

FLORIDA

Golf, food, nightlife and axe throwing from Palm Beaches

NORTHERN ITALY

The architecture, colours and life from this beautiful region

STAY, PLAY & SPA

Las Vegas, London and Spain

INDIA

Jane Finn discovers why they call it Incredible India

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

24 Golf, travel and sustainable gift ideas for friends and family

EQUIPMENT & APPAREL REVIEWS

Blue Tees, Cleveland, Cobra, Oscar Jacobson, Scotty Cameron, Trust

PLANET GOLF

REVIEW

ISSUE 23

VIEW.COM



WELCOME

Time flies when you're having fun; no sooner were we talking about summer and now we have Christmas rapidly approaching. Apart from the cold, this is a wonderful time of year when you can reflect on the past year, but also snuggle up by the fire and plan next year's adventures.

With that in mind Jane brings you the wonders and mystery of India, Peter points his lens at Northern Italy and brings you two very different hotel and spa options. While Charmaine and I head to Palm Beaches in Florida and the wonderful Delray Beach. There is also equipment and apparel reviews from Blue Tees, Cleveland, Cobra, Oscar Jacobson, Scotty Cameron and Trust, and last but by no means least three pages

of Christmas gift ideas so you can stay by that fire and just click the links instead of hitting the shops.

We are also very aware that a lot of people are struggling out there, so please reach out to friends and family and where you can help those that really need it, even if it is just a smile, a warm drink and a sandwich. Or better still, volunteer to talk to someone by phone who may be lonely and just wants another human being to talk to. As always, the team at planetgolfreview and myself wish you and your families a happy and healthy Christmas and may your god protect and watch over you

MEET THE TEAM

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PLANETGOLF

REVIEW



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

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

VIEW.COM



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- p 4 Christmas Crackers**
 Three pages and 24 stress-free Christmas gift ideas for golfers and travellers, plus sustainable gift ideas with links to buy online, so you don't need to leave the warmth of your home
- p 7 Northern Italy In Focus**
 Lights, Camera, Action, Peter grabs his Canon and captures the beauty, history and every day life of Northern Italy
- p 10 India**
 They call it Incredible India and Jane Finn heads to this wondrous part of the world for a wedding and discovers so much more
- p 17 Florida**
 Can a destination have it all? James and Charmaine find out that Palm Beaches and Delray Beach come pretty close
- p 32 Equipment & Apparel Reviews**
 Featuring Blue Tees, Cleveland, Cobra, Oscar Jacobson, Scotty Cameron and Trust
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 Paul shows you how to chip from those sloping downhill lies
- p 50 Stay, Play & Spa**
 We bring you three hotel reviews from Las Vegas, London and Spain

STREETN CON

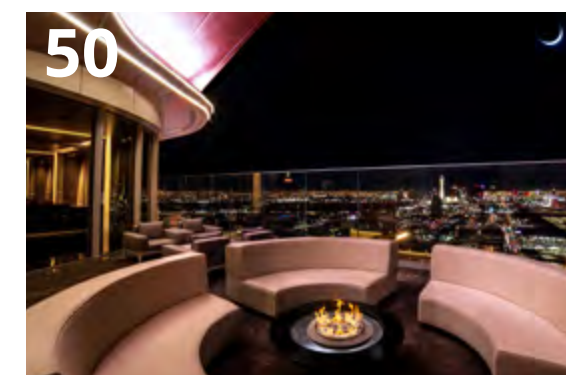
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50

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24 gift ideas

Searching for the perfect golf, travel
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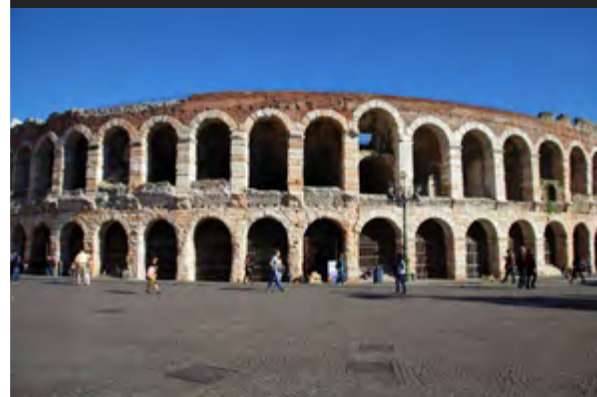
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IMPRESSIONS NORTHERN ITALY



