

MAURITIUS

James and Peter head off to this idyllic island for golf and love. All is revealed inside

SOUTHERN CHINA

The colours, mystery, landscapes and wonders of this amazing region of China and its people

IRELAND

Jane and Monica head to Ireland, Jane for hiking and a family reunion while Monica tees it up on some not-so-hidden gems

PLANET GOLF

REVIEW

ISSUE 33

STAY, PLAY & SPA

Weekend, short-stay getaway or spa days? We bring you hotel & spa reviews from Cyprus and Italy

THE MASTERS

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

EQUIPMENT & APPAREL REVIEWS

We have the latest releases from Cleveland, FootJoy, TaylorMade and TecTecTec. Along with our Pro Tip from Paul

VIEW.COM

WELCOME

Since the Genocide in Gaza started it has been with a heavy heart that I write these editor's letter, hoping soon that humanity would prevail. But here I am writing a few days after more needless deaths, not only in Palestine but now in Iran, which started with the slaughter of 165 schoolgirls and his since escalated into a regional war between the US, Israel and Iran. Another war where the innocent suffer and the people of the world don't want.

But we all have a vote and we now have to start looking past the duopoly parties in our countries and use our vote for peace, not hatred. Before you go to place that X on a ballot form in future elections, look at your children and grandchildren, and not at your bank account, your mortgage

or your tax deductions and vote for their future, so they too can travel the world and enjoy the many different countries and cultures that you have been able to.

The PGR team and myself put these reviews together to bring you new destinations to enjoy, and give you the information you need to make the most of your holidays/vacations and golf tours. But what makes new destinations so special are the people and their varied cultures and history and the realisation that they love their families just like you, they eat just like you, they work just like you, they love just like you, and they want peace, just like you. Don't let those who peddle their propaganda on mainstream media tell you otherwise.

MEET THE TEAM

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TRIAL TO T I D E

REVIEW



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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

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REVIEW





Rolex

Justin Thomas tees off at the par 5, 13th hole, Azalea

LITTLE GREEN JACKET

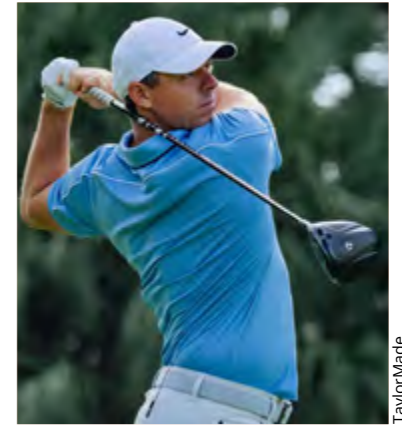
Tea Olive, Pink Dogwood, Yellow Jasmine, Azalea, Firethorn – where many a Masters Champion has walked away smiling. But, lets not forget White Dogwood and Golden Bell, where many a Masters green jacket has been lost to a watery grave. It's that time of year when a flower nursery in Georgia comes to life in more ways than one

It has certainly been a very wet and grey start to the year in the Northern Hemisphere. So, the emerald fairways, blue skies and the many varieties and colours of the flora that blossoms in April at this former plant nursery in Augusta, Georgia, will certainly be a welcome sight as we turn on our HD TVs to watch the best golfers in the world do battle for the year's first Major Championship.

As Rory said last year after competing his Grand Slam, what will the story be here this year? The LIV rivalry has passed, even if some of the players haven't returned to the PGA Tour. Luke Donald has one again confirmed he will be Europe's Ryder Cup captain in →

RORY MCILROY

13/1



TaylorMade

XANDER SCHAUFFELE

16/1



Callaway

LUDVIG ÅBERG

18/1



Rolex

COLLIN MORIKAWA

40/1



Rolex

PATRICK REED

40/1



Peeteesnumber1

JACOB BRIDGEMAN

90/1



Bryan Berlin

Ireland. But, come the green jacket ceremony in the Butler Cabin on Sunday night, after all the drama, excitement, highs, and lows, The Masters always produces a worthy champion. Here are our picks who we feel may be donning that green jacket come Sunday.

MY TIPS TO WIN

Rory McIlroy 13/1 – with AKBets – for the first time in this event Rory will be the defending champion and I am sure he will want to put up a strong defence of his first green jacket

Xander Schauffele 16/1 – with BetVictor – had a runner-up finish in his second start at Augusta and has only been outside the Top 20 twice in his eight starts. Xander has four Top 10s including a 3rd place finish in his last four starts

Ludvig Åberg 18/1 – with PricedUp – has two

starts at The Masters and took the runner-up spot in his first start here and followed that up with a Top 10 finishes last year. Ludvig arrives here on the back of three Top 5 finishes in this last three starts

MY EACH-WAY TIPS

Collin Morikawa 40/1 – with PriceUp – has only been outside the Top 20 once and has three Top 10s in his last four starts at Augusta

Patrick Reed 40/1 – with AKBets – has two wins, a runner-up and is number one on the European Tour OOM. The 2018 Masters champion has four Top 10s here at Augusta in his last six starts including last years third-place finish

MY OUTSIDE TIP

Jacob Bridgeman 90/1 – with AKBets – This may be Jacobs first start at The Masters, but he

comes into this week on the back of a win and having not been outside the Top 20 once this year in his eight starts

LONGER ODDS TIP

Try **Casey Jarvis 200/1 – with VirginBet** – Those who follow our guides regularly know how highly we rate the South African who has two wins and a runner-up in his last four starts on the European Tour

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

As always good luck and have fun!



12th hole, Golden Bell
- Par 3, 155 yards

Mike Rundle

- Scottie Scheffler 5/1
- Bryson DeChambeau 10/1
- Jon Rahm 11/1
- Rory McIlroy 11/1
- Ludvig Åberg 14/1
- Xander Schauffele 14/1
- Cameron Young 22/1
- Matt Fitzpatrick 22/1
- Tommy Fleetwood 22/1
- Robert MacIntyre 25/1
- Justin Rose 28/1
- Collin Morikawa 30/1
- Brooks Koepka 33/1
- Jordan Spieth 33/1
- Patrick Reed 33/1
- Viktor Hovland 33/1
- Hideki Matsuyama 35/1
- Min Woo Lee 40/1
- Akshay Bhatia 45/1
- Chris Gotterup 50/1
- Justin Thomas 50/1
- Tyrrell Hatton 50/1
- Corey Conners 55/1
- Russell Henley 55/1
- Sepp Straka 55/1
- Jake Knapp 60/1
- Patrick Cantlay 60/1
- Shane Lowry 60/1
- Adam Scott 66/1
- Jacob Bridgeman 66/1
- Jason Day 66/1
- Si Woo Kim 66/1
- Cameron Smith 70/1
- Sam Burns 70/1
- Gary Woodland 80/1
- Marco Penge 80/1
- Nicolai Højgaard 80/1
- Sungjae Im 80/1
- Harris English 90/1
- J.J. Spaun 100/1
- Maverick McNealy 100/1
- Max Homa 100/1
- Ben Griffin 125/1
- Daniel Berger 125/1
- Dustin Johnson 125/1
- Kurt Kitayama 125/1
- Wyndham Clark 125/1
- Aaron Rai 150/1

[More](#)

IMPRESSIONS FROM SOUTHERN CHINA



Left: Sun Yat Sen Memorial,
Guangzhou, Guangdong province
Below: Guanyin statue, Nanshan
Cultural Tourism Zone, Sanya,
Hainan Island



Left: Zhuang
minority girls
in traditional
dress,
Dragon's
Backbone
rice terraces,
Longsheng,
Guangxi
province



Left: Reflecting
pagodas, Shan
Lake, Guilin,
Guangxi province
Right: Silver
Cave stalactites,
Yangshuo, Guangxi
province



Left: Karst scenery,
Yangshuo

Below: Playing games in the street, Guangzhou, Guangdong province
Right: Ethnic minority girl, Silver Cave, Yangshuo



Above: Ethnic minority girls knitting, Silver Cave, Yangshuo
Right: Father and daughter at Dragon's Backbone rice terraces, Longsheng



Above: Red Yao minority women washing their hair in a river, Longsheng



Left: Tai Chi class, Guangzhou

IMPRESSIONS FROM SOUTHERN CHINA

Right: Children wearing traditional headwear, Longsheng, Guangxi province
Far right: Dragon's Backbone rice terraces, Longsheng



IMPRESSIONS FROM SOUTHERN CHINA

Right: Roof carvings, Chen Clan Temple, Guangzhou, Guangdong province
Below: Pavilion at night, Two Rivers and Four Lakes Scenic Area, Guilin, Guangxi province



Above: Street scene, Guangzhou, Guangdong province
Right: Statue, Temple of the God of the Southern Sea, Guangzhou,



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

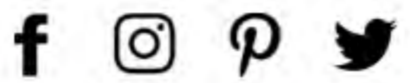


Above: Lijiang River, near Guilin
Right: Reflections of Crystal Palace rock formation, Reed Flute Cave, Guilin



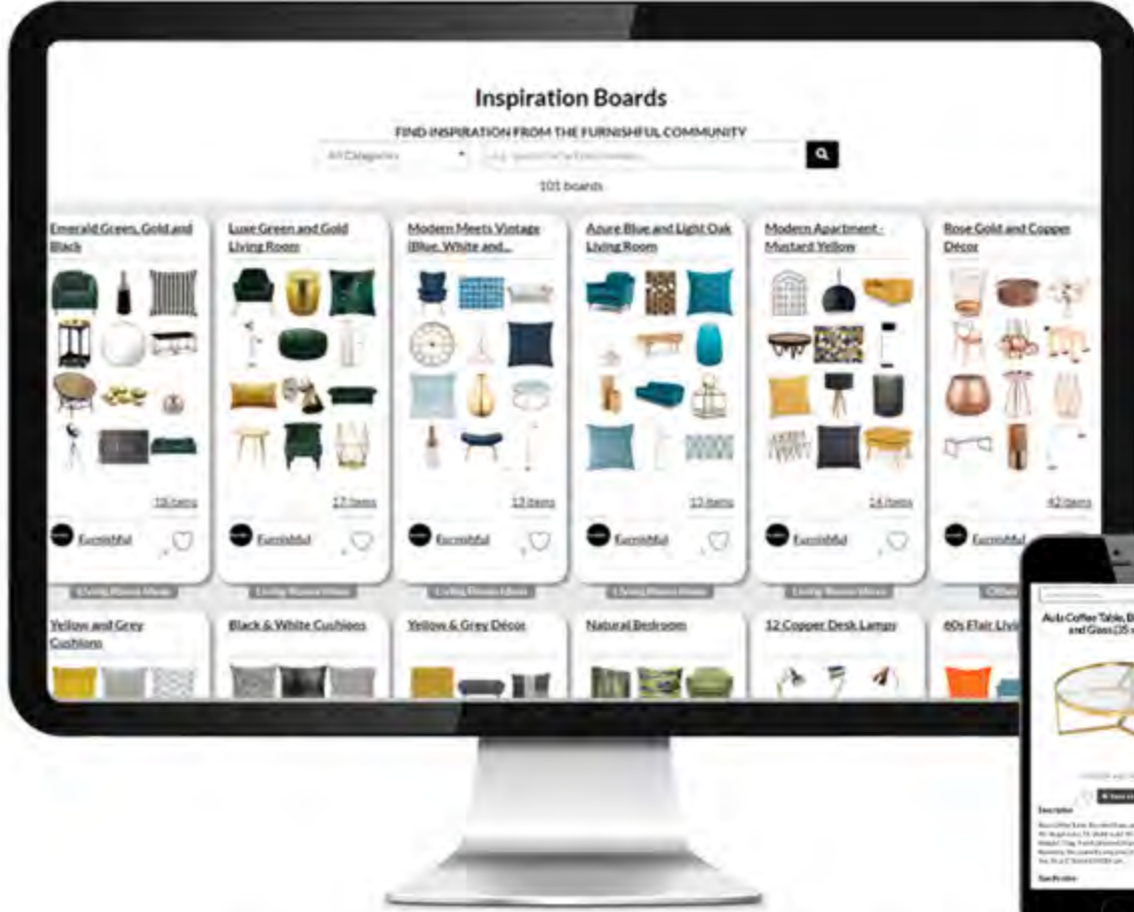


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THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

"Finding your ancestral roots can bring a new way of thinking about your identities, and past and present belonging." – Dr. Sarah Gaither.
Jane travels the road home and rediscovers her father's legacy



BY JANE FINN

It's September but the weather is unpredictable. Sunny one moment, raining the next. A metaphor for life? Or perhaps a gentle reminder that part of the adventure is embracing the elements and allowing your intuition to guide your way.

My journey 'home' starts in Donegal. A part of Éire I have never seen and know little about. Some consider it the 'forgotten county'. In my mind, that's a blessing in disguise for anyone seeking an authentic Irish experience.

UP HERE IT'S DIFFERENT

This morning, the sun is shining, but by the time I reach the rugged northeast coast the skies are overcast, and the slight drizzle feels like mist as it lands on my shoulders. Inside the Sliabh Liag Cliffs Centre, it's warm and cosy and the smell of richly brewing coffee and freshly-baked scones convince me I need to savour the local flavours before making my way to the cliffs.

I'm about to exit the Tí Linn Café when I see a small interpretive centre, beckoning me to →

Sliabh Liag Cliffs
and the Giant's
Desk and Chair



“My journey ‘home’ starts in Donegal. A part of Éire I have never seen and know little about. Some consider it the ‘forgotten county’. In my mind, that’s a blessing in disguise for anyone seeking an authentic Irish experience”



“After venturing 100 metres, slightly more than 300 feet along the knife edge path that connects to Pilgrim’s Pass, I’m keenly aware that I’m standing on a narrow precipice atop the highest cliffs in Europe. I’m also mindful that while I’m still brave, I’m not as sure-footed as I once was”

step inside. Immediately I notice the narratives are written in Gaelge, followed by an English translation – a tangible expression of shared traditions, history and kinship. Amazingly, this subtle reassertion of Irish culture shifts my perspective and significantly influences my experiences on this trip.

Too often we overlook opportunities to delve below the surface because we’re too busy racing from one attraction to another, in search of the big ‘ah-ha’ – and that’s our loss. As I uncover little known facts about the area, more importantly, I’m gaining an appreciation for the inhabitants of this remote corner of the world. Their resilience. Their sense of community. Their ties to the past and their hopes for the future.

NOW, IT’S TIME TO REACH FOR THE SKY

Hopping off the shuttle that has brought me to the edge of Ireland’s Wild Atlantic Way, I head straight to the Bunglass viewing platform, where I get my first glimpse of the cliffs. The headland is shrouded by a heavy veil of clouds, but it doesn’t obscure the raw, majestic beauty of the massive stone walls rocketing more than 601 metres/1,972 feet above the tumultuous ocean. Almost three times higher than the Cliffs of Moher, Sliabh Liag (Slieve League’s) rock faces appear wise and knowing, solid, and fiercely independent. A reminder that storms come and go, but the land remains.

