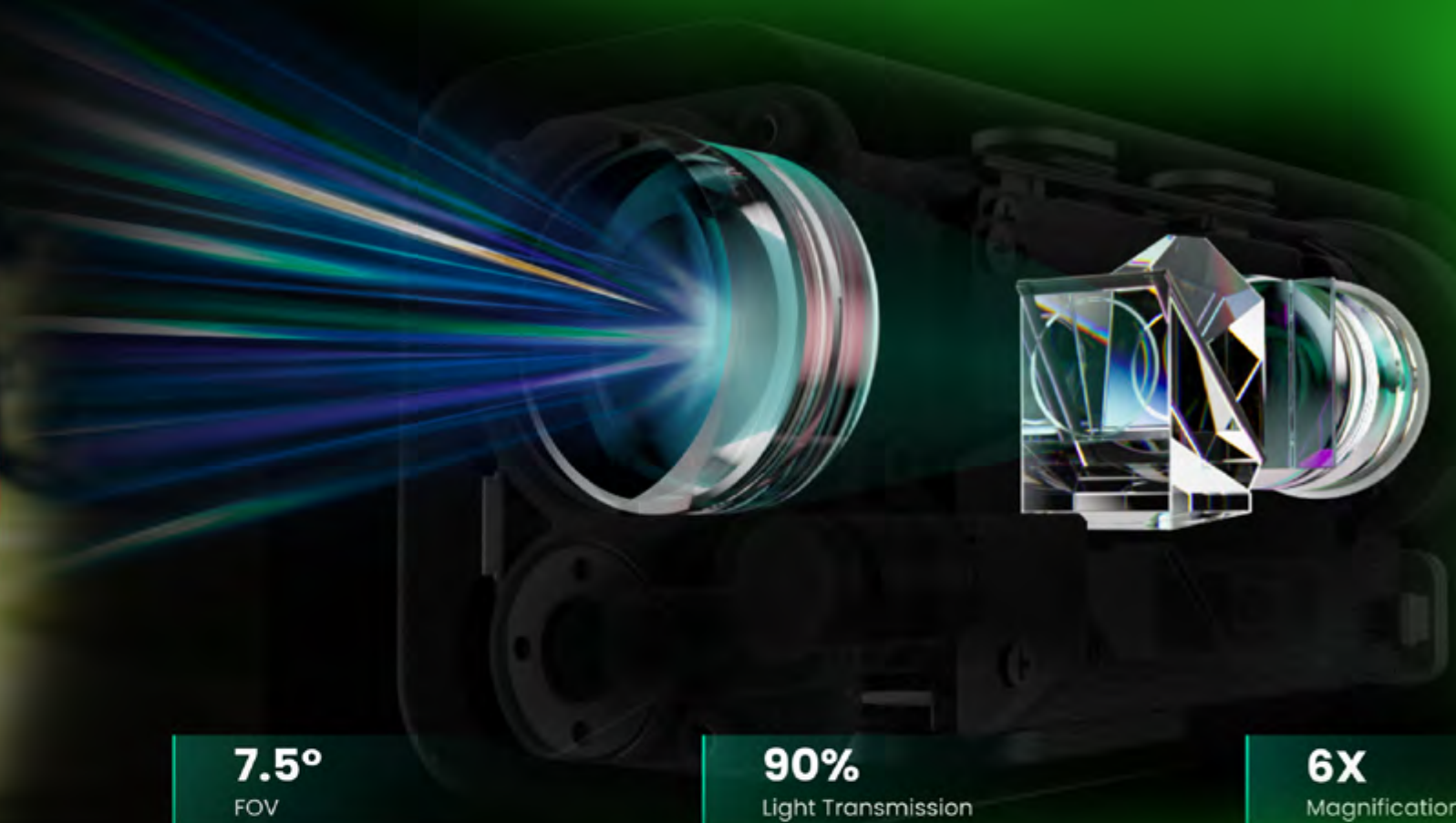
The IONME2 features a clear, streamlined viewfinder that minimises visual clutter in the viewfinder, helping you to quickly lock on to the pin or any of your other chosen targets.