Left: Colourful building in Verona
Below: The Verona Arena, built almost 2,000 years ago



Left: Bell at the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa



Left: Leaning Tower of Pisa and Pisa Cathedral
Right: Florence Cathedral's dome and Giotto's Bell Tower



Right: Arno River in Pisa



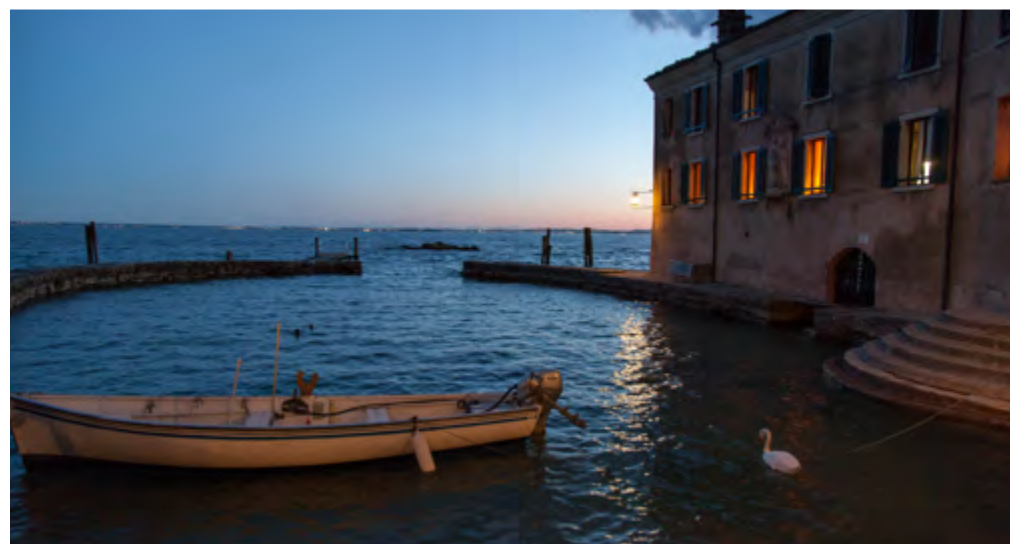
Right: Canalside restaurant
in Venice
Below: Pastry shop in Turin