The wind is powerful and a gentle rain is falling but neither dampen my enthusiasm nor my desire to reach the summit. As I join a

group preparing to hike the trail, several eye the vertical ascent with some trepidation, but David, our guide, is reassuring. Born and raised on this wild peninsula, I get the impression he knows this land like the back of his hand. So, it’s onward and upward, feeling perfectly safe, following in his steps.

Reaching the top is easier than expected but traversing the headland requires skill and nerves of steel. One Man’s Pass is aptly named and not for the faint of heart. After venturing 100 metres, slightly more than 300 feet along the knife edge path that connects to Pilgrim’s Pass, I’m keenly aware that I’m standing on a narrow precipice atop the highest cliffs in Europe. I’m also mindful that while I’m still brave, I’m not as sure-footed as I once was.

Suddenly the fog dissipates and the sun

bursts through the clouds, illuminating the bay below. I’ve reaped my reward now that I’ve got a bird’s eye view of Donegal and decide to retreat to the main trail. Apparently, I’m not the only one who deems discretion the better part of valour. Within seconds our group reassembles on sturdier ground, delighted we have time to hear more from David who I would classify as a Seanchai, a natural raconteur, and the keeper of local lore, myth and history.

Whenever I think of that day, I can recall almost every detail of the wondrous tale of Anna who disappeared after her cruel father sent her out not once, but twice in a raging snowstorm to herd their cattle off the mountain. The second time, she didn’t return. The villagers couldn’t fathom that any harm would befall such a sweet and innocent girl, and to this day maintain →

Top: Aerial view of Slieve Liag, Slieve League, cliffs at sunrise



Far left: Ancient stones on the cliffs of Sliabh Liag
Left: Ballyarr Wood Nature Reserve
Jane Finn

“David’s story was beguiling and told with such conviction that I have no doubt a magical connection to the Otherworld of the Celts exists, but it’s his take on a present day ‘legend’ that shows me the true spirit and grit of those who earn their living on these windswept shores”

Anna was rescued by the faeries, married to their king and if you listen carefully, you can hear her whispers on the wind that speak of love, loyalty and loss.

David’s story was beguiling and told with such conviction that I have no doubt a magical connection to the Otherworld of the Celts exists, but it’s his take on a present day ‘legend’ that shows me the true spirit and grit of those who earn their living on these windswept shores.

Walking close, but not too close to the edge of the cliff, he points to a rocky formation, known as the Giant’s Desk and Chair, where a single red buoy bobs on the waves, telling me it belongs to Mícheál, a 3rd-generation fisherman.

Every morning at dawn, Mícheál dives deep to claim his lobster catch then hastens home to prep it before returning to the car park where he serves up homemade delicacies from his van. David proclaims that if I don’t partake, I’ll miss out on a second heavenly treat. As a Canadian, I’m proud of our East Coast fisheries and must have raised an eyebrow as David noted my skepticism, but I heeded his recommendation and must admit, Mícheál’s lobster roll is the freshest lobster roll I’ve ever tasted.

LOCAL ADVICE IS GOOD ADVICE

Many of the myths and legends of Ireland I’ve grown up with are coming to life as I criss-cross

the county, in search of hidden spaces and quiet places. One of which I discover, in of all places, a computer shop in Letterkenny.

As Connor is deciding how to retrieve my data from my laptop, that sadly won’t power up, we get onto the topic of the Game of Thrones, and I ask about the Dark Hedges. He agrees they are grand, but he knows a place nearby, the Ballyarr Wood Nature Reserve that is far less touristy and even more mystical. He’s so certain it will lift my spirits and distract me from my computer woes that I take him at his word and set off to find this secret forest.

It is estimated that Ireland has more than a quarter of a million archaeological and historic

sites, most offering free entry. This is one I would have missed had it not been for a chance conversation and Connor’s explicit instructions. I drive by the unmarked gate, more than once, before I realise I can park my car on the shoulder of the road, a rarity in this part of the world, and access the reserve via a farmer’s field.

Inside the forest a 2-kilometre circular loop leads me through the oldest part of the 33-hectare park. After crossing a babbling little brook, the sky disappears beneath a canopy of ancient sessile oaks, and I’m surrounded by rowan, holly and hazel trees. Like the Sassenach in Outlander, I feel like I’ve been transported back in time, to a foreign place that is somehow

familiar, where many souls have trod before me.

Behind a tangled web of shrubs, I spy remnants of once solid rock walls and allow my imagination free rein. Could this possibly have been a secretive hedge school where children were taught reading, writing, even Latin under the tutelage of dedicated teachers, hidden beneath dense thickets, behind moss-covered boulders?

Rounding a bend, there is evidence that while humans have left, there are many creatures inhabiting the land. When my eyes adjust to the dim light, I see setts, elaborate underground burrows where badgers hide before emerging under the cover of darkness, in addition to →



Jane Finn

Above: Aerial view of Horn Head
Top right: A deserted Silver Strand cove

numerous fox holes and deer tracks. Overhead the raucous cries of ravens, crows and magpies remind me that this is their territory, urging me forward. Another turn and the topography changes once more.

Standing stones mark the entrance to a place where the ordinary meets the extraordinary. A space where anything is possible. Patches of shamrocks crown tumbling rocks and upon closer inspection, I discover a series of tiny openings, mostly hidden by thick moss. Peering into one after another I'm sure I've found a portal to the fairy realm. It feels both peaceful, yet powerful here, and I understand why Anna would never want to leave. Sadly, I must make haste and get back to the shop before closing.

TAKING THE LONG WAY HOME

It's late when I let myself into the cottage at Claggan South and in the darkness, I sense the past and present merging together. As I throw a chunk of peat on the fire and pour a wee dram of Kilbeggan Irish Whiskey, I can't help but reflect on the stories that have shaped who I am today and why I've been drawn once again to Ireland's shores.

My ancestors don't hail from Donegal, but our maiden name Byrne is popular here and I can't help but wonder, am I somehow related? Staring at the flickering flame, I recall my Grade 8 English teacher telling us that "stories build memory and give meaning to facts" as I settle in and take another step back in time.

On April 22, 1928, my grandmother, Rose, with my dad and his six siblings, sailed from Belfast on the SS Montnairn to reunite with her husband in Canada. My grandparents never returned to their beloved Ireland, but seventy years later, my parents gathered our clan – my sisters, their husbands and our children – to make the pilgrimage and renew the ties that bind. It was a trip of a lifetime and the last time my dad would visit the place of his birth. With the recent passing of my aunt, the last of that generation, I know what was calling me back to my roots.

After several days of trekking to experience the remarkable beauty and solitude of Donegal's landmarks like Horn Head, Fintra Beach, the

quiet horseshoe shaped Silver Strand cove, and the dunes at Carrickfinn, I'm relaxed and exhilarated, but my body is telling me to rest.

After wending my way along the Antrim Coast, for no trip to Ireland would be complete without spending time in the Glens where the green hills sing, it's now time to head inland for one last solo adventure, one last personal indulgence. A taste of luxury at the Galgorm Resort and Spa.

CÉAD MÍLE FÁILTE - A THOUSAND WELCOMES

Inside the main reception hall, there's a roaring fire in the lobby. It burns 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, a nod to the age-old tradition of →

"My grandparents never returned to their beloved Ireland, but seventy years later, my parents gathered our clan – my sisters, their husbands and our children to make the pilgrimage and renew the ties that bind. It was a trip of a lifetime and the last time my dad would visit the place of his birth. With the recent passing of my aunt, the last of that generation, I know what was calling me back to my roots"



“Now it’s time for a long-awaited reunion. It’s been twenty-five years since I last saw any of my relatives. Will I remember them? Will they remember me? Will we have anything in common? Only time will tell”

smoothing – a signal to weary travellers that they have arrived at their destination and a potent demonstration of Irish hospitality.

I’m early and when I ask the concierge if I can wander the grounds before my spa treatment, I’m delighted to learn something I didn’t know. When you book a bed and breakfast stay at the Galgorm, you’re welcome to unwind in the Thermal Village from noon until check-in at four o’clock, at no additional charge. I don’t need to be told twice and soon find myself plunging in and out of the hot and cold pools and taking advantage of the steam rooms before my Sound and Soul Therapy session where I succumb to the restorative effects of nature and emerge, not only relaxed but rejuvenated.

Dinner at Gillies turns into a party when I’m seated next to two couples whose accent is distinctly Canadian. It turns out they are from Edmonton, Alberta where I’d lived for several years. Six degrees of separation? We ended up passing the evening together in McKendry’s sampling a taste or two from their extensive collection of more than six hundred whiskeys; updating me on the changes to their city while I share what’s brought me to the Emerald Isles. In a word, family.

Now it’s time for a long-awaited reunion. It’s been twenty-five years since I last saw any of my relatives. Will I remember them? Will they remember me? Will we have anything in common? Only time will tell.

Everywhere I’ve been I’ve been greeted with open arms, but none could compare with my cousin’s warm embrace when she burst through

the red door of the house I remembered well, proclaiming: “Welcome home!” Plenty of hugs and a round of quick introductions follow; but before I could even catch breath, my vivacious host declares we have places to go and people to see. It turns out she has arranged an ‘intimate’ dinner party for thirty of my relatives in nearby Hilltown at The Downshire Arms, so I hit the ground running and never looked back. It is only too clear that time and distance matters not. I am their kin and a part of their story.

CRAIC IS MORE THAN CONVERSATION. IT’S FOOD FOR THE SOUL

If you’ve never been to Ireland, craic (pronounced crack) is likely an unfamiliar term. In essence, it describes a lively, social atmosphere but returning to my father’s birthplace reveals a much deeper, emotional meaning. It’s what happens magically when people come together with open minds and open hearts.

It’s more than the exchange of information, or a wee bit of harmless gossip. It’s about celebrating the arrival of a child, a 50th wedding anniversary, the success of a business venture, or a trip abroad. It’s also the sorrow of losing someone to age, illness or even mysterious circumstances. It’s a respite from worries and a chance to focus on life’s simple pleasures. It’s the laughter and the tears and everything in between. It’s time to catch up, to listen, to be heard.

Over clinking glasses, gatherings around →

Left: The setting sun and Atlantic waves bouncing off the stones at the Giants causeway



Jane Finn

Left: The standing stones at Ballymascanlon Golf Course known as the 'Giant's Load', also known as the Proleek Dolmen

kitchen tables, an excursion to the Titanic Exhibit in Belfast or a leisurely stroll down a country lane, we share family news, celebrate births and mourn deaths. There is laughter and there are tears but no matter where we meet up, over a pint, a neighbour's fence, or walking down a country lane, there's always curiosity, care and compassion.

TIME TO PART WAYS

All too soon, it's time to bid farewell to my extended family but before I head for Dublin, there's one last thing I need to do.

In the middle of the golf course at Ballymascanlon, I locate the 'Giant's Load', also known as the Proleek Dolmen. It's a megalithic portal tomb, so called because of the two large upright stones that support a 46-tonne capstone. More than an engineering marvel, in my mind, it's a bridge between worlds.

Slowly, I turn away from the massive structure and reach in my pocket for a coin. I close my eyes and focus my intent. Legend has it if I can land it on top and it stays on top; my wish will be granted. I hear a satisfying clink and let out a sigh, knowing I've been successful. My heart's desire will be fulfilled. It won't take me another twenty-five years to find my way 'home'.

The Irish way of life has shown me the richer meanings of wealth and happiness. I leave filled with a profound sense of gratitude knowing that I belong to something much bigger than myself. Sláinte!

"The Irish way of life has shown me the richer meanings of wealth and happiness. I leave filled with a profound sense of gratitude knowing that I belong to something much bigger than myself. Sláinte!"

WHERE TO STAY

Galgorm Resort & Spa
W: galgorm.com
T: +44 (0) 28 2588 1001
E: reservations@galgorm.com

Ballymascanlon Hotel & Golf Resort

W: ballymascanlon.com
T: +353 42 935 8200
E: info@ballymascanlon.com

WHERE TO EAT

Tí Linn Café
 Slieve League Cliffs Centre
T: +353 74973 9077

The Downshire Arms

T: +44 (0) 28 4063 8899

WHAT TO DO

Slieve League (Sliabh Liag) Cliffs
W: sliabhliag.com
T: 074 9739620
E: info@sliabhliag.com