RANGEFINDER TESTED

Mileseey Golf

MODEL IONME2

RRP £399 / €460 / \$399.99



CONCLUSION

The first time I looked through the IONME2 to get a yardage, I was blown away by how clear and bright the display was. It is something everyone that I played with during testing was impressed by. With two of my fourball the first time I took it out said they wanted to buy one and that pretty much sums up all the comments I got when people looked through the viewfinder.

The IONME2 is designed to sit on your belt and while it doesn't restrict your swing in anyway, I preferred to have it clipped on the handle on the front of my bag. And to be honest it looked pretty cool in that position.

The IONME2 has the quickest pin lock with vibration of any rangefinder that I have tested to date. I loved everything about the IONME2: the clear viewfinder graphics, how quickly

it locked on to the pin, to how snugly it fitted in my hand. And of course when buying a rangefinder you have no extra fees to pay or the need to download courses when you visit another country.

If you are looking for a new rangefinder, make sure you get the Mileseey IONME2 in your hand before you make a purchase. You can thank me later!

When September Ends

We all know it's coming, but are you ready for winter?
To be honest, I hate winter.
Don't get me wrong, I love breathing the cool crisp air.
What I don't like is cold hands and feet, chipping ice off my car and playing golf in fifteen layers of clothing looking like the Stay Puft marshmallow man from Ghostbusters.

With all that in mind, James Mason puts the latest A/W 25/26 Abacus Range to the test



TECHNOLOGY

Abacus Sportswear have been developing winter apparel for over 30 years and have received multiple awards. On their website they state: "We think of the apparel as a part of the golf equipment. The right clothes can make a big difference on the course, both for the comfort and for the score. Especially in challenging weather conditions. Our goal is that your rainwear should give you the same confidence as your best club in the bag.

In the abacus® School of Rain, we have gathered much of the knowledge and experience we have collected during the years, about what really makes a difference on a rainy day at the golf course. We want to make it easier for you to choose rainwear that allows you to focus on your game – whatever the weather."

Abacus has three different rain and winter ranges: Links, Bounce and Pitch. All are waterproof, windproof and stretch with you during your golf swing. →

LINKS STRETCH RAIN JACKET

RRP £50 €70 \$100

LINKS WARM WATERPROOF TROUSERS

RRP £50 €70 \$100



WALTON DRYCOOL POLO
RRP £50 €65 \$68



PIKEWOOD DRYCOOL POLO
RRP £50 €65 \$68



STOKE DRYCOOL POLO
RRP £50 €70 \$100

Three polo shirts,
three midlayer
tops, one hybrid
vest to mix and
match from the
Abacus AW 25/26
range



PORTRUSH HYBRID VEST
RRP £70 €90 \$99



BOUNCE WATERPROOF HOODIE
RRP £75 €90 \$140



**LANARK STRETCH
WINDSHIRT**
RRP £80 €100 \$130



WOBURN MIDLAYER
RRP £99 €110 \$160

CONCLUSION

When I was in Minnesota reviewing golf courses on a press trip before the Hazeltine Ryder Cup matches, a professional at one of the clubs told me a quote that goes: “There’s no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing,” and that has stuck with me, especially when I review apparel for the winter.

Having reviewed Abacus winter apparel over the last few years, I know they have the basics down to a T; waterproof, windproof and material that stretches with your golf swing are now a given throughout their winter range. What I have also noticed is how styling has changed, building on those fundamentals, but also adding a touch of style, fashion and class. Looking good used to be just for the summer range, but now you can not only stay dry in the winter but also look good doing so.

I have enjoyed testing the winter range from Abacus over the last month, at my home course and in the Czech Republic, where it rained every day I was there! But the clothing did its job of keeping me dry and warm perfectly. Abacus have everything you need to enjoy winter golf. However, remember your base layer is not only essential, but also your best friend until March.