Above: Gondola
and Rialto Bridge,
Venice
Right: Children in
fancy dress, Verona



Above: Ponte
Vecchio, Florence



Left: Lake Garda

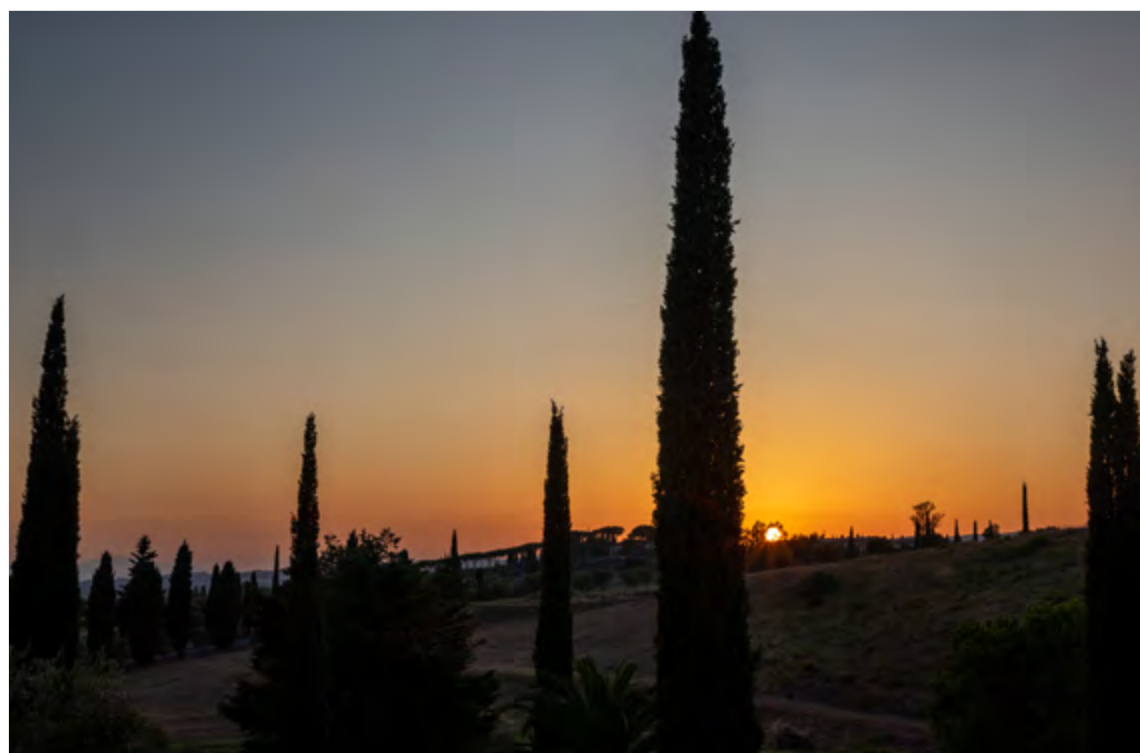
IMPRESSIONS NORTHERN ITALY



Above: Reggia di Venaria palace, Venaria Reale
Left: Carnival masks in Venice
Right: Valentini Vineyards, Maremma
Below: Tuscan sunset, Il Pelagone



Left: Gondolas in Venice
Below: Bell tower, Verona
Bottom right: Piazza Erbe, Verona