Ballyarr Wood Nature Reserve

W: npws.ic/nature-reserves
T: +353 749 153 960

Proleek Portal Tomb

National Monument Reference
 No: 476
 Coordinates:
 54.037200°N 6.348270°W

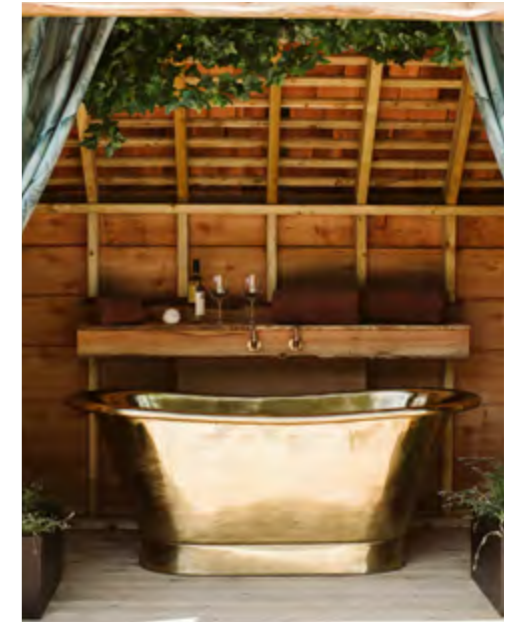
GALGORM RESORT & SPA

Antrim, Northern Ireland

By JANE FINN

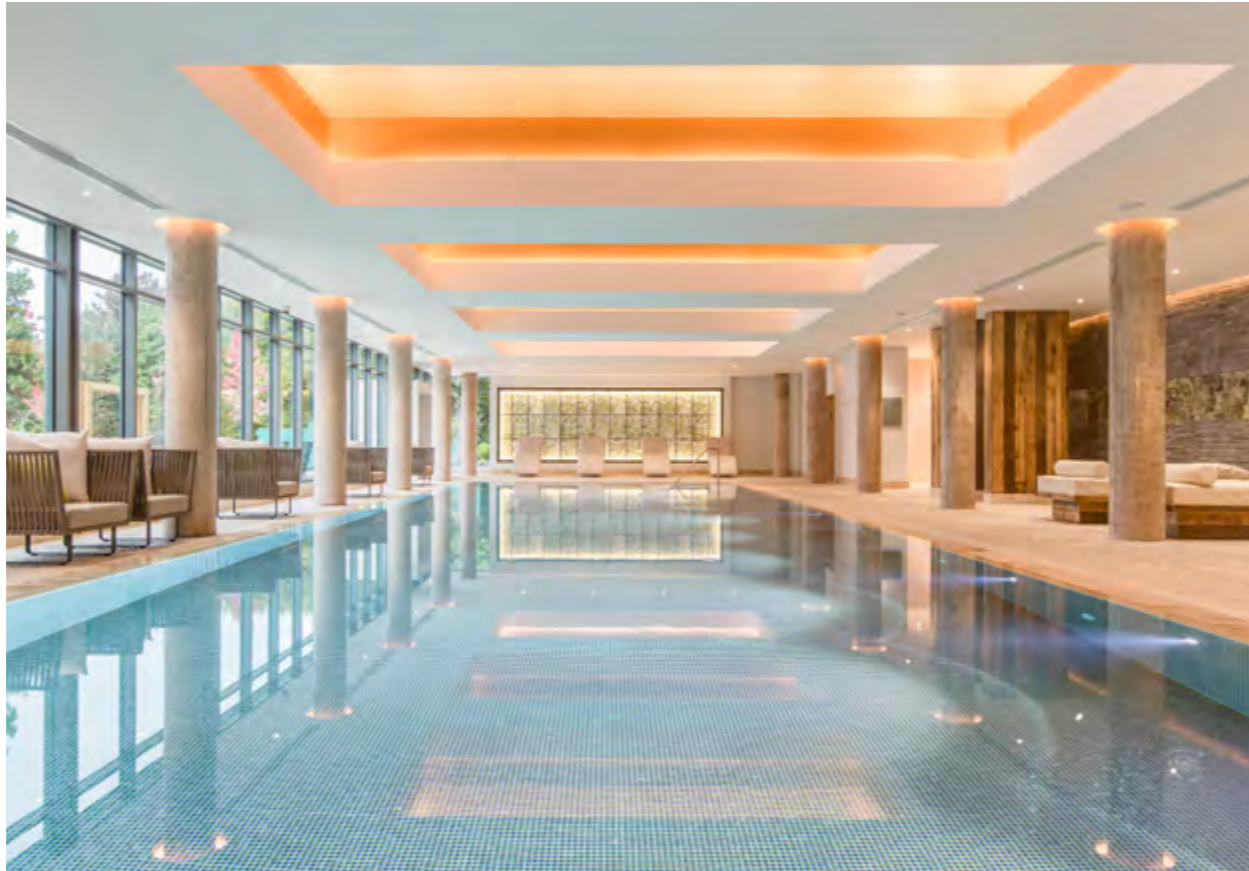
RELAX YOUR MIND

After hiking the mountains and trails of Donegal **Jane Finn** heads to Antrim and the mind and soul-soothing wellness facilities and beautiful gardens of Galgorm Resort and Spa





Top Left: Deluxe Hotel Room. Top Right: Shepherd's Hut
Middle: Glass enclosed Spa Pool. Bottom Left: Galgorm's Gin Library
Bottom Right: Cottage Village



Coming through the gates of Galgorm Resort & Spa, I feel as though I have entered someone's grand country estate. The sight of the original villa, built in 1857 that serves as the main reception area, confirms this impression, and sets the tone for my visit.

A VISION REALISED

After warming myself by the cheery fire that invites guests to take a moment to make themselves at home, I begin my exploration of this 450-hectare property to discover what sets this resort apart from others.

In a word, it is the ambience. The Hills Brothers, the visionaries behind Galgorm, have indeed succeeded in creating an elegant escape that blends old-world charm with world-class amenities. And their commitment to creating a transformative space is evident everywhere I look.

Normally, I do not take much notice of the décor but at Galgorm, the architectural design is not just a backdrop – it is part of the experience. The hotel draws inspiration from its natural surroundings, with light, colour, shape and texture combining to form a relaxed, harmonious, and comfortable setting that instantly puts me at ease.

DRINKING IT ALL IN

One of the first spaces that captures my imagination is the conservatory; a stunning, airy glass dome flooded with light. I can easily picture Edwardians enjoying high tea here or a libation in the adjacent Gin Library.

As a modern traveller, I am delighted to learn that this spirit lives on with daily tastings, where guests can sample different gins from Galgorm's collection of over three hundred blends, including their artisan version produced at a nearby small-batch distillery.

A HAVEN OF WELL-BEING

The true heart of Galgorm is the acclaimed Thermal Spa Village and as I make my way to the spa on the lower level, my sense of well-being automatically increases, and I find myself frequently stopping to consider why. Then it dawns on me. It is the interplay of local stone, natural light, stained wood, and a palette inspired by the surrounding woodlands and gardens that creates a seamless transition between indoors and outdoors. This design philosophy fosters an inexplicable sense of calmness, and I slow my pace to take it all in.

The Thermal Spa Village itself is a haven of relaxation and the first of its kind in Ireland. Guests can enjoy full access to riverside hot tubs, indoor and outdoor heated pools, multiple saunas and plunge pools, countless Jacuzzis, steam rooms, even a salt cave as well as relaxation areas set within the beautiful Alpine, Riverside, and Serenity gardens. The challenge is what is next after a massage that leaves me relaxed but wanting more. →

Perhaps a refreshing dip in the massive 20-meter glass-enclosed pool, followed by thirty minutes in an aroma grotto, then a stroll to the Celtic Sauna for an utterly unique experience.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN COMFORT AND CHARACTER

When it comes to accommodation, choosing from a deluxe room or superior suite in the hotel or a self-catering option is equally challenging. The intimacy and informality of the Forest and Shepherd’s Huts hold great appeal but, in the end, I’m drawn to the Shepherd’s Huts for their proximity to the vitality infinity pool that hugs the edge of the River Maine, and the pièce de resistance - your own personal copper hot tub. And should you decide you want to spend the evening in a robe and flip-flops, there is no need to dress for dinner. The resort’s Woodpecker delivery service will bring tasty treats like stone-baked pizzas, Madras curry or smashed burgers right to your door.

NOW IT IS TIME TO TEE IT UP

The second jewel in Galgorm’s Crown is the championship Castle golf course, home to the Black Desert NI Legends and this year part of the Elevate Golf 2026 tournament when it makes its initial debut in Ireland.

While I can attest to spectacular scenery of this mature parkland course, the exceptional staff and the superb steak dinner I enjoyed at the Castle Kitchen + Bar, I’ll leave it to Monica in her review and James’s video that follows to share their insider’s tips so you can ace your round.

THE GALGORM EXPERIENCE

In summary, what sets Galgorm apart are the resort’s design, amenities, and service; all work in concert to create a truly serene setting that feels worlds away from every day. Galgorm Resort & Spa is more than a destination; it is an experience. The ambience is one of understated elegance, the amenities are world-class, and the atmosphere is tranquil and harmonious. For anyone seeking a restorative escape, Galgorm delivers, inviting you to relax, unwind, and rediscover your sense of well-being in the heart of Northern Ireland.

Galgorm Resort & Spa
 Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland

T: +44 (0) 28 2588 1001
W: galgorm.com

Top Left: Alpine Garden Bar
 Top Right: Elements Spa Cafe
 Middle: Forest Den with Personal Hot Tub
 Bottom Right: Thermal Village Spa View from the Hotel
 Bottom Left: Hot Tub Overlooking the River Maine



RAMBLE ON

While Jane was hitting the mountains and trails of Donegal, Monica Akakpo was following in the footsteps of some of the best golfers in the world



©James Mason planetgolfireview

PORTSTEWART GOLF CLUB

W: portstewartgc.co.uk

Arriving at Portstewart Golf Club, the weather isn't exactly on my side. It's rainy, grey, and the kind of day where you question why you're even stepping out with your clubs. But as it turns out, it isn't nearly as bad as I thought. Sometimes the best rounds come when you just embrace the elements.

I start on the Strand Course. The right side runs alongside the sea, and as I take my shot the Atlantic wind hits me – a reminder that this is true links golf. It's raw, it's open, and it sets the tone perfectly.

The 2nd hole really makes me stop and think. The views are breathtaking – the sea rolling in on one side, towering dunes on the other. But I can't let myself get too distracted because the hole itself is tight and tricky. Club selection is a puzzle, and the wind only makes it harder.

The 5th hole is another big test – long, demanding, and unforgiving of anything less than your best shots. By the time I reach the

7th, I am deep in the dunes. This hole captures everything Portstewart is about for me: stunning natural beauty combined with a relentless challenge.

The 12th hole is one of those holes that will stay with me forever. Elevated, exposed, and absolutely stunning, but completely unforgiving if you lose focus for even a moment. And then comes the 18th — a proper finishing hole. Right in front of the clubhouse, with everyone watching. It is challenging, a little nerve-racking, and the perfect way to end my round.

The landscape here is unlike anywhere else I've played. Rolling dunes, sweeping ocean

views, and that wild, natural beauty that only true links golf delivers. Even in the rain, it is breathtaking.

Portstewart isn't just beautiful, it's also full of energy. It's a busy club with real character, and with tournaments like the Irish Open in its history, it's clear how highly it's regarded in the golfing world. Championship level, but still welcoming to anyone who comes to play.

Playing alone gave me the space to soak it all in – the views, the challenge, the history. For me, Portstewart Golf Club isn't just golf, it's an experience. Rain or shine, it's one I'll always remember. →

THE 12TH HOLE IS ONE OF THOSE HOLES THAT WILL STAY WITH ME FOREVER. ELEVATED, EXPOSED, AND ABSOLUTELY STUNNING, BUT COMPLETELY UNFORGIVING IF YOU LOSE FOCUS FOR EVEN A MOMENT



COURSE VIDEO

Far left: Looking down on the 2nd green and 3rd tee
 Top left: The amazing 1st tee with its view of the Strand beach
 Left: Aerial view of the 12th surrounded by bunkers

NORTHERN IRELAND PORTSTEWART GOLF CLUB GALGORM
CASTLE GOLF CLUB GALGORM RESORT & SPA



Aerial view of
the front nine at
Portstewart

WHAT MAKES GALGORM EVEN MORE SPECIAL ARE THE VIEWS. WITH THE RIVER MAINE WINDING ALONGSIDE AND THE HISTORIC GALGORM CASTLE AS A BACKDROP, THE SETTING HAS A CHARM THAT'S HARD TO BEAT. AND I HAVE TO MENTION THE STAFF – FRIENDLY, HELPFUL, AND GENUINELY INVESTED IN MAKING SURE YOU ENJOY EVERY MOMENT



GALGORM CASTLE GOLF CLUB

W: galgorm.com/golf

If you ever want to experience golf at its finest in Northern Ireland, Galgorm Castle Golf Course is the place to be. Over the years it has built an incredible reputation, hosting the ISPS Handa World Invitational and, most recently, this year's Celebrity Pro-Am. It's a venue that combines true championship pedigree with a warm, welcoming atmosphere, and it's easy to see why it draws players from all over the

world.

I have the privilege of teeing it up alongside professional golfer Shinichi Yakota from Japan, and what an experience it turns out to be. Playing side by side with someone of his calibre gives me a whole new appreciation for the game, especially on a course as beautifully designed and challenging as Galgorm Castle.

We are starting our round on the 15th hole, and right away I know I am in for a real test. Even the smallest mistake gets punished here, with water and clever bunkering lying in wait. By the time we reach the 10th, the demands only grow – accuracy and patience are key, with a green that refuses to give away easy pars.

The 5th hole stands out to me as well. It's deceptively tricky, tempting you into risks that you'll likely regret if you're not careful. And then there's the 1st hole – often overlooked at other courses, but not at Galgorm. Here, the opener sets the tone immediately, reminding you that this is a course where focus is essential from your very first swing.

The layout is spectacular: rolling parkland, tree-lined fairways and greens that are both smooth and lightning fast. Even with the steady rain coming down, the course is holding up beautifully. The drizzle makes club selection tougher, but it only adds to the drama and challenge of the day.

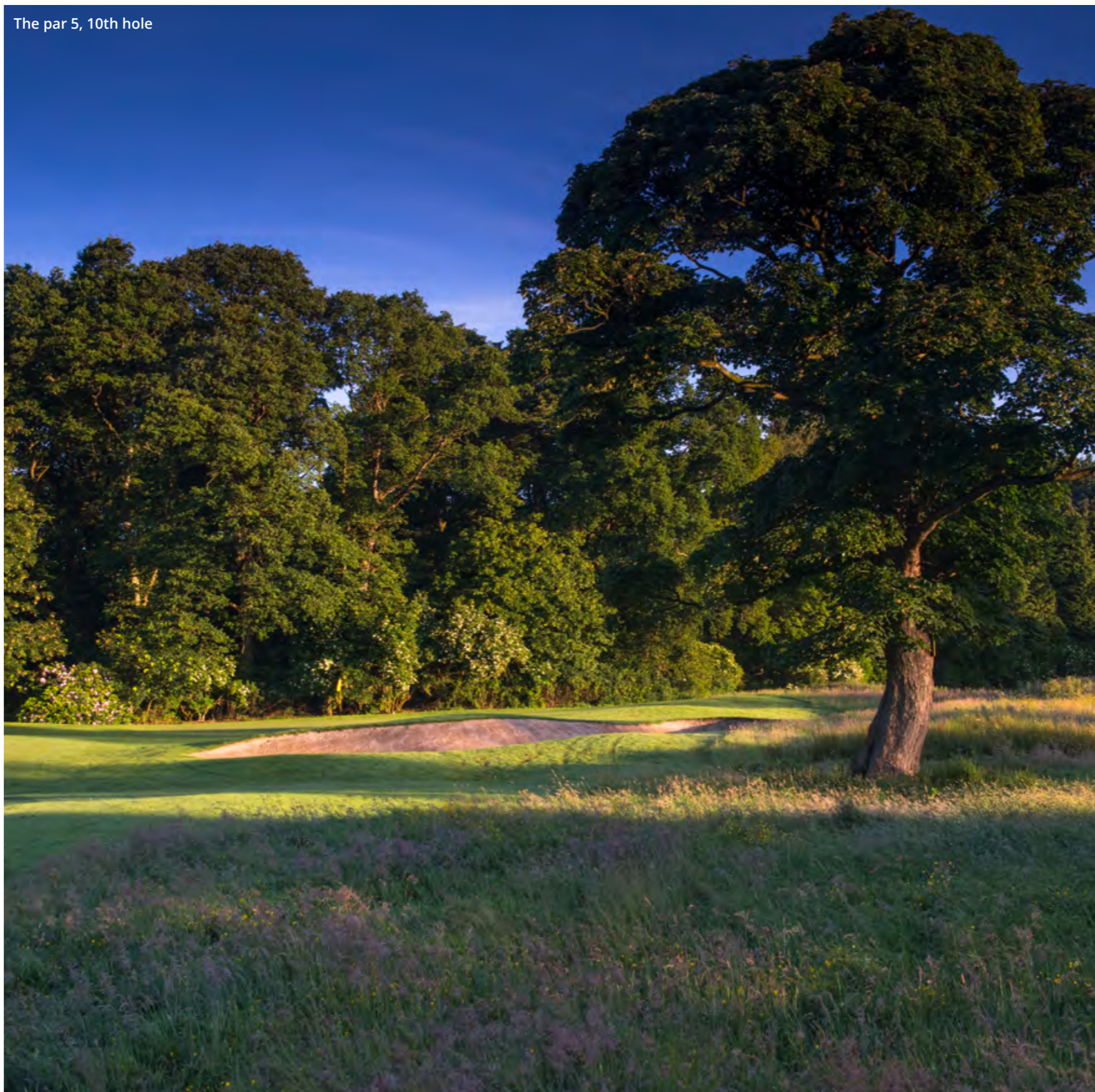
What makes Galgorm even more special are the views. With the River Maine winding alongside and the historic Galgorm Castle as a backdrop, the setting has a charm that's hard to beat. And I have to mention the staff – friendly, helpful, and genuinely invested in making sure you enjoy every moment.