COMPRESSION TOP
RRP £50 €70 \$100



LINKS STRETCH RAIN JACKET
RRP £50 €65 \$68



PORTRUSH HYBRID JACKET
RRP £50 €65 \$68



COPRESSION TIGHTS
RRP £80 €100 \$130



BOUNCE RAIN TROUSERS
RRP £70 €90 \$99



LINKS WARM WATERPROOF TROUSERS
RRP £70 €90 \$99



PITCH 37.5 TECHNOLOGY RAIN TROUSERS
RRP £75 €90 \$140

MEDAL WINNER

But which medal did Under Armour's Drive Medal waterproof golf shoes pick up after being put through their paces over five rounds of golf in the rain on a testing trip to the Czech Republic? James Mason reveals all



**UNDER ARMOUR DRIVE MEDAL
GOLF SHOES**
RRP £90 €105 \$121.99

AMERICAN GOLF LINK [Click Here](#)



TECHNOLOGY

The Under Armour Drive Medal golf shoes incorporate a premium microfibre upper that helps provide a soft and comfortable feel on the course and comes with a one-year waterproof warranty.

The shoe utilises Under Armour's Rotational Resistance 2.0 spiked outsole, giving the shoe a lockdown horizontal

traction, helping to inspire extra confidence that you won't slip when trying to get a few extra yards from your tee shots.

The shoe also features a Charged Cushioning® Midsole, helping your feet feel comfortable during the round and across various terrains.

CONCLUSION

As much as I like spikeless shoes, during the winter months I prefer a spiked shoe. They give me that added confidence that my feet won't slip when it's wet and especially when mud and worm casts start to make their presence felt.

The biggest test for me in a golf shoe is always can I wear them straight out of the

box without them destroying my heels and limping my way up the 18th fairway. The good news is that they cannot only be worn straight from the box, but your feet feel comfortable and dry walking off the 18th green and still look good.

I tested the white/castlerock/met gunmetal colour option, and what I loved

about the microfibre material used in the upper is that it is easy to wipe down, making them look brand new again. So if you are looking for a winter shoe that is waterproof, wearable straight from the box and that looks good, then take a look at the Under Armour Drive Medal waterproof golf shoes.



PRO TIP



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Facebook: [Paul Babbage](https://www.facebook.com/PaulBabbage)

WINTER MOT PACKAGE
8 x 50 min lessons
+ 2 x 9 holes playing lessons
Cost – £499

**T&Cs Lessons have to be used by
30th March 2026**

**Contact Paul on the above
email or phone number**

FOCUS ON THE TASK

One of the many mistakes that golfers make when chipping is focusing on where the ball will finish rather than picking a landing zone and aiming to hit that spot. **Paul Babbage** gives you a drill to help eliminate those costly dropped shots around the green

Video watch: Practice this routine to become more confident and consistent with your chip shots around the green



Step One: Measure the distance to your landing zone. Instead of focussing on where the ball will land (result based), focus on what swing length will get you the required distance to your landing zone

Step Two: setup for the shot. Have a couple of practices of the desired swing length.



Step Three: When hitting try to have 100% focus on the task of completing the correct swing length to hit your landing zone

PRO TIP



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

WINTER MOT PACKAGE

8 x 50 min lessons
+ 2 x 9 holes playing lessons
Cost – £499

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**Contact Paul on the above
email or phone number**

THE LOW SPINNER

With winter here, making contact with the ball first is imperative with all the mud, worm casts and bare lies. A fun shot to have in your armoury around the greens is the “Low Spinner”. **Shain Johnson** explains how this low ball flight with backspin can be a lot of fun to play and practice

This shot isn't a must-have in your game, but it's a fun one to pull off when you can. You might remember Rory McIlroy's shot in the Ryder Cup a few years ago — that low runner that looked like it was going to fly past the pin, but stopped right next to the flag. That's the kind of shot we're talking about.

It does take a slightly higher level of

skill, but here's how I like to play it.

This setup encourages a steeper strike, which helps the ball come out low and hot. It'll skip a few times, then grab and check up nicely. It takes practice to build the confidence and feel, but once you've got it, it's an incredibly fun shot to have in the bag.