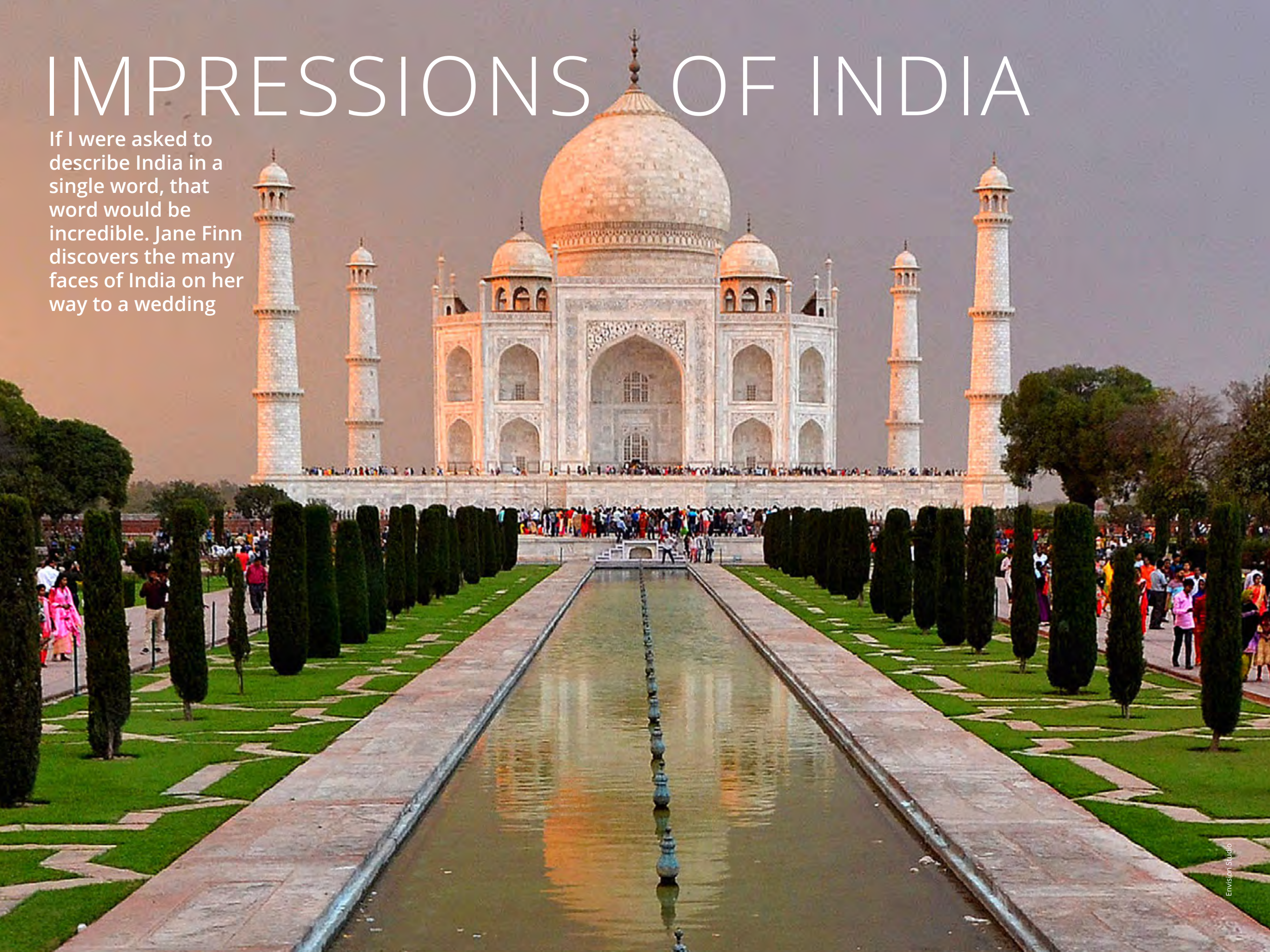
IMPRESSIONS NORTHERN ITALY

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



IMPRESSIONS OF INDIA

If I were asked to describe India in a single word, that word would be incredible. Jane Finn discovers the many faces of India on her way to a wedding



BY JANE FINN, PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID FINN

Rich in history and steeped in tradition, India is a country of contrasts. It's spicy with a bit of bite like the chili chicken I would grow to love on this trip. It's a mix of congested cities, rural settlements, and large tracts of uninhabited land where wild animals roam free. It's also a spiritual hub where mind, body and soul align if you allow it. Here, the threads of architecture, culture, and ritual weave together to create a tapestry as stunning as the silky, rainbow-coloured sarees I admire wherever I go.

Before I even land, India engages all my senses. As we descend into Mumbai, the plane's cabin fills with the scent of camphor, incense, and cooking fires. It's just after dawn, and the soft morning light shines upon the encampments nestled up against multimillion-dollar condos. From my window seat, I can see that even though it's early in the day, throngs of people line the streets, and traffic appears to be moving at a crawl.

Everything about India evokes my curiosity and my desire to explore. Still, I admit to being a little intrepid about what I will discover, not only about the country but also about myself on this trip.

THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS

Once inside the terminal, I'm overwhelmed by the noise and the crush of people jockeying to retrieve their bags. I grab mine and move swiftly towards the immigration line reserved for foreign tourists. Surprisingly, I am quickly processed and step through the doors and immediately find my smiling driver holding up a placard welcoming me. I sigh with relief that he is here to collect me as planned. I'm even more grateful for Jay's calm demeanour and navigation skills as he deftly manoeuvres us around rickshaws, bicycles, camel carts, →

Right: Skyscrapers and slums coexist in Mumbai's Bandra suburb
Far right: Bollywood drummer brings the audience to their feet



“Before I even land, India engages all my senses. As we descend into Mumbai, the plane's cabin fills with the scent of camphor, incense, and cooking fires”



“I even attend a big, bold Bollywood production that has me swaying in my seat and longing to take dance lessons”

Below left: Snake charmer tames a cobra
Below right: Visitors flock to The Gateway of India
Right: Wild Royal Bengal Tiger, Ranthambore National Park safari

honking Tata trucks, and the occasional cow en route to my hotel on Marine Drive.