For me, Galgorm Castle is more than just a golf course. It's a place full of history, challenge, and character. Playing here – especially in a Pro-Am with Shinichi Yakota – is an unforgettable experience, one I'll carry with me for a long time. →

Left: Looking over the 8th green and back down the fairway
Above: Sunrise over the 15th hole

COURSE VIDEO 

The par 5, 10th hole



JOURNEY PLANNER

GETTING THERE

Direct flights from most major cities to
Belfast International
W: belfastairport.com

WHERE TO STAY

Galgorm Resort & Spa

T: +44 (0) 28 2588 1001

E: reservations@galgorm.com

W: galgorm.com

DoubleTree by Hilton Belfast Templepatrick

T: +44 (0) 28 9443 5500

W: hilton.com

Roe Valley Resort

T: +44 (0) 28 7772 222

W: roevalleyresort.com

WHERE TO PLAY

Portstewart Golf Club

T: +44 28 7083 2015

W: portstewartgc.co.uk

Galgorm Castle Golf Club

T: +44 28 2564 6161

W: galgorm.com

Roe Valley Golf Club

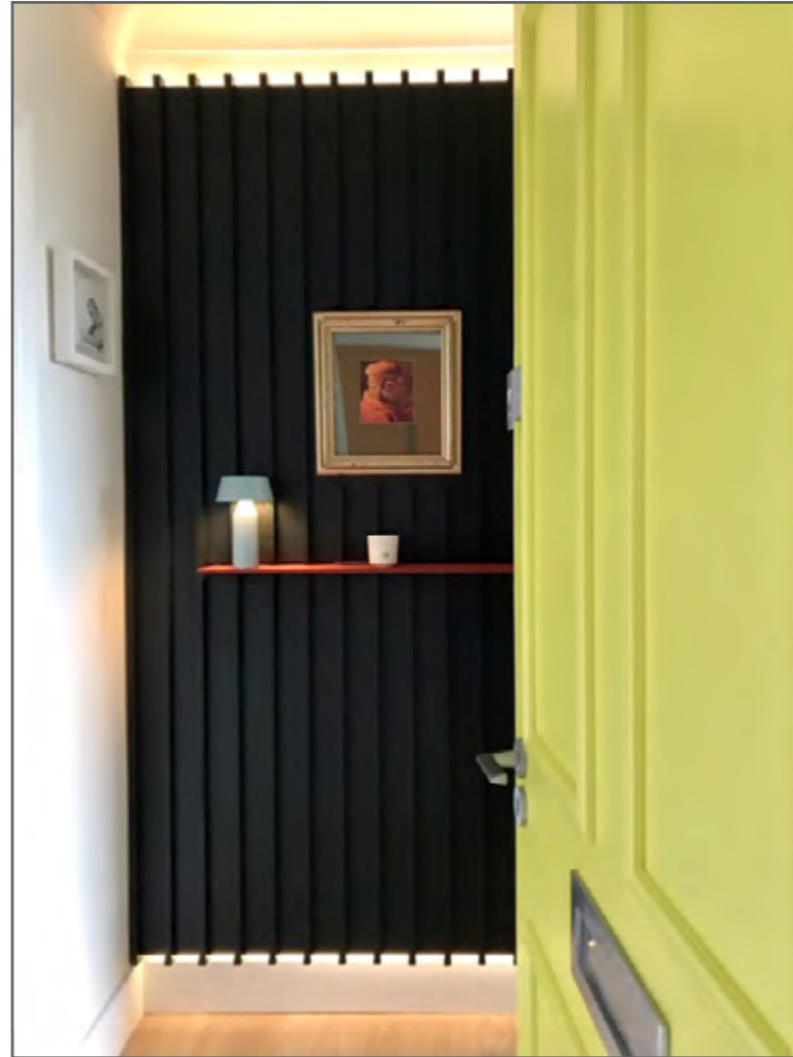
T: +44 28 7772 2222

W: roevalleyresort.com

Templepatrick Golf Club

T: +44 28 9443 5500

W: hilton.com



JOHN WILSON DESIGN

Finest Bespoke Interiors

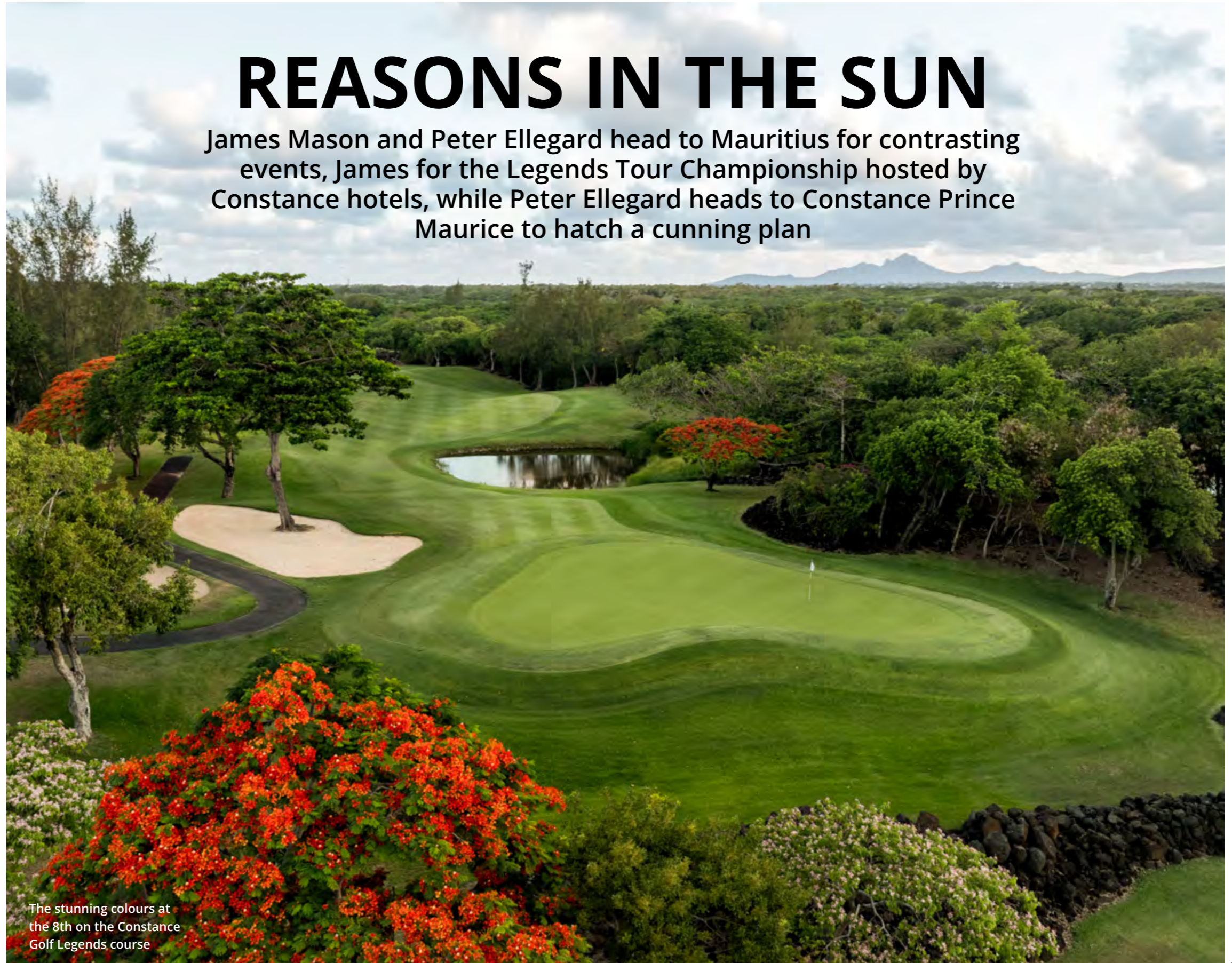
info@johnwilson.design

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

REASONS IN THE SUN

James Mason and Peter Ellegard head to Mauritius for contrasting events, James for the Legends Tour Championship hosted by Constance hotels, while Peter Ellegard heads to Constance Prince Maurice to hatch a cunning plan



The stunning colours at the 8th on the Constance Golf Legends course

CONSTANCE GOLF LINKS COURSE

W: constancehotels.com

I am playing in the Mauritius Constance Amateur Trophy, while also watching the MCB Mauritius Legends event this week and after warming up on the wonderful range they have at the Links course I am standing on the elevated 1st tee looking down the fairway and the amazing backdrop of the hills in the distance. The fairway has a bunker on the right and black rock on the left, right in the landing zone! This is a practice round before the competition starts tomorrow so I smash my driver aiming at the back rocks and let it fade back into the middle of the fairway. I didn't realise the green was raised but I make my chip and putt par and head to the 2nd tee.

More amazing views greet me from yet another elevated tee, but it is the second shot that will get you thinking. At 560 yards – there are four teeing options to choose from ranging from 6,498 to 4,621 yards so choose your option carefully – you really need to get a good drive away, then it is all risk and reward. Do you go for the carry over the small hill, black rock and tree to another raised green or try for the chip and putt birdie? That is the option I go for – without making the birdie!

Water comes into play on the 3rd hole with water down the left, which you will also need to carry to hit the green. The 4th is all about strategy and putting your ball in the right area to get the right angle on this sharp uphill dogleg right. Another wonderful elevated tee greets you at the 5th, which is followed by a beautifully designed dogleg-left par 5, with more risk and reward for the second shot, with the green being protected by more black rocks and sits below the fairway.

The first of the two par 3s arrives at the 7th and at only 139 yards, it gives you a great birdie opportunity as long as you carry the bunker protecting the front of the green. But the 9th is a whole different story. Played uphill to a two-tiered green that has a steep step and runs from back to front, it may only be 160 yards, but par here is definitely your friend.

Hitting the back nine, these amazing elevations and stunning views just keep coming, starting



with the par-5 10th hole. Water comes into play on the par-3 11th, on the tee shot, but also has a bunker at the back so you need to club right here. There is also water to carry on the par-4 12th on the tee shot and to the right of the green. The 393 yard, par-4 13th has another carry to an island green, which is then followed by the 148-yard, par-3 14th, again played over water with more water if you miss the green to the right.

It is a shame they have taken the back tee on the 15th out of action, but as you can see on my video, I filmed from the original back tee, which has black rock to carry from the tee shot. The 16th is all about strategy and making sure you are far enough left to take the tree out of play so you have a clear angle of attack at the pin.

The 17th is all risk and reward with your drive – depending on teeing option – to carry the black stone and bunkers, but at 312 yards you can get very close to the green and for the longer hitters, make the green. Stepping onto the 18th tee with more black rock in front of me, there's another tree protecting the right-hand side. You have to be out left to be able to attack the green, which has water protecting the front.

Sitting in the bar looking out on those amazing countryside views of Mauritius I really can't think of a weak hole on the course. Rodney Wright and Peter Alliss have certainly done a wonderful job and added another gem of a course to this amazing island. →



Top left: Elevated tee at the 5th hole
 Top right: Water to the right of the 12th green
 Middle left: Aerial view of the 10th and 11th greens
 Middle right: Aerial view of the 16th and 17th holes
 Bottom: Aerial view of the 18th with water front and right of the green

COURSE VIDEO



Bunkering at the sharp
dogleg-right 4th hole

CONSTANCE GOLF LEGENDS COURSE

W: constancehotels.com

Today I am playing in the Mauritius MCB Legends ProAm with Scotsman David Drysdale. We are actually teeing off on the 10th hole, but I am going to review the course from the 1st. The good news for our team is that we get to choose our best drive from our fourball and then play our own ball from there.

At 332 yards, the 1st hole eases you into the round and gives you a great opening birdie chance. There is water down the right, but as you will be hitting iron or 3 wood it really shouldn't come into play. There is a risk and reward element to the 2nd tee shot, which is played from an elevated tee with the hole doglegging to the right. You can play left of the trees and have a very longer shot in or go over

the trees with water on the right and then have a shorter shot into the green.

The first of the par 3s arrives at the 3rd and, at 171 yards, it is a great little hole with water on the right, which again shouldn't come into play. This is followed by the first par 5, which weighs in at 553 yards and has water down the right, but your best bet is to go over or as close to the trees on the left as the hole gently doglegs left. I love the way the trees frame the green beautifully, without intruding.

This is followed by the hardest hole on the course. From the back tees there is water to carry, which then frames the fairway on the left and then cuts across the fairway, but that part doesn't come into play from the tee shot. Thankfully I am playing David's tee shot as I have put mine into the water!

I am loving the way the fairways are framed by the trees and that again is the case on the par-5 6th, which is followed by the second par 3 on this nine. At 194 yards, it may look relatively benign but it can certainly put a dent

in your scorecard if you're not careful of the water and bunkers framing the green.

The back nine comes to a close just as it began, with a gentle finish at 377 yards. But it holds a subtle little trap if you go long with your second shot to the green, with a bunker and then water just laying in wait ready to pounce.

There is another gentle opener to this nine with a dogleg right, which is followed by the first of the par 3s on the back nine that has a dried pond and reeds short protecting the front of the green. This is followed by another strategic hole where you need to make sure you are far enough left to not get blocked out by the trees and give yourself a better angle to carry the water protecting the green.

The 14th is a beautiful driving hole with the way the fairway funnels through the trees, and so too is the 16th with more trees framing the hole. But it is the par-3 17th tee that is the most photographed hole here. As I arrive on the tee with the green perched some 166 yards

away on the other side of a sea inlet, there are water skiers to my left enjoying the warm clear waters of the Indian Ocean. It is all carry from the back tee over the water and then those black rocks to the right and bunkers front and back; it really is a stunning golf hole.