Step One:

Setup: Play the ball back in your stance — even outside of your trailing foot. Don't be afraid to push it further back than you think



Step Two:

Hands & Weight: Get your hands forward, roughly over your lead knee, with plenty of shaft lean. Keep your weight on your lead side throughout the motion



Video watch: In my video I take you through each step of the set-up and how to execute the shot



Step Three:

Motion: Always remember to rotate your chest when chipping. Keep your hands soft, make a simple, controlled turn, and hit down on the ball with some acceleration, holding the finish low with an open face

LONDON CALLING

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

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

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

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

Look out for the 2026 dates in the next issue of PGR Magazine



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

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



58 ROSS BRIDGE RESORT



VIEW.COM

STAY, PLAY & SPA

REVIEW



64 KULM HOTEL



RENAISSANCE
BIRMINGHAM ROSS
BRIDGE GOLF RESORT &
SPA

Alabama, USA

By Peter Ellegard

CASTLE ON THE HILL

We can't confirm or deny if **Peter Ellegard** was driving at 90 down Alabama's country lanes Singing to "Tiny Dancer" but we can confirm that he did watch a few sunsets while listening to the sound of the bagpipes floating over the Alabama hills



It’s known as “The Castle” because of its stately architecture and soaring turrets, inspired by Scotland’s baronial edifices.

The Scottish ambience is enhanced by the tradition of a kilted piper playing the bagpipes around the Ross Bridge Resort grounds at sunset each day.

Inside the theme continues. The grand, two-storey lobby is dominated by a stone fireplace and tall feature chimney breast flanked by dark wood shelves full of books, around which period armchairs, William Morris-style wingback chairs and deep sofas invite you to sink into their embrace and drink in the atmosphere – which I do on several occasions.

Plenty of dark wood and stone in other public areas adds to the feel, as does the tartan carpet in the clubhouse restaurant.

While that all might seem somewhat kitsch for a 20-year-old luxury hotel in the heart of Deep South state Alabama rather than an ancestral pile in the Scottish Highlands, it actually works. Brilliantly, in fact.

The resort lords over a 1,700-acre estate of

rolling hills close to the city of Birmingham and provides accommodation for the on-site Ross Bridge golf course, built as part of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail that spans 26 golf courses on 11 sites across Alabama.

However, Ross Bridge Resort is much more than simply a golfers’ hotel. It is a destination in its own right with amenities to cater to guests of all types.

ROOMS

There are 259 rooms and 11 suites including a presidential suite. The rooms have either a king bed or two queen beds and all have a balcony with a table and chairs. Some rooms are also accessible. My balcony looks out over trees and a car park. Others have views over the pool complex and terrace, fairways and the surrounding Alabama hills.

The rooms are spacious, elegant and luxurious, and the light furnishings and carpet help make mine feel even more airy. The Renaissance Bed is as comfortable as it looks and I’m sound asleep almost as soon as my

head hits the generously-sized pillows each night.

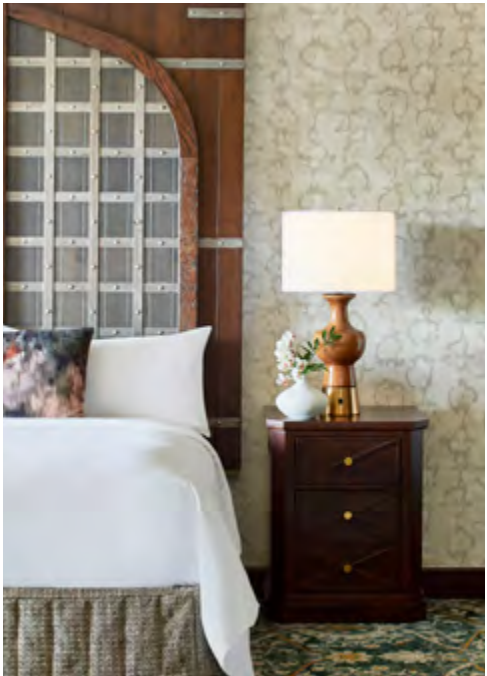
There’s a large armchair by the floor-to-ceiling windows, which is fine for me as I am staying on my own, although not so good if I was with my partner. I can never understand why so many hotel rooms only have one chair to relax in when they are intended for couples.

A desk with plenty of electrical sockets and fast, free wireless internet makes working in the room a pleasure.

The teal sideboard has lots of storage space, there’s a coffee maker and a safe, and free bottled water is provided daily, while the mini fridge is stocked with drinks and snacks you pay for if you can’t resist the temptation. Inside the wardrobe are an iron and ironing board. The flat-screen TV is set on the wall above the sideboard facing the bed, although angling it so that you can watch while working at the desk is tricky.