I check in planning to nap, but I’m not jet lagged. I tear my eyes away from the sweeping panoramic view of the Arabian Sea and descend twenty floors in search of advice, so I can get out and explore.

I’m in luck. There’s a group assembling in the lobby for a walking tour, and they have room for one more. Our first stop is the Gateway to India, a fitting start considering I’m a newcomer to India’s shore. For the next few days, like the city, I barely sleep as I try to take in all the sites – the Crawford Market, Siddhi Vinayak and Mumba Devi temples, the Elephant Caves and Bandra Fort. I even attend a big, bold Bollywood production that has me swaying in my seat and longing to take dance lessons, but what I will remember most about Mumbai isn’t featured in any tourist guide.

As we prepare to leave the hustle and bustle of this megacity for the solitude of Ranthambore National Park, our car requires servicing, and we make an unplanned stop on the city’s outskirts. I’m offered a seat in the air-conditioned waiting room, but something beckons me to step outside. Across the alleyway, there are rows upon rows of tents. One stands out as there is a small Winnie-the-Pooh plaque beside the door. As I watch, two young girls in pristine uniforms emerge, obviously excited to be off to school. Suddenly, I’m hit by a wave of nostalgia. I think of my daughters when they were that age. Ah, taking

the time to absorb an ordinary activity in an extraordinary place reminds me that we are not meant to rush through life. For the rest of this trip, this will be my mantra.

THE CALL OF THE WILD

It’s been a long day in transit but worth the effort. The welcome I receive from the gracious staff at the Oberoi Vanyavilas reenergises me, and before I know it, I’m off on a tour of the ‘encampment,’ a 5-star resort in the heart of the Tiger’s Lair, so undeniably well-planned and well-conceived, it’s hard to take it all in.

My ‘room’ is an opulent tent reminiscent of the era when royalty travelled together in caravans. I dine under the stars, where I’m introduced to Rajasthani cuisine, including Ker Sangri, a local delicacy prepared with shrub berries and wild beans - a feast for a king. The low-slung moon illuminates my path as I wend my way to my tent. I’ve travelled miles today, but when I curl up on my canopied king-size bed, surrounded by the sounds of the jungle, I feel like a queen as I drift off to sleep.

The following day, I think I’m the first person in the compound to wake, eager to meet some big cats on this leg of the journey, but Mohan, my knowledgeable and unflappable guide has been up for hours organising today’s safari. I’m so appreciative of the wild beauty but I’m also concerned about the impact humans have had on its inhabitants. Mohan smiles a gentle smile; glad I asked the question. There is immense gratitude in his voice as he explains that not →



Below: A ruined mosque inside Ranthambore Fort
 Right: Ranthambore Fort towers 500' overhead



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only have the people enjoyed greater prosperity due to ecotourism, but the animals have also benefitted from government-supported conservation. Over the last two decades, the Bengal tiger population has steadily increased as man and beast learn to live and work in harmony.

Minutes later, we're joined by three other guests who hop in the jeep, before we set off along the dusty, golden road in search of adventure. Surprisingly, the landscape is extremely varied. We drive for long stretches amongst barren trees devoid of leaves and then dense foliage that provides refuge for various animals. As we round a corner, Mohan swiftly

brings the vehicle to a standstill to give us a bird's eye view of India's national bird – the blue peacock and his harem. Suddenly, to our surprise and delight our newfound friend lifts his tail and spreads his iridescent feathers in a semicircle known as a train before performing a mesmerising mating ritual. In Hinduism, peacocks are a symbol of pride, beauty and grace and, according to our guide, confidence as he is now certain we will find tigers before our day is done.