The 18th is a fitting finale to the course and at 501 yards with water down the right and then encircling the green, it's risk and reward time once more. I have had a wonderful day playing with David and my team on yet another fantastically designed golf course. South African professional golfer Hugh Baiocchi was the original designer back in 1994, but Rodney Wright made some updates in 2016, with water featuring on every hole on the course.

It will be interesting to know which one of the two courses is your number one; it's certainly a tough choice picking between the Links and Legends courses. →



COURSE VIDEO 

Far left: Aerial view of the 2nd and 3rd greens
 Top right: Looking down on the 4th green and down the 5th fairway
 Bottom left: Aerial view of the 9th green
 Bottom right: Aerial view over the course

The beautiful par-3
17th hole
played over a sea
inlet from the back
tees



©James Mason planetgolfrview

JOURNEY PLANNER

WHERE TO STAY

Constance Belle Mare Plage

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 2600

Constance Prince Maurice

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 3636

WHERE TO PLAY

Links course

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 2735

Legends course

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 2738

WHERE TO EAT

Blue Penny Cellar

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 2600

Blu Sushi Lounge

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 2600

La Citronelle

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 2600

Le Barchois

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 3636

Asian

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 3636

Archipel Restaurant

W: constancehotels.com

T: +230 402 3636



LIFES A BEACH

Sandwiched between two stunning golf courses and the crystal blue waters of the Indian Ocean, **James Mason** wonders if there is any better location to stay

CONSTANCE BELLE MARE PLAGE

Belle Mare Plage, Mauritius

By JAMES MASON

An hour and a half drive through some wonderful Mauritian scenery and some sneak peeks of the the golf courses I will be playing over the next 10 days, I arrive at the Constance Belle Mare Plage Resort. The friendly staff are taking care of everything, but as I walk into the foyer I am greeted by the stunning clear azure waters and white sandy beach of the Indian Ocean and a broad smile breaks across my face as my whole body tingles at the thought of being here for the next 10 days.

After a simple check-in accompanied by one of the resorts refreshing mocktails, I am shown to my room. The sun is out and the clear blue skies have me bouncing along the pathway.

ROOMS

One of the hotel staff is showing me around my room, but my focus is looking out from my huge balcony out to those clear azure waters, I am sure my mind is taking everything in, but I could just sit in one of those comfortable loungers on the balcony and do nothing for the next few hours.

Once she left and after chilling on the balcony, I realise I have work to do. I then check out my bed with a Charmaine-like nose dive into the pillows to reveal crisp, clean smelling linens and bed sheets. There are open wooden shutters that look into the bathroom which obviously can be shut, but are perfect if you are on a honeymoon or a couples holiday to set the mood – don't worry the toilet is in a separate room! There is also a walk-in closet with plenty of hangers, shelves and drawers along with a safe. The bed is huge and at least a king-size if not bigger and has a big wall-hung TV perfect for watching the football back home as we are four hours in front here.

I am currently sitting at the desk in my room and there is also a lounge area. It has been a hectic week with competitions etc, but I love sitting right next to the beach having breakfast each morning and just →

Right: Chilling over one of the pools contemplating life



watching those clear waters gently lapping the white sand.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

The main restaurant, La Citronelle, is buffet-style and offers some wonderful food, and they certainly know how to cook meat perfectly. There is also a pasta station offering a variety of pastas and sauces, not forgetting the many desserts and ice creams.

There is also the Blu Sushi Lounge which is right next to the beach. You certainly need to spend at least one night there during your stay, the food is amazing. If you want to be right next to the beach then Lakaze Indigo and La Spiaggia are perfect places to relax and eat and just watch those clear waters lapping the white sandy beach. Then there is the Blue Penny Cellar for a more moody atmosphere, blending lipsmackingly amazing food with some beautifully-produce wines from around the world.

FACILITIES

Of course there are two amazing golf courses to choose from, both uniquely different and you can read my reviews of those in this issue. Unfortunately I don't get to use the Bijou Constance Spa facilities but I know from the standard of the resort you will be well looked after if you just want to relax or pick one of the many wonderful treatments on →



Top: One of the many food stations in the La Citronelle restaurant
 Far left: The Indigo restaurant with its wonderful views
 Left top: My room with views into the bathroom
 Left bottom: The bathroom and reflection of the walk-in shower in the very large mirror



Far left: The Bijou Constance spa
 Top and bottom middle and left: Lipsmackingly amazing food options at the many restaurants on the resort
 Bottom left: Aerial view of the beach and resort.
 Below left: Breakfast with a view

“Mauritius is a beautiful island and the Constance Belle Mare Plage resort has certainly captured that special magic and added a touch more of their own. If this is going to be your first visit to the island, I know it won’t be your last.”



offer. The resort also has four floodlit tennis courts, table tennis, French bowling and nine-hole mini golf.

When it comes to water sports, the boathouse offers a wide range of complimentary activities on the Indian Ocean including waterskiing, wakeboards, windsurfing, kayaks, pedalos, Hobie Cats and Laser sailing dinghies, besides glass-bottom boat trips and snorkelling trips including equipment. The resort also offers private/personal lessons in tennis, water skiing, windsurfing, sailing, kite surfing and, of course, golf.

CONCLUSION

From the moment I saw that sea view walking into the foyer on my first day to sitting here writing at my desk on my last day, the resort and staff have never failed to go beyond my expectations, with their infectious smiles and can-do attitude. Mauritius is a beautiful island and the Constance Belle Mare Plage resort has certainly captured that special magic and added a touch more of its own. If this is going to be your first visit to the island, I know it won’t be your last.

Constance Belle Mare Plage
 Belle Mare, Poste de Flacq,
 Mauritius

T: +230 402 26 00

W: bellemareplagehotel.com →



Above: Lunch by the Indian ocean
Right: Looking down on the pool and white sandy beach



CONSTANCE PRINCE MAURICE

Poste de Flacq, Mauritius

BY PETER ELLEGARD

LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Enlisting the help of the wonderful staff at the Constance Prince Maurice hotel and despite the weather not playing ball, **Peter Ellegard** gets down on one knee and proposes to his partner amidst 25,000 bottles of wine in the biggest wine cellar in the Indian Ocean

Love is most definitely in the air when I check into the Constance Prince Maurice on the north-east coast of Mauritius with my partner Julie.

We have transferred here from nearby sister hotel Constance Belle Mare Plage, where I have been working at the MCB Mauritius Legends golf tournament, taking place on its two golf courses. I have a little surprise planned for Julie and have roped in the hotel staff, who are only too eager to help with my plan.

Before that happens, though, we are shown to our accommodation. And it couldn't be more romantic – a villa on stilts set above a natural fish reserve, which our butler takes great delight in showing us around before leaving us to explore it on our own.

As for the surprise, I plan to propose to Julie during our stay. However, while my original idea is to do so on the beach looking out over the Indian Ocean to the setting sun, the weather does not look hopeful.

So instead I switch venues to the hotel wine cellar, where we are due to have a personalised wine tasting with assistant sommelier Vishal. And after he pours two glasses of bubbly, I produce a diamond ring and get down on one knee to pop the question while he videos the event. →

Thankfully, she says yes!

While I have been to Mauritius a number of times before, this is my first stay at the Prince Maurice, and it doesn't disappoint. A five-star hideaway surrounded by nature, it exudes elegance and serenity, while the thatched low-rise buildings, secluded beaches and tropical gardens add a Robinson Crusoe feel to it. Perfect for my proposal.

ROOM

Our villa is one of 13 in the hotel, three of which are set over the water on stilts and the others, including the topmost option the Princely Villa, offering direct beach access as well as a private pool.

In addition, there are 64 junior suites and 12 family suites, 8 of the junior suites also being on stilts over the water.

The villa is beautifully appointed and comprises a spacious lounge and dining room leading on to the bedroom dominated by a king-sized bed, adjoining dressing room, bathroom with a free-standing bath and separate shower cubicle, an outside shower in the enclosed garden and two verandas overlooking the water. There is also an extra toilet by the front door. The floors are polished wood and the lounge furniture consists of a dining table with four chairs, a sofa and chairs with a low coffee table, and a desk and chair. All very classy yet without being over the top. The vaulted ceilings have fans suspended from the apex while there is also air conditioning.

We spend time each day sat under a parasol at the table on the main veranda outside the lounge, enjoying the natural environment and watching the fish in the seawater pond, which is linked to an ocean lagoon beyond and rises and falls with the tides.

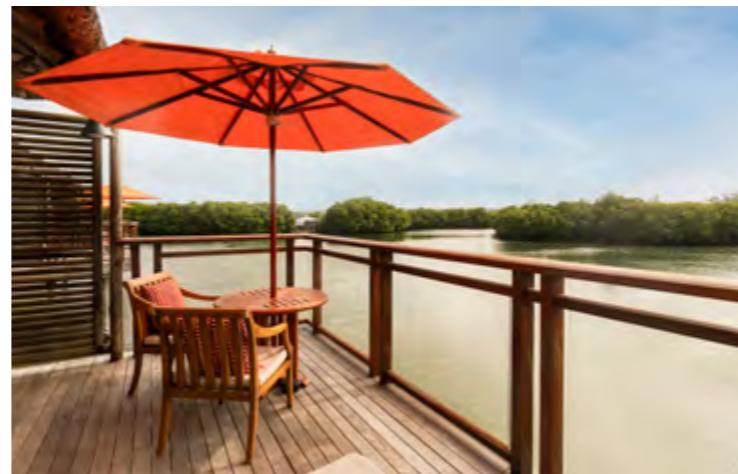
The bedroom veranda has lie-flat loungers, which we also make extensive use of.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

The hotel has three main restaurants, all of which we dine in on different evenings. →



Above: Aerial view of the villas on stilts
Below left to right: Interior design of some of the rooms





Top left: Asian restaurant
 Top right: Le Barchois floating restaurant
 Bottom left: Lotus lounge bar
 Right: The 25k bottles of wine in the wine cellar
 Far right: Sunset drinks at the Le Barchois bar



The 140-capacity L'Archipel, located in the main building, overlooks the pool and the beach and is partly open-air. It is where breakfast is served but is also open for lunch and dinner, offering a la carte menus with Mauritian-influenced gourmet food and themed buffet dinners.

The Asian Restaurant is open for lunch and dinner and offers a more intimate setting with just 30 seats, its specialities including sushi, sashimi and dim sum.

Our favourite place to dine, however, is Le Barchois. Open just for dinner, it is a floating seafood restaurant made up of five pontoon decks set within the fish reserve looking out over the lagoon with views to the distant sharp-peaked mountains. The wooden walkway leading to it passes by the Barchois floating bar, where we stop by for Aperopical cocktail sundowners on a couple of evenings.

The Laguna Bar in the main building is set above the pool and beach and is open from morning until midnight – ideal for trying the rum and coconut-based Constance Signature Cocktail after dinner. It even has a swim-up bar with a hand bell to ring for service.

Next to L'Archipel, the Lotus Lounge Bar is also great for a nightcap.

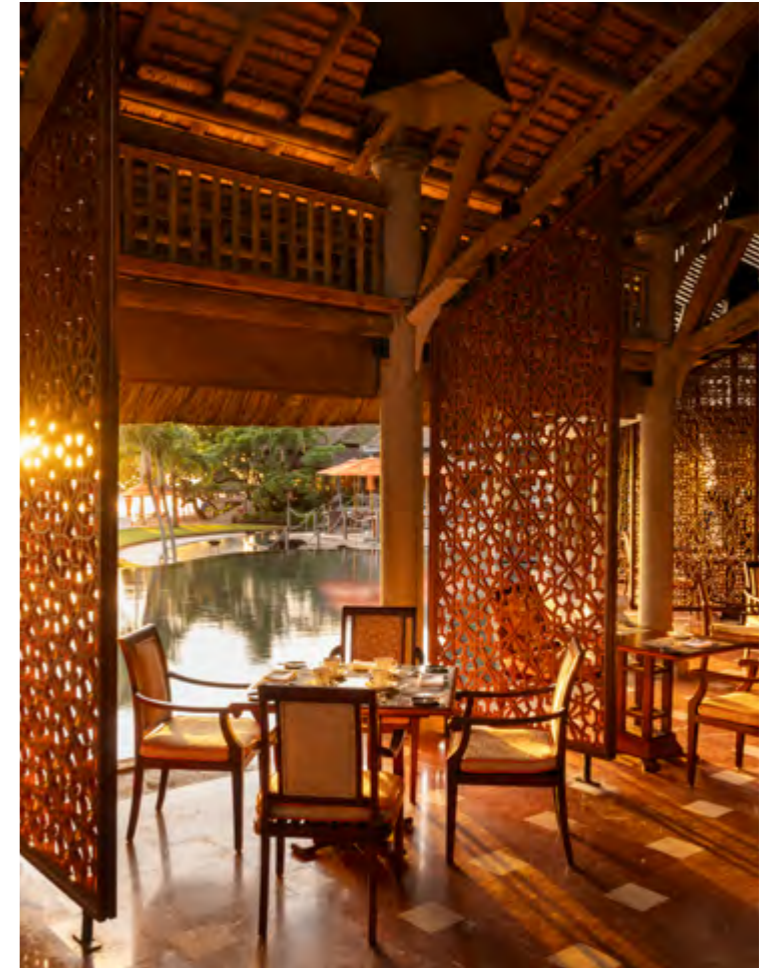
The wine cellar is the largest in the Indian Ocean, boasting more than 25,000 bottles of wine from around the world. Up to 10 people at a time can enjoy wine tastings there, accompanied by cheeses and delicatessen snacks. The extensive collection includes some dessert wines that date back to the 1930s.

SPA AND WELLNESS

The Constance Spa has seven treatment rooms, including two double ones, as well as a heated pool, sauna, steam room and cold plunge pool.

Massages, facials and body treatments use aromatic natural products inspired by plants from the Indian Ocean besides phyto-aromatic treatments that combine aromatherapy and massage rituals from around the world and pedicures and manicures devised by celebrity podiatrist Brice Nicham.

The paradise setting calls for a relaxing massage and I'm left completely chilled by mine. →



Top left: Views at the Le Barachois floating restaurant
 Top right: Chilling by the main pool
 Bottom left: Laguna bar at night
 Bottom right: Sunset view from one of the beach front villas
 Far right: The Archipel Restaurant

The hotel's gym is equipped with Life Fitness Cardio equipment.

ACTIVITIES

Relaxation is the main activity for guests staying at the Prince Maurice, either in your villa or suite, by the main pool or on the soft-sand beaches that wrap around the property, caressed by the warm Indian Ocean waters.