The marble bathroom has a walk-in shower and separate bathtub, above which is a photograph of the 9th and 18th holes and →

Right: Piper at sunset
Bottom left: Suite dreams
Bottom middle: Presidential Suite
Bottom right: Rooms are airy and bright



the stream tumbling down from a watermill that divides them. The sink has a single basin set within a large granite top to put all your toiletries on, with a circular mirror above.

RESTAURANT AND BARS

Several dining and socialising options are offered at Ross Bridge.

Brock’s Restaurant serves up refined cuisine with a Mediterranean slant and has an open kitchen where diners can watch their meals being prepared. Breakfast and dinner are offered there. It also boasts a fabulous wine room with a curved wooden, full-height wine rack and moveable ladder to reach bottles in the uppermost sections.

The Clubhouse Restaurant serves salads, burgers and other classic American dishes in a relaxed setting inside or on its terrace and is open from 11am to 10pm.

JT’s Lounge is a lively pub open from 3pm to midnight that serves cocktails, craft beers and other drinks, accompanied by live music every evening.

The seasonal Poolside Bar & Grille is open between late May and early September, offering American fare, drinks and snacks from mid-morning until evening.

Coffee, pastries and light bites are available every morning at Café Macrae’s by the lobby.

SPA AND WELLNESS

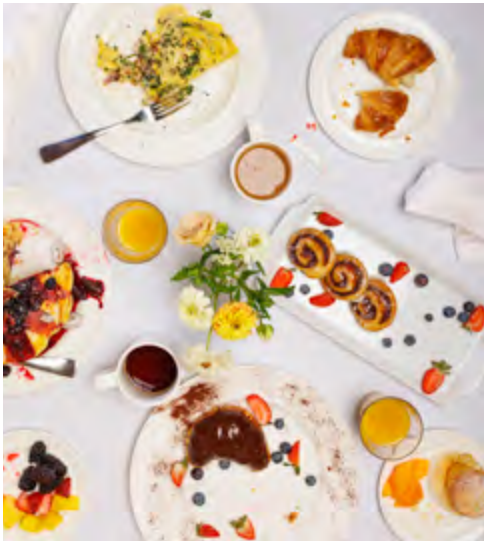
Named one of the top 100 spas of America in 2024, The Spa at Ross Bridge is a 12,000-square-foot haven of peace and →



Left: Open kitchen at Brock’s Restaurant
Above: Brock’s wine room
Below left: Clubhouse Restaurant
Below: Breakfast fare

“Several dining and socialising options are offered at Ross Bridge.

Brock’s Restaurant serves up refined cuisine with a Mediterranean slant and has an open kitchen where diners can watch their meals being prepared”



relaxation that offers a variety of treatments. Massages range from relaxation Swedish-style massages to a 110-minute RTJ Athletic Recovery Massage as well as couple’s massages, while other treatments include body scrubs and wraps, facials, pedicures and manicures. The spa also has its own hair salon.

A Wellness Suite guest room offers features to minimise the impact of travel on the body, including a Bryte Balance Smart Bed, microfibre bedding, air purification and a eucalyptus shower.

The fitness centre is open 24 hours a day and features cardio and weight equipment with Wi-Fi device connections and Peloton bikes.

The resort’s main outdoor pool has a water slide to cater to families while the new Serenity Pool offers a tranquil retreat for adults with a dedicated bar, lounge chairs, private cabanas for rent, firepits and a Jacuzzi. There is also a saltwater indoor pool.

ACTIVITIES

Play golf right on your doorstep on the world’s fifth-longest golf course, a par-72 layout that measures 8,191 yards from the championship tees. The pro shop is inside the hotel building.

Just a mile away is another RTJ Trail facility, Oxmoor Valley, which has two full-size 18-hole golf courses and a par-54 short course, all built on former mining land and set amidst scenic forests and creeks with challenging elevation changes.

Nearby attractions include the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the Birmingham Museum of Art, Industrial Revolution heritage at Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, and hiking and biking in Red Mountain Park and Oak Mountain State Park.

CONCLUSION

It may lack the history and authenticity of the Scottish castles it emulates, but Ross Bridge truly is fit for kings and queens, not forgetting little princes and princesses.