Throughout the morning, we come across large groups of spotted deer grazing quietly at the edge of a stream or watering hole, entirely at ease in their surroundings. We also encounter

a shy desert fox and a hyena with pups, but the tigers remain elusive.

By mid-day, the air has grown hot, heavy, and humid. The birds are quiet, and I sense that the animal kingdom is enjoying a well-deserved rest. Mohan suggests it's time for us to tuck into our picnic lunch before making our way to the Ranthambore Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site whose history dates back more than a millennium.

At first, I'm disappointed that we're abandoning our tiger search, but when I get my first glimpse of the circular ramparts towering more than five hundred feet above my head, I have a change of heart. Shrouded in myths →

“Suddenly, to our surprise and delight our newfound friend lifts his tail and spreads his iridescent feathers in a semicircle known as a train before performing a mesmerising mating ritual”

“After that, it’s as if Mother Nature conspires to put on a show for the tourists. Before we return to the resort, we have four more sightings, including a mother and her cub. What a day”

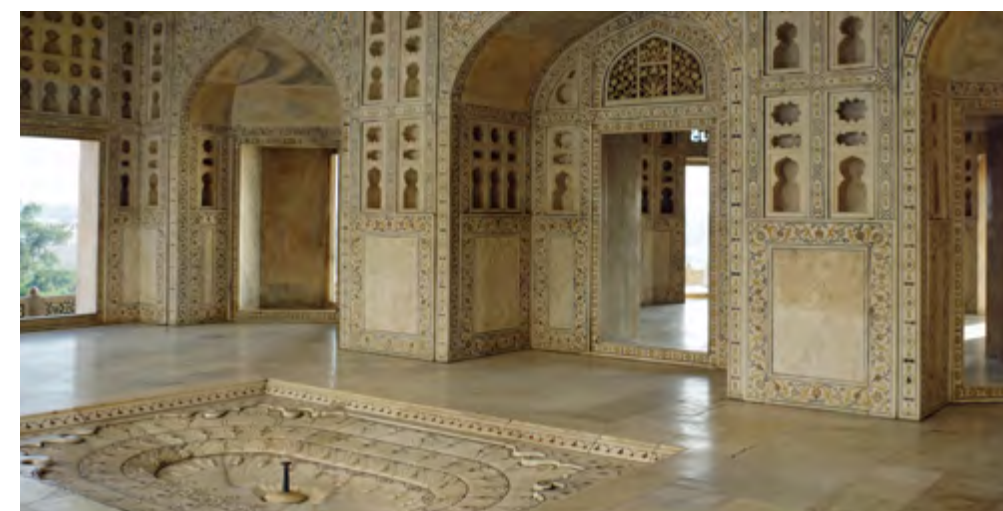
and folklore, I know this is one of those places where legend comes alive.

As I tread the stone pathways and listen to the stories from the elders, I can feel the presence of the warrior spirit of the ancient ones who occupied this land during sieges and battles. Within this complex there are three Hindu temples, dedicated to Ganesha, Shiva and Ram Lalaji. There is also a Jain temple of Lord Sumatinath and Lord Sambhavanatha that are still in use today; a symbol of man’s ability to come together for safety and connection, regardless of differing beliefs. Two hours later, Mohan comes to collect us to resume our safari, and now, I’m almost reluctant to leave.

Patience is a virtue, and perhaps the lesson I need to learn - let go of expectations and enjoy the moment. Within minutes of departing the Shilpgam artisan village, we come across a young male tiger sunning himself on the rocks who is utterly oblivious to the humans who can’t believe their good fortune. After that, it’s as if Mother Nature conspires to put on a show for the tourists. Before we return to the resort, we have four more sightings, including a mother and her cub. What a day – one that I celebrate with a sundowner or two as our group relives the day, knowing we now have shared memories, even when we go our separate ways.

LOVE LOST AND FOUND

I usually shy away from highly visited attractions, but how could I pass through Agra and not see the Taj Mahal? It’s pitch black, →



Top: Even on a cloudy day the Taj Mahal glows
Right: Amer