However, there are activities available for those who don't want to be indolent all day.

The hotel has two floodlit tennis courts and a practice putting green, while on the water there are Hobie Cats, Laser sailing boats, pedalos, windsurfers and kayaks. You can also take excursions on its powered catamaran and go water-skiing, deep-sea fishing and parasailing.

A free shuttle service operates to the Belle Mare Plage's Legend and Links golf courses a five-minute drive away, which guests can play for free.

Coconut Tribe offers themed activities for younger guests aged from

four to 11 years old.

The Library has books and indoor games freely available for guests, while the Orchid Lounge is an arrival and departures lounge with shower rooms – handy for those arriving before their rooms are ready and who have later flights but want to use the beach or pool before leaving.

CONCLUSION

Whether you are looking for an idyllic break amidst tropical splendour or, like me, have a more romantic plan in mind, the Prince Maurice is a luxurious and enchanting bolthole that will leave enduring and endearing memories. In fact, I would call it wonderfully engaging...

Constance Prince Maurice
 Choisy Road, Poste de Flacq, Mauritius

T: + 230 402 36 36

W: constancehotels.com

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Qi4D
DRIVER



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CLEVELAND
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CLEVELAND
CBZ WEDGE



EQUIPMENT & APPAREL

REVIEW

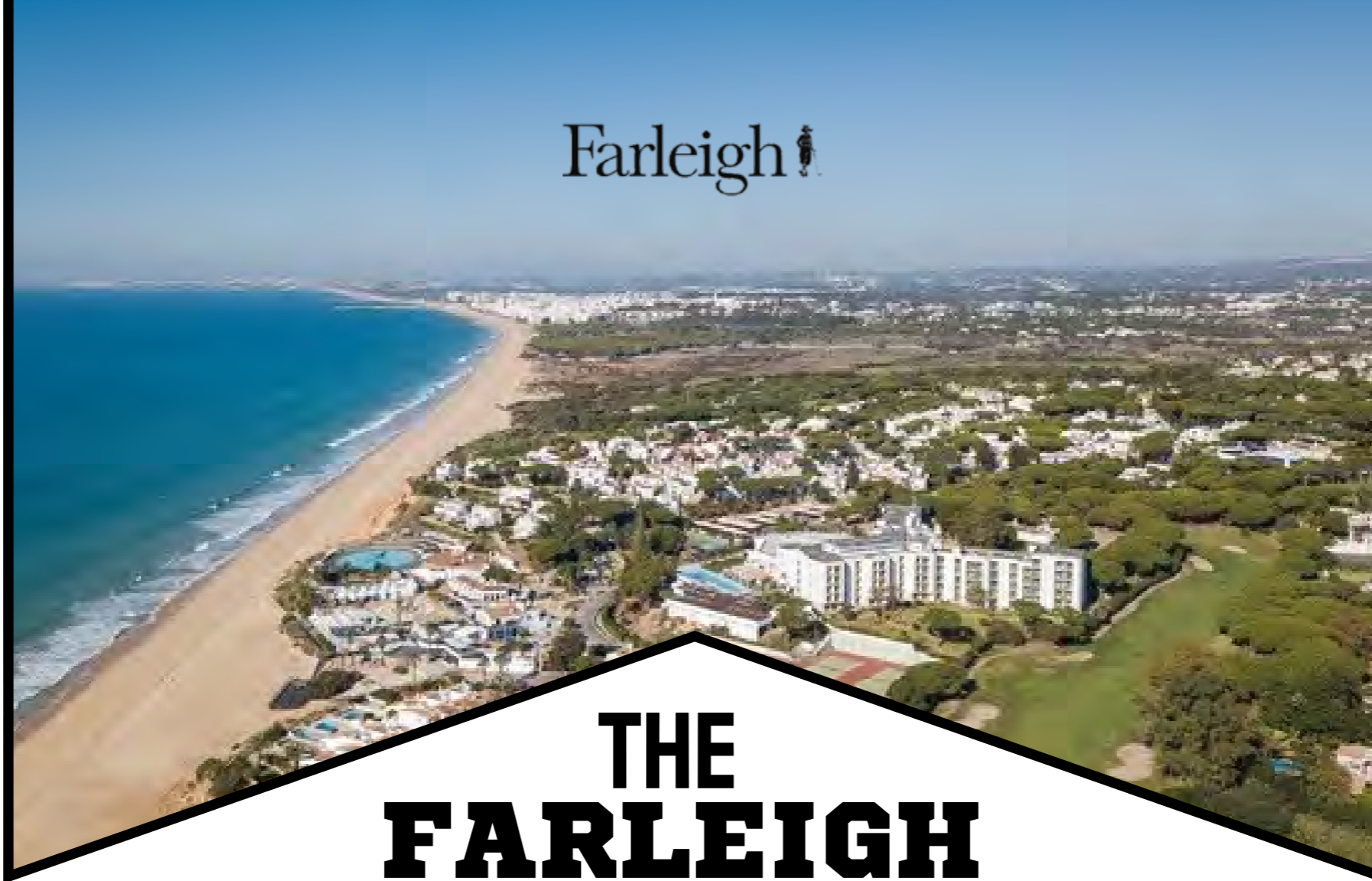
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Farleigh 



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THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION

James Mason heads to Cyprus armed with the next generation of the TaylorMade Qi series, the Qi4D, to discover any improvement over the previous iterations



TECHNOLOGY

TaylorMade have used a carbon face in their new Qi4D drivers range basically because carbon is lighter than titanium. Through extensive research and testing, TaylorMade engineers proved that a carbon-faced driver produced more speed than titanium faces.

The Qi4D driver face utilises a reengineered roll radius that delivers more consistent spin across different vertical impact locations over the entire face. That gives golfers less discrepancy in spin rates between shots struck low and high on the face with those that come out of the centre. More consistent spin allows for more consistent flight and distance.

A new and improved cut-through Speed Pocket™ helps enhance face flexibility across the bottom of the face, to improve ball speeds on areas of the face where players commonly strike shots.

This all works with the Carbon Twist Face™ design which uses a corrective face curvature with less loft in the heel and more loft in the toe to help golfers achieve tighter dispersion on mishits.

The Qi4D quad weighting system has four moveable Trajectory Adjustment System (TAS) weights (9g x 2 / 4g x 2) that allow golfers to optimise speed, forgiveness, launch and ball flight. Placing the heavier weights in the front provides faster ball speeds, whereas placing the heavier weights in the back increases MOI, for more forgiveness and stability. Placing a heavy weight in the heel adds draw bias while placing a heavy weight in the toe promotes fade bias.

Qi4D heads also feature a 4° loft sleeve which allows golfers to adjust loft, lie and face angle for optimised ball flight.



REAX SHAFT TECHNOLOGY

TaylorMade have captured and analysed more than 11 million driver shots and that data has helped them develop the REAX™ shafts that come in the new Qi4D drivers. The REAX™ shafts will help golfers with their varied swing types and speeds to get the most out of this new driver.

In order for fitters and golfers alike to find the ideal head and REAX shaft combination, TaylorMade R&D team used that data to study how golfers deliver the clubface at impact – their rate of rotation. What they found was players generally fall into one of three rotation rate categories: high, mid and low.

Armed with this information, fitters and golfers are now able to

capture a single face-on video of their driver swing and determine their rotation rate, which is a critical data point in choosing the correct shaft.

TaylorMade determined that roughly 20% of golfers fall into the high rotation rate category. These golfers have an active swing signature and a high amount of rotation through impact. This demographic group is best suited for a high rotation (HR) REAX shaft with a softer tip section.

The majority of golfers (roughly 60%) fit into the mid rotation rate category. These golfers have a balanced swing signature and a moderate amount of rotation through impact. These players fit best into a mid-rotation (MR) REAX shaft with a mid-tip flex.

About 20% of golfers swing with a low rotation rate. These players have a hold swing signature and less rotation through impact. These players would use the Low rotation (LR) REAX shafts with a stiffer tip section.

CONCLUSION

I tested the Qi4D driver in Cyprus and in England and if you take a look back at my review of the Qi10 driver I was certainly impressed by the improvements in distance and dispersion. But to be honest if there has been any improvement over the Qi10 I really didn't see any out on the course, although these may show on a simulator when you put the two up against each other.

Now that's not to say I don't think the Qi4D is a good driver. It certainly is, and the big advance for me is the REAX™ shafts, because the 40% of golfers who sit in the high and low rotation brackets will see a difference compared to their normal driver when they get fitted with one of these shafts.

The Qi10 was a great driver and certainly a leap forward, the Qi4D has continued those advancements, but what it isn't is another leap forward. If you have a Qi10 then I would certainly think about getting a fitting for one of the REAX™ shafts and if you have a SIM/Stealth driver or your driver is over 5 years old then I would certainly recommend putting the Qi4D on your testing list.

CLUB TESTED ▶

TaylorMade Qi4D Max Driver

LOFT 8° - 12°

LOFT SET UP 10°

SHAFT Mitsubishi REAX 50

TIP ROTATION MR - Mid rotation

WEIGHT 50gm

FLEX Stiff

RRP £369 / €419 / \$399.99



BRILLIANT DISGUISE

Cleveland release their latest new wedge systems and James
Mason heads to Cyprus to help you decide which is the best model
to improve your short game





RTZ TECHNOLOGY

The new RTZ wedges are made with Z-Alloy, which is a completely new steel formula that enables a zero-compromise design for increased feel, better durability and more consistency. The Z-Alloy also features rust-resistant properties ensure longer-lasting, like-new performance. They also feature a new ADAPT grind that utilises full-face grooves – the only full-face option for this generation of the RTZ – to give more versatility than previous models.

ZipCore is a low-density core technology, which replaces heavier material in the heel and hosel area with a lightweight, low-density, vibration-dampening material. This proprietary core allows Cleveland to shift the centre of gravity (COG) closer

to the strike area, while also adding MOI.

This all helps to give you enhanced forgiveness along with better distance and spin control.

UltiZip's sharper grooves cut through grass and debris at contact, while deeper grooves help make space for grass, sand, dirt or water to clear the strike area, giving the RTZ wedges stronger, more consistent spin from various lies in the fairway, rough or bunker.

Key features :

- Z-Alloy
- HydraZip
- ZipCore & UltiZip
- True Temper DG Spinner Tour Issue Shaft
- 1-Year Guarantee



CBZ TECHNOLOGY

The New CBZ utilises the same Z-Alloy as the RTZ wedges, which is a completely new steel formula that enables a zero-compromise design for increased feel, better durability, and more consistency. The Z-Alloy also features rust-resistant properties ensure longer-lasting, like-new performance.

HydraZip is a unique system of face blasts and laser-milled lines formulated to deliver more spin under wet conditions. This pairing of blast media and laser patterns is configured by loft groupings 44°-48°, 50°-52°, and 54°-60°. The lower lofts receive a less rough blast, while higher lofts are treated with a rougher blast and more laser lines. These combinations help balance spin across lofts, while improving spin consistency in adverse conditions.

ZipCore is a low-density core technology, which replaces heavier material in the heel and hosel area with a lightweight, low-density, vibration-dampening material. This proprietary core allows Cleveland to shift the centre of gravity (COG) closer to the strike area, while also adding MOI.

This all helps to give you enhanced forgiveness along with better distance and spin control, as with the RTZs.

UltiZip's sharper grooves cut through grass and debris at contact, while deeper grooves help make



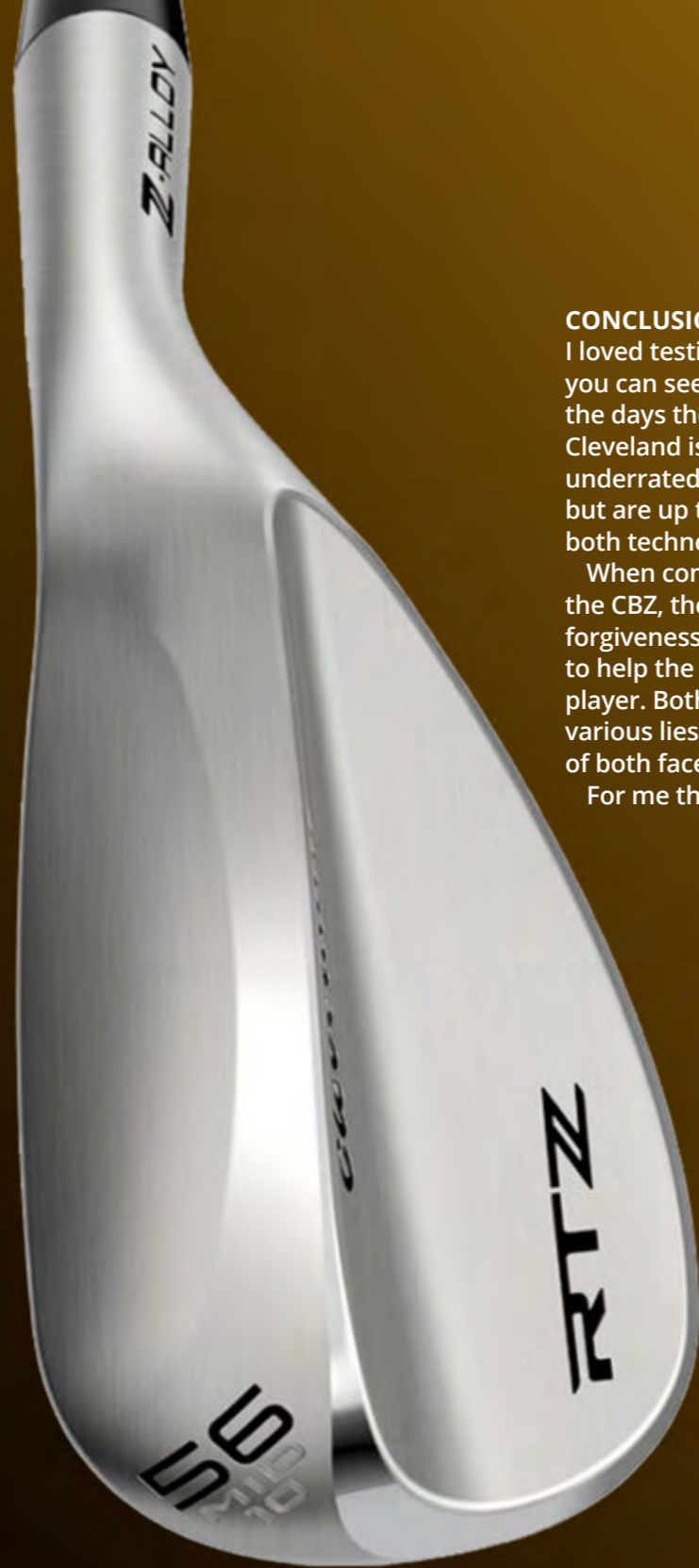
space for grass, sand, dirt or water to clear the strike area, giving the CBZ wedges stronger, more consistent spin from various lies in the fairway, rough or bunker.