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Right: Relaxing in the spa
Middle right: Indoor Jacuzzi
Far right: Warming firepits
Left bottom: Serenity Pool area
Far right bottom: Aerial view of the hotel and main outdoor pool





James Mason



ROSS BRIDGE GOLF COURSE

by James Mason

After an hour or so's drive we arrive at Ross Bridge, the newest course on the RTJ Golf Trail and depending on what teeing option you choose can measure from a staggering 8,191 yards, while the second teeing option is 7,446 yards. Yes, you get the idea but don't let your heart sink too much because there are three other teeing options going down to 5,312 yards from the teal tees.

As I step onto the 1st tee, the good news is the fairway is very wide so it's a real grip it and rip it course. For the sake of the video I am playing a lot of holes from the back tees on this tour so you can

see the changes in elevation from the tees to the fairways, and as I'm standing on the black tee with my playing partners on the whites there is a 109-yard difference in distance. I certainly won't be playing my second shot from where it lands, as I do not carry a bazooka in my bag – and I am not even sure that will be long enough as I would probably need a SAM!!

Like the fairway, the green is enormously wide and three- or four-putting is definitely on the cards if you don't hit the right section with your third shot, which is played across water to a green that sits in a valley below the fairway.

Water doesn't come into play on the

2nd which is played from an elevated tee, but it does come into play on the par 4, 3rd hole, which is all risk and reward from the tee. Your tee shot is played across a fairly wide river to the fairway on the other side and the further back you play the safer you are; the more river you cut off the shorter the second shot you will be left with. As I stand on the tee, it is visually stunning and strategically a brilliant piece of design work. That same river comes into play on the par 3, 4th hole where it's all carry to make the wide green.

The 7th hole has a blind tee shot to a rolling downhill fairway, but if you get a long drive away you could be looking at hitting only a mid iron into this par 5 →



James Mason

Top left: The opening tee shot from the black tees, with the white tees 109 yards to the right!

Top right: 9th green with bagpipe player at sunset

Left: View of the 7th green from the fairway



James Mason

hole this is with the green sitting between two sculptured white sanded bunkers, with the river running to your right – which is not in play. It really is a beautiful hole.

The par 3, 14th hole is played to a semi island green with water short and left. No matter which tees you choose to play from on the 15th, you need to go and take a look from the tips. The fairway sits some 200ft below you with three sculptured white-sanded bunkers in the fairway and a lake to carry, which then runs along the left of the fairway and the green, it's another wonderful design and the vistas from the tee are breathtaking.

The 18th is a fitting end to a wonderful course. There is only a 130-yard difference in distance between the black and white tees that again take you back across the lake. The design of the hole that doglegs right means it's another risk and reward hole and, depending on pin position and how brave/stupid you are, will dictate how much water you are going to take on.

It's yet another great course on the RTJ Golf Trail and if you choose your teeing options wisely you will have a lot of fun and enjoyment. Choose to go from the tips and you will walk off thinking you have just been 18 rounds with Mike Tyson. The choice is all yours!

"It's yet another great course on the RTJ Golf Trail and if you choose your teeing options wisely you will have a lot of fun and enjoyment. Choose to go from the tips and you will walk off thinking you have just been 18 rounds with Mike Tyson. The choice is all yours!"

hole to give you a shot at eagle.

Water comes back into play on the final two holes of the front nine with water protecting the left side of the green on the 8th and running along the entire left hand side of the fairway on the 9th with the green sitting on what looks like a peninsula from the tee as the hole gently doglegs left.

There is a 177-yard difference between the black and white tees and it's all risk and reward on the tee shot from the back with how much water you want to try and carry!

From the tee on the par 5, 13th you can't see the green until you hit the top part of the hill. If you get a good drive away hopefully you can hit the hill and pick up some much needed yardage for your second shot, but it's when you hit the top of the hill and see the green below you that you start to see what a beautiful



**COURSE
VIDEO**

Top: Amazing views from the back tee on the 15th

Left: Views of the 9th, 17th and 18th holes



KULM HOTEL

St Moritz, Switzerland

By PETER ELLEGARD

QUIET LUXURY

Snowcapped mountains, azure clear waters, crisp fresh air and quiet luxury. **Peter Ellegard** heads to St Moritz and steps back in time

I'm standing on the balcony of my third-floor room at the five-star Kulm Hotel, looking out over St Moritz Lake and the lower parts of this famous resort town to the crags towering high above them and the surrounding mountainous scenery.

It has taken me four hours to get here via three trains from Zurich Airport, whisked by private transfer from St Moritz train station, following the two-hour flight from London.

But I feel on top of the world, both for the stunning views in front of me and jaw-dropping alpine landscapes along the spectacular winding route – the sense of awe accentuated next day by early-morning fog that slowly lifted its shroud.

Then there is Kulm Hotel itself. And what a stunning hotel it is. Few can boast such legendary provenance as this grande dame of the Alps.

St Moritz was already a popular summer escape for wealthy English visitors in the mid-1800s when Swiss businessman Johannes Badrutt leased and then bought a small Engadine Valley inn that would become Kulm Hotel. He made a bet with several English summer guests that if they returned to St Moritz in December and did not enjoy the winter there, he would reimburse them. →

Right: Kulm Country Club
 Below: Nature reigns supreme in St Moritz
 Far right: Junior Suite



They stayed until Easter, spread the word on their return and winter tourism was born – with St Moritz its cradle. Kulm Hotel expanded over the years, establishing itself as the fulcrum of the town’s burgeoning tourism industry.

At Christmas in 1878, Switzerland’s first electric lights illuminated Kulm’s dining room (now the Grand Restaurant) and a streetlamp still standing outside the hotel was lit by a purpose-built hydroelectric plant.

The following decade saw more innovations, such as the introduction of the hotel lobby concept in its new west wing and Switzerland’s first public telephone network installed in the hotel.

It also saw the construction of now-legendary Cresta Run and the establishment of the St Moritz Tobogganing Club at the hotel, as well as the Alps’ highest golf course, the nine-hole Kulm Golf Course at 1,864 metres (6,115 feet) above sea level.

The hotel was central to the 1928 and 1948 Winter Olympics held in St Moritz, with the opening ceremonies and a number of sporting events taking place in its adjacent Kulm Park.

There’s no resting on its laurels, however. More than £100 million worth of improvements are planned for coming years, among them a winter garden designed by noted English architect Lord Foster, who has close links with the hotel.

Kulm Hotel is seasonal, opening from mid-June to the end of August for summer stays and from early December to the beginning of April for winter.

ROOMS

Kulm offers 150 rooms and suites, all recently renovated.

The first thing I notice when entering my Junior Suite room, in the central part of the hotel above the lobby, is the smell – it’s like walking into a pine forest, or a sauna without the heat.

The aroma comes from the local Swiss stone pine cladding every wall in the bedroom and one wall in the bathroom. The warm tones give the room a homely and cosy feel, accentuated by the contemporary furniture and décor.

When I’m not sitting on the balcony gazing at the glorious Alps vistas during my free time, I relax on the two-seater settee or small armchair and footstool. Being a corner room, there is a side door with a Juliet balcony looking across to another wing of the hotel, helping to make the room even lighter with the curtains opened. Books, pictures and ornaments add to the home from home atmosphere.

I love little touches such as the Kulm Post newsletter detailing summer events and activities at the hotel and a booklet of short stories put in the room each night, as well as bowls of ripe cherries and other fruit plus beautifully-made sweet treats including a chocolate butterfly and a glazed vintage car under a glass cloche on the table.

Even more thoughtful is the minibar stocked with goodies including beer, water, soft drinks and Lindt chocolate bars – all free, with anything consumed replaced daily.

The desk has power sockets and both USB and USB-C charging points on the wall above, as have both bedside tables along with table lamps and adjustable reading lights, while another nice touch is a provided →



Top: Chesa al Parc
Right: Breakfast on
the terrace
Far right: Amaru
restaurant



adapter plug. The king-sized bed has pillows as soft as clouds, although a pillow menu lets you choose your preferred options.

There's plenty of shelves, drawers and hanging space, with room to store my golf clubs, in the walk-in wardrobe, and I make use of one of the two provided monogrammed robes and slippers.

The bathroom features a double granite sink with huge mirror and small, light-up shaving/make-up mirror, separate bath and walk-in shower, and a bidet toilet in another cubicle. And the blinds power up or down with a single long press.