The CBZ range also feature Cleveland's signature Rotex Milling across the clubface. This dual-pass milling pattern increases friction and is configured in a frown shape, so whether you hit a normal square shot or an open-face shot, the grooves are angled in such a way that the ball will be perpendicular to the grooves when struck.

The Gelback TPU is one of Cleveland's low-key cavity back features and makes a reappearance with this family of CBZs. This variation is larger and looks more like metal to better integrate with the overall design. This specially designed TPU insert sits behind the sweet spot to help dampen vibrations and enhance feel, even on mishit shots.

Key features :

- Cavity Back desgin
- Z-Alloy
- Hydrazip
- Ultizip
- Zipcore
- Belback TPU
- CBZ Sole grinds
- 1-year guarantee



CONCLUSION

I loved testing both wedges and as you can see from the video on one of the days the wind was really up. I feel Cleveland is probably one of the most underrated wedges on the market, but are up there with the very best, in both technology and feel.

When comparing both the RTZ and the CBZ, the CBZ certainly has a lot of forgiveness designed into the wedges to help the higher handicapped player. Both have great spin from various lies and the ball feels soft off of both faces.

For me the RTZ edges it over the

CBZ and that is purely down to aesthetics, as I loved the crisp clean teardrop design. But testing both side by side I would say to higher handicapped golfers you really aren't missing out on anything, in fact you gain more with the forgiving side of the technology used in the CBZs.

Wedges, along with putters, are the most used club in your bag. Unless you're hitting every green in regulation you will be pulling out a wedge. I recommend you get these two on your testing list and see which model works best for your golf game.

CLUB TESTED ▶

Cleveland Golf CBZ and RTZ Tour Wedges

CBZ LOFT & BOUNCE 50° 12°

RTZ LOFT & BOUNCE 54 MID 10°

CBZ SHAFT Nippon Modus NS Pro

RTZ SHAFT True Temper Dynamic Gold Tour

FLEX Wedge

RRP CBZ £159 / €189 / \$179.99

RRP RTZ £159 / €189 / \$179.99



QUANTUM OF SOLACE

Golf shoes are as important as getting the right shaft for your golf clubs. No one wants to be at the furthest point from the clubhouse with blisters and sore feet from a new pair of golf shoes. James Mason heads to Cyprus to put FootJoy's Quantum waterproof shoes through their paces



**FOOTJOY MEN'S QUANTUM
WATERPROOF SPIKELESS
GOLF SHOES**

RRP £90 €105 \$121.99

AMERICAN GOLF LINK [Click Here](#)



TECHNOLOGY

The FootJoy Quantum golf shoes feature the SofFOAM technology which gives your feet a cushioned walk and energy absorption. This is combined with a waterproof performance mesh upper to help create comfort round after round.

The upper has been constructed from a lightweight, soft leather and performance

coated mesh, maximising fit and comfort with 100% waterproof protection, and has a ripstop heel design that ensures your feet stay dry and supported. The shoe also has a specially designed folded 3D collar to prevent slipping and helps enhance overall comfort.

The shoe comes with a durable rubber

outsole, with multiple geometric shapes that help target various lies and surfaces to offer grip and traction during your golf swing. The shoe is also equipped with FootJoy's OrthoLite® Impressions FitBed® for superior step-in comfort, which also moulds to your feet over time for a truly custom fit innersole.

CONCLUSION

Straight out of the box and out onto the course and after three rounds of testing and wearing the shoes like ordinary trainers you can tell I loved the feel, look and fit of the FJ Quantum golf shoe.

It is a shoe that looks great on and off the course; they are easy to drive in so there is no need to change shoes before

you go out and practice and play. I also loved the snug fit and the support they gave while playing golf. And most of all during this horrendous amount of rain we have had in the UK, they kept my feet dry, and believe me that has been no mean feat over the last two months with rain every single day.



MOVING TARGET

Did James Mason accidentally find the solution to all those golfers who have trouble locking onto pins because of shaky hands in Cyprus?



TECHNOLOGY

The TecTecTec KLYR rangefinder comes with a simple slope on and off option, so you can use this in competitions as well as non competitive rounds. The target lock vibrates when you lock on the flag and will also give you distances to any other objects like bunkers, front of green that you are looking to get a distance to.

The KLYR is around 30% smaller than the average rangefinder and is also magnetic so you can have this

attached to one of the struts on a golf cart, the unit comes with a belt clip for you to attached to your belt and then the rangefinder can just clip to your side for easy access when you need a yardage.

Key features :

- Compact Design
- Slope & Target Vibration Lock
- Built-in Magnet
- Case & Ball Marker

RANGEFINDER TESTED

TecTecTec

MODEL KLYR Golf Rangefinder

RRP £249.99 / €209.97 / \$199.99

AMERICAN GOLF LINK [Click Here](#)



CONCLUSION

I loved the colour options and went for the yellow unit to test and the first thing that jumped out for me was how quickly the KLYR locked onto the flag and vibrated to let me know.

I know a lot of golfers out there don't use rangefinders as they have trouble keeping their hands steady with units taking too long to lock onto the pin. So, for all you guys and girls out there who fall into that category then this rangefinder is the perfect fit for you.

I love a slope option on a rangefinder especially if you play in competitions regularly at your home course, you can use the KLYR in practice/fun rounds and get to know the slope on your course and then when you do play a competitive round, you can turn the slope option off, but you will have a good idea of when to club up or down once you have the yardage.

For those who like to have their rangefinder close to hand, then this magnetised rangefinder comes with a

belt clip so you can have the unit on you ready to go or clip to the side of a golf cart so you don't have to keep going to your bag.

From how compact the rangefinder was in my hand, how quickly it locked onto the pin and vibrated and the slope option and not forgetting the bright yellow, if you are in the market for a new rangefinder then you are going to love the TecTecTec KLYR for both the tech and price.



PRO TIP



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SOCIAL MEDIA

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

SEPTEMBER COACHING TRIP

ALICANTE, SPAIN

3-Day golf coaching and playing trip
in Sep 2026.

La finca golf course and resort.

2 nights, coaching each day, 3 rounds,
inc buggies and transfers.
(Flights not included)
Cost £1085 per person.

POWER GRIP DRILL

In this issue **Paul Babbage** shows you how to generate power while keeping control of the clubface



Step One: Place club in fingers of left hand. Wrap hand around so that left thumb sits on the right side of the grip. Roughly two knuckles of left hand should be visible



Step Two: Try a swing with just left hand holding the club and you should be able to hold the club steady on the backswing and easily control the club swinging through



Step Three: Also try swinging with the club in the palm of hand to feel the difference as it will be a lot less stable

Video watch: Practice this grip technique to help you gain distance without losing control of your clubface



Left hand golfers:
The opposite would apply for left handed golfers, holding the club in their right hand

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](#)

- 25th April 2026 Lydd GC, Kent
- 20th June 2026, Nizels GC, Kent
- 22nd/23rd June 2026 "Golf til we drop"
- 22nd August 2026 Leatherhead GC, Surrey
- 19th September 2026 Location TBC
- 24th October 2026 Surrey Downs GC, Surrey
- 4th December 2026 Marquee Course TBC



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

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



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REVIEW



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MEDITERRANEAN



VIEW.COM

STAY, PLAY & SPA

VILLAVERDE HOTEL & RESORT

Fagagna, Italy

By James Mason

UPSIDE DOWN

In part one of a two part, play, stay and spa journey to the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of Italy, **James Mason** samples the delights of an upside down, eco-sustainable, contemporary designed hotel with stunning views of the Alps, while playing golf at a European Legends tour venue in Fagagna, Udine





Right: The hotel flowing with the contours of the land and also the outside pool
 Bottom left: Looking into the room from the balcony
 Bottom right: The white marbled bathroom

“As I step out of the vehicle my eyes light up, I love the modern contemporary design and I find out later that the lead architect was Alessio Princic, with artistic collaboration from Maestro Giorgio Celiberti.”

After an hour-and-a-half drive from Marco Polo airport in Venice our transport pulls into the drive of the Villaverde hotel & resort and as I step out of the vehicle my eyes light up. I love the contemporary design and I find out later that the lead architect was Alessio Princic, noted for his modern, minimalist designs, with artistic collaboration from Maestro Giorgio Celiberti.

The hotel is a total reverse of what you would expect, with the reception area and main restaurant being on the top floor while all the rooms and facilities are on the lower floors. It really is an intriguing design and I love the way it sits in its environment. I did feel they missed a trick by not utilising a grass-planted roof instead of going with fake grass, just to add to the ethos of the eco-sustainable, contemporary

design theme integrating with nature.

ROOMS

I head down to my room and as I open my door I smile. Now when I say contemporary design you’re probably thinking lots of white and black, but the colour scheme is deep purples, green, mustard and wood, although the stylish bathroom has a simple, but classic white marbled tiling with walk-in shower, large sink and mirror. The walk in closet is behind the bed separated from the bedroom area by a deep green curtain. The king size bed faces the large sliding glass doors that look out over the grounds to the golf course, and the large balcony has a table and chairs and there is a desk and chair, which I am currently sitting at typing this review. Modern elegance would →



be the words that I would use.

We have a light welcome lunch, which then gives us time to roam the hotel. I choose to go and use the practice facilities at the golf club, which are just a short walk away over the bridge that takes you to the golf club.

RESTAURANT AND BARS

There are a choice of restaurants: the Privilegium Restaurant, which is in the hotel and also serves breakfast each morning, and the Club House Restaurant, which has some wonderful views over the golf course and where you can also dine al fresco there if you choose to. But no matter where you eat, the food is just lipsmackingly scrumptious.

FACILITIES

Unfortunately I didn't get to enjoy the spa facilities this time, but you can choose from a variety of treatments and there are both an indoor and outdoor pools to choose from. The gym has modern equipment and also has a stretching area. And with the large windows looking out across the hotel grounds and golf course, you are able to enjoy the views while you keep your body toned and fit. The hotel also offers conference facilities as well.

CONCLUSION

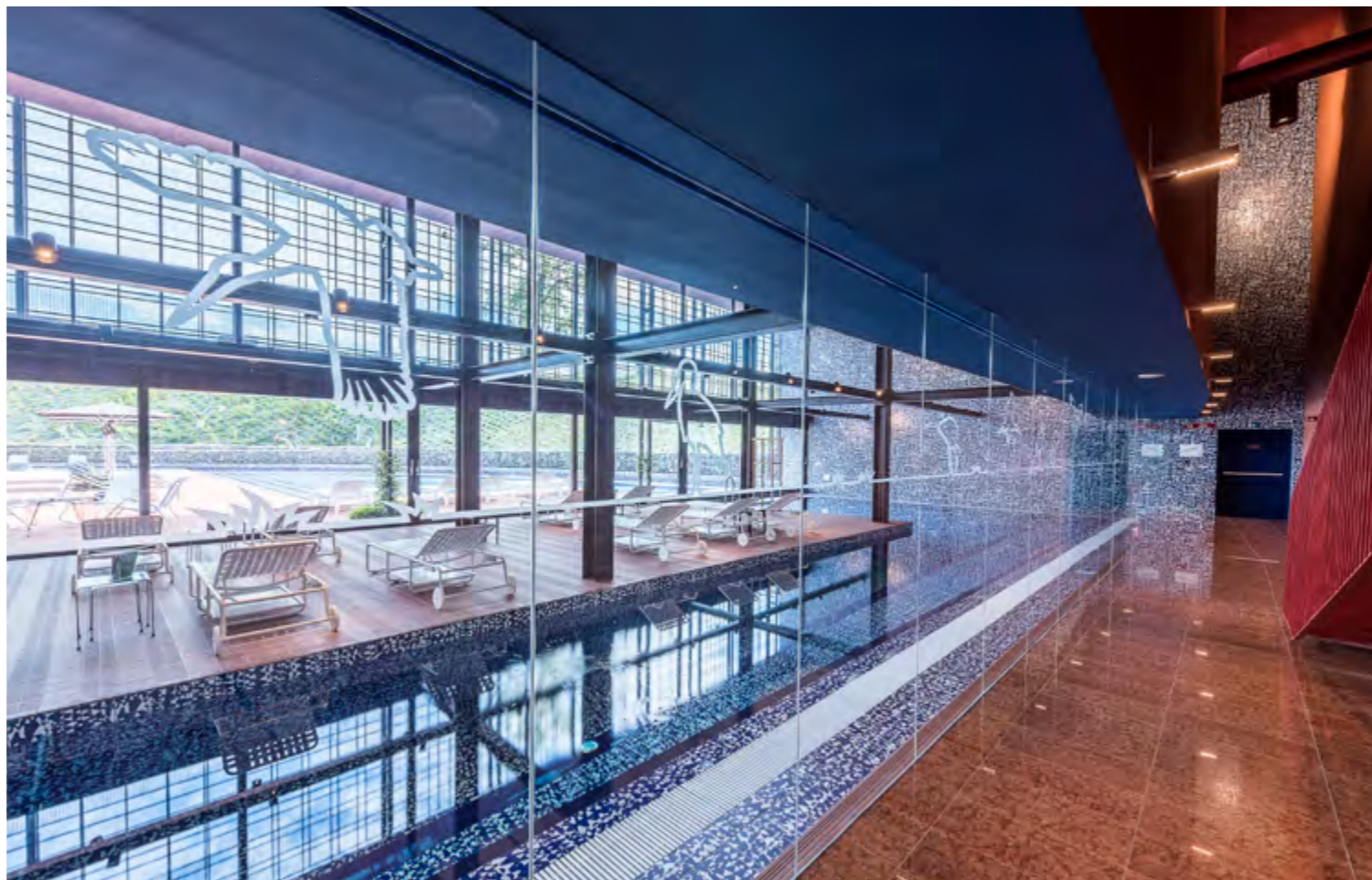
I only got to stay at the hotel one night unfortunately, but I loved the design and feel of the hotel and it is perfectly situated to take full advantage of the golf course and its wonderful practice facilities. For those looking for wellness and spa treatments in a beautifully designed environment, then Villaverde Hotel & Resort certainly offers that and more.

Villaverde Hotel & Resort

Via delle Acacie, 1 33034
Fagagna (UD)
Italy

T.: +39 0432 812600

W: villaverderesort.com →



“With the large windows looking out across the hotel grounds and golf course, you are able to enjoy the views while you keep your body toned and fit.”