My only gripe is the lack of a hook to hang my robe when I shower.

RESTAURANT AND BARS

You won't go hungry staying at Kulm. It offers seven restaurants, featuring everything from traditional Engadine specialities to international haute cuisine.

The Pizzeria, as far removed from a fast-food pizza chain as is possible, features traditional Italian starters, wood-fired pizzas and desserts to die

for.

Lunch after nine holes on the Kulm course is on the terrace of Chesa al Parc, which offers local dishes and also serves as the golf course clubhouse. I choose soup and beef tartare, which is very tasty – until I see the veal bratwurst on rosti ordered by three of my travelling colleagues and have food envy. A nearby group are enjoying a Swiss cheese fondue, something of a fad in the UK in the Seventies.

Thankfully I do get to try the bratwurst and rosti in the strikingly ornate Lobby Lounge, amidst decorative fluted columns and below crystal chandeliers. It doesn't disappoint.

Perhaps our best meal is in the Kulm Country Club, sat below historic bobsleds slung from the ceiling in the upstairs Lord Foster-redesigned restaurant. Chef Mauro Colagreco treats us to succulent tomahawk steak, lamb shoulder and other Latin American dishes accompanied by wines from Argentina and Chile, after which we decamp to the downstairs bar. There I try a rare Orma Corvatsch Limited Edition single malt whisky, produced at nearby mountaintop Corvatsch Ski Station, 3,303 metres

above sea level – the world's highest whisky distillery – served, on the rocks of course, in a mug resembling a rock. Delicious!

Breakfast each morning is in the appropriately-named Grand Restaurant, below a carved wooden ceiling as exquisite as the food. At night, diners can dress up for six-course dinners in the opulent setting.

Also at the hotel are the rustic Bob Restaurant, by the entrance of the Olympia bobsled run that is hand-crafted from ice each year, Peruvian flavours in the Amaru restaurant, and the Sunny Bar and Grill where the Cresta Runners gather every winter.

We also enjoy a fabulous meal in the Gourmet Restaurant Kronenstübli of Kulm's equally impressive sister hotel, the Grand Hotel Kronenhof, in nearby Pontresina.

SPA AND WELLNESS

I cannot recall ever using a hotel spa with such mesmerising views.

My knotted muscles are expertly eased in a 50-minute relaxation massage by my masseuse Selena, resisting the temptation to crane my →



Top row left to right:
Grand Restaurant,
Kulm Country Club,
view from the Lobby
Lounge
Bottom row left to
right: Paragliding
over St Moritz, Lake
St Moritz, Kulm Golf
Course



neck to look out of the floor-to-ceiling window to the lake and mountains as she works her magic. Her home is just across the border in Italy but she lives at the hotel when it is open to work at the Kulm Spa.

Soak in the same spine-tingling vistas from the spa's indoor and outdoor pools, the latter heated to a bath-like 34°C and equipped with a waterfall Jacuzzi. Indoor and outdoor relaxation areas also allow guests to lie back and enjoy the scenic splendour.

The fitness area includes state-of-the-art Technogym equipment and SensoPro training apparatus.

ACTIVITIES

Kulm Golf Course may only be a par-3, but the clever layout means every hole is unique and breathtaking, whether atop lofty mountain slopes or through thick pine forest. You even play some shots over the Bob Run route.

Other summer activities include hiking past alpine lakes in the

Engadine Valley, exploring Lake St Moritz and the lower town of St Moritz Bad below the hotel as well as St Moritz itself, sailing on the lake and taking the funicular and cable car to the summit of Piz Nair.

You can also visit villages in the area by bus and take the famous UNESCO Bernina Red Train through 55 tunnels and over 196 bridges of the Bernina Pass to Tirano in Italy.

In winter, those brave enough can ride in a four-man bob sled down the Olympia run.

CONCLUSION

From the moment you set foot inside Kulm Hotel you enter a rarefied world of style, opulence and history, ushered in through the grand entrance and lobby decorated with sensational arts and crafts designs by Italian artist Lorenzo Mongiardino.

Yet for all that, it embraces guests with understated elegance. Or, as the hotel management calls it, quiet luxury. I couldn't agree more.

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