Top left: Indoor pool
Top right: Lounge area
Top right middle: Breakfast area
Top right bottom: Wellness salt relax room
Bottom far left: Villa options
Bottom right: Gym with a view



James Mason



GOLF CLUB UDINE

by James Mason

It's a slightly chilly morning; I am wearing shorts as I know it will warm up later but I also have a windproof shirt on over my polo to take the edge off the chill. I am heading to the first tee after warming up on the wonderful practice facilities they have here. Standing on the elevated tee looking down the fairway of this 535-yard par 5 framed by trees, a clear blue sky with the Alps dominating the skyline in all their majestic glory, I have a feeling I am going to be in for a wonderful day's golf.

I manage to get a decent drive off and play my approach shot from the dew covered fairway to quite a small green

that sits across you. The 2nd hole plays back up the hill, but has a large tree sitting in the fairway on the right-hand side making it a tough tee shot.

The first of the two par 3s on this nine arrives at the 3rd hole and weighs in at 211 yards, plays downhill to a raised green. I do love an elevated tee shot, but while the tee shot on the 4th from the back tees isn't elevated, I love the aesthetic beauty of the hole with the trees and bunkers framing the fairway.

As I make my way around I find myself even more impressed with the design of the course. Standing on the 6th green – which is a par 4, where you play from an elevated tee and then back up to →



James Mason

Top left: You will definitely need your camera on the 6th green

Top right: Wonderful view of the Alps on the 9th green

Left: Looking backdown the 8th hole



phone out yet again. This 419 yard, par 4 is played from an elevated tee to a fairway that has a cart path cutting across it and water down the left, which also protects the green if you come in from that side. But it is the views of the Alps that dominate the vistas that make this such a special golf hole. It's definitely a group photo selfie moment!

With my head still full of euphoria from those views, I am now confronted with the 557-yard par 5 16th that is played uphill and soon brings me down to earth with a bump. But I console myself with

more amazing views of the Alps as I look back down the fairway from the green.

The 18th is the hardest hole on the course and is played uphill to a large green. Par here is definitely a good score. Sitting in the clubhouse eating some amazing food, the conversation is all about those stunning views. Golf Club Udine is a well-designed, tough golf course, but add in those majestic views and it now becomes a must-play golf course. The only downside for me was I only get to play once. I do hope I get to come back and play it again someday.

"It really is a jaw-dropping moment with the Alps looking magnificent. I have seen some amazing views on golf courses around the world and this view is certainly up there with many of those."

James Mason

an elevated green – it really is a jaw-dropping moment with the Alps looking magnificent. I have seen some amazing views on golf courses around the world and this view is certainly up there with many of those.

The par-3 7th has a similar view, but doesn't top the one on the 6th hole. As the front nine comes to a close and I look back down the 9th fairway from the green with more amazing views of the Alps, I can't wait to see what the back nine has to offer.

There are back-to-back par 3s on the 11th and 12th holes but the back nine doesn't really get started until the 470-yard, par-5 13th, which has water down the right and surrounding the green – a real risk and reward hole for the longer hitters.

But it is the views from the 15th tee where you are going to want to get your



COURSE VIDEO

Top: The Alps dominating the skyline at the 15th

Left: More stunning views looking back down the 16th

James Mason



CITY OF DREAMS MEDITERRANEAN

Limassol, Cyprus

BY PETER ELLEGARD

TUMBLING DICE

You won't be gambling on having a great stay at this ritzy casino hotel in Cyprus, as **Peter Ellegard** discovers

Ushered into the pyramid-shaped City of Dreams hotel by a uniformed doorman, the first things that strikes me once inside are the soaring ceiling and shiny marble floor of its grand lobby – and the dazzling lights of the casino leading off from the far end of the lobby.

I could be in the gambling capital of the Far East, Macau, or perhaps on the Strip in America's Sin City, Las Vegas. Maybe even a swanky five-star hotel in one of the Gulf states, save for the casino.

Except this is Cyprus, an island tucked in the eastern Mediterranean not known for its glitzy casino resorts. Until now.

Opened in July 2023, City of Dreams Mediterranean is a huge development close to the country's second-largest city, Limassol, by Melco Resorts & Entertainment, which owns and operates half a dozen other casino resorts throughout Asia. Its Cyprus hotel is touted as "the first integrated resort in Europe" and boasts what is claimed is Europe's grandest and most luxurious casino, along with 500 guest rooms, fine dining, a spa and the largest resort pool complex in Cyprus, complete with an adventure park.

The December opening of the island's fifth 18-hole golf course, →

Right: Superior room
bed and sofa
Below: Superior room
bathroom with privacy
screen open
Far right:
Pyramid design
of City of Dreams
Mediterranean hotel



Limassol Greens, just a few minutes from the hotel, with dedicated transfers for guests, means that its appeal will broaden from families and couples to golfers as well.

ROOMS

Accommodation is spread across Premier Rooms, looking out to the Mediterranean or the Troodos mountains, Superior Rooms and a selection of suites, from Junior Family Suites to Sky Suites and Panoramic Suites offering sweeping balcony views. If you can afford it, the Presidential Suite spans two floors and is the largest and most opulent in Cyprus.

I am more than happy with my eighth-floor Premier Room. It is bright and airy, with plenty of room for my golf clubs between the entrance door and the two large wardrobes.

Other than the blue carpet where the king-sized bed is, the bedroom is calming shades of beige and grey. There is no desk, but a comfortable L-shaped sofa and low table are perfect for me to use my laptop.

Two large glass bottles of purified water filtered on-site are on the table, replenished daily when the room is serviced, along with an assortment of boxed sweets. There is also a minibar stocked with branded soft drinks and beers as well as more water. The minibar is free and is also restocked daily. Above that on the worktop is an espresso coffee machine – and yet more bottled water. I clearly won't go thirsty here!

A large flat-screen TV is on the wall opposite the bed, while an automated panel next to the bed controls the lights. There are bedside power sockets but while there is a solitary USB socket next to a power outlet by the coffee machine, surprisingly there are none by the bed – and no USB-C sockets anywhere. For such a new hotel that seems an omission as almost all phones and tablets now use USB-C.

Floor-to-ceiling windows and a sliding door lead out to a balcony with chairs and a table overlooking the pool complex – empty for maintenance as it is winter – and beyond to the Med, with giant cranes from Limassol's port to the left and the Limassol Salt Lake to the right.

The marble bathroom is separated from the room by a glass panel with an electrically-operated privacy screen for those whose partners don't wish them to be on show. Besides a free-standing bathtub there is also a separate rain shower, and slippers and robes are provided.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

The City of Dreams has eight restaurants and bars to keep guests sated, and its dining establishments are a class apart.

Buffet restaurant Aura is open for breakfast and dinner as well as Champagne Sunday brunch. It offers an impressive choice of dishes from Middle Eastern to Asian and European featuring live cooking stations, a salad bar, Kids' Corner and crepe stations.

We get to try the resort's three signature restaurants for dinner, and I'm torn as to which is my favourite.

On the first night, I join my other fellow early arrivals at French restaurant Anaïs, choosing truffle coquillettes pasta to start, followed →



Top row left to right: Chefs hard at work at the Amber Dragon restaurant, steak from the steakhouse restaurant and Amber Dragon dish
Bottom row left to right: Sushi from Amber Dragon, Anais dish and cocktails from the Aqua bar



by confit Antarctic cod as the main while we share a very quaffable bottle of local Cyprus white wine to go with our meal. I'm a little bemused by the "sustainability pillars" stated on the menu considering how far away my main dish and others originated, although I applaud the commitment to responsibly-sourced food.

The meal, including the shared Kataifi Farci dessert dish (local fresh Anari cheese and pistachio ice cream) is wonderful, and I enjoy watching the chefs at work in the open kitchen. In season, the restaurant has an outside terrace where you can dine al fresco.

The Prime Steakhouse, where we dine on our second night, is equally impressive. After a crab cake appetiser, I go for the tomahawk steak, shared between two of us. We ask for it medium rare and it is cooked to perfection, before being carved at the table. Cooked over charcoal, the smoky flavour is to die for and goes down perfectly with an Argentinean Malbec. If you really like it smoky, you can dine in the restaurant's Cigar Lounge and pair your meal with the most extensive list of rare whiskies

on the island.

Less appetising is the smoke that seeps in from the adjoining casino, where smoking is surprisingly allowed, as the open plan design means there are no doors.

Award-winning Asian restaurant Amber Dragon is our final dinner venue and, if anything, it raises the bar even higher. We each choose a couple of dishes and they are laid out on the table for all to try, together with some extra dim sum options. In a word, they are all exquisite, as is my spiced rum cocktail.

You can also dine in the Lounge, at the poolside Aqua Bar and at Centre Stage, watching live entertainment.

SPA AND WELLNESS

I know I am in for a treat while negotiating the labyrinth of corridors in the bowels of the resort en route for my massage in the Renu Spa, as it was named Cyprus's Best Resort Spa for 2025 in the World Spa Awards.

And so it proves.

I check in and am led first to a relaxation room and then to a dimly-lit treatment room with its own shower and changing room. Within minutes, my back muscles – knotted from the travel and an earlier round of golf – are getting an invigorating workout by Angeline, one of several Filipino masseuses working at the spa, as I lay on the massage bed.

The session is only 25 minutes but it is so soothing, I feel relaxed and could easily drift off to sleep.

As well as massage treatments, the spa has a sauna and a heated indoor pool open until 9:30pm. A health club offers the latest gym and training equipment besides fitness classes for activities such as Pilates and yoga.

ACTIVITIES

A host of activities at the resort and nearby will keep everyone wanting to enjoy the island's sunny outdoor climate happy.

Guests enjoy special green fee rates at Limassol Greens, which also →



Top row left to right: Pirate themed adventure park and entrance to the award winning Renu spa
 Bottom row left to right: Aerial view of the swimming pools, family ropes course and zipline coaster



has extensive practice facilities. You can also play at the island’s four other courses, which are all in the Paphos area 30 to 40 minutes away. If that’s too strenuous, the resort has its own 18-hole miniature golf course, too.

Squash, pickleball, padel and tennis courts are augmented by the Marcos Baghdatis Tennis Academy, which offers tuition by the former Cyprus tennis star and his coaching team.

The pool complex includes the heated Beach Pool, which is open year-round, as well as the Grand Pool, Wave Rider for surfing and Relaxation and Kids’ Pools. Youngsters can play at being pirates in a shipwreck-themed playground, while the Adventure Park includes a zipline coaster, family ropes course, high ropes and climbing wall.

The casino is at the heart of the resort, spanning 7,500 square metres of floor space offering roulette, baccarat, poker tables, sic bo (like craps but with three dice) and gaming machines below a stunning chandeliered ceiling and open 24 hours a day for those with the stamina. High rollers

can try their luck in the resort’s exclusive Platinum Club. Sadly, my invite never materialises...

Limassol is well worth exploring, for its historic centre and for its lively Old Port, where fishing boats, yachts and floating gin palaces are reflected in the mirror-calm harbour waters lined by cafes and bars. There are high-end stores to browse in the resort and the island’s second-largest shopping mall is close by.

CONCLUSION

A veritable fusion of East and West, the City of Dreams is well-named, whether you take on Lady Luck in the casino or just savour its fabulous array of restaurants and leisure amenities. However, one aspect that jars with me is the smoking in the casino. Because of its central position, you have to pass by it as you walk to some of the restaurants and the acrid smell of smoke hangs in the air night and day, despite the advanced air filtration system.

In essence, it is a wonderful resort with top-notch facilities and friendly staff – they just need to sort out the smoke problem from the casino for it to be perfect.

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Peter Ellegard

LIMASSOL GREENS

by James Mason

Having only been open for 7 weeks, I was looking forward to seeing the Cabell B Robinson design on this former citrus tree plantation. I am sure he was as shocked as me to find that the owners had to remove all the trees before being given permission by the Cypriot government to build a golf course on the property. I am sure he would have liked to not only preserve them, but put them to good use in helping shape and give definition to the holes/course.

After a coffee in the beautifully-designed clubhouse, I hit the range for a warm up session and with each bay

having trackman technology, you can certainly use this facility to work on your game. I head to the 1st tee where you have 5 teeing options to choose from ranging from 6,923 to 4,955 yards. And for a resort course you couldn't ask for a better opening hole: a par 5 weighing in at 580 yards and a very wide fairway. You would certainly need to be very wayward to miss this fairway.

But for the better golfers out there don't think this is an easy birdie; there's water and bunkers down the left in the landing zone from the tee. There are also bunkers down the right hand side of the fairway from around 100 yards in and that water continues all the way up to the green →



James Mason

Top left: The wonderfully designed clubhouse and practice bays with trackman monitors
 Top right: Water and bunkers protecting the 1st green
 Left: Trees and mounding surrounding the 4th green



COURSE VIDEO

Far left: 10th, 11th and 12th holes
 Top right: Water at the 615 yard, par 5, 9th hole
 Left: Looking back down the 17th green and 16th fairway with the 18th tees to the right

“When you have three players, playing from three different tee options because of their differing abilities, but all land in the same bunker on two different holes, I think you can say Cabell nailed that part of his course strategy and its defences perfectly!”

on the left, so those going for the green in two it becomes a big risk and reward hole.

As I start to make my way round, Mr Robinson has certainly placed the bunkers perfectly in the landing zones and while the holes definitely need framing to help with their definition, when you have three players, playing from three different tee options because of their differing abilities, but all land in the same bunker on two different holes, I think you can say Cabell nailed that part of his course strategy and its defences perfectly!

At the 4th hole you get a taste of what the future of the course will look like once it has matured and trees have been planted and started to grow. This slight dogleg-left hole has an old church to the right and has trees and mounds framing the green.

The 6th is another risk and reward for the longer hitters, who at the moment can go straight for the green, but it will be a totally different proposition once those shrubs and trees that have been planted start to grow.

The greens here are beautiful, running true and fairly fast at the moment, but you can see they will certainly be very fast once they have bedded in and are needed to be at competition pace. And with some measuring over 60 yards from back to front with all their subtle breaks and complexes, they offer many varied pin positions with lots of subtle and not so subtle breaks.

The front nine comes to a close with a tough par 5, measuring 615 yards with water down the left. Making my way to

the 10th hole I am impressed and none of the three par 3s on the front nine have been easy.

The back nine has had less time to bed in than the front nine, so the green staff can be forgiven for having the grass on these greens higher. The plan for the back nine as it is nearer the sea – which doesn't come into view – is to leave this nine more exposed so it plays more like a links-style course.

And making my way round, I can see that as there are more undulations in

the fairways. Water features on the 10th 11th and 12th make wonderful use of the water that helps protect the right hand side of both greens on the 10th and 11th, with the 11th being the first of the par 3s on this nine and the tee shot on the 12th.

Sitting in the bar chatting after the round, all agree it is a well-designed golf course. And once they have finished with the framing of the front nine and the back nine starts to mature, Limassol Greens is going to become a must-play course on any golf tour of Cyprus

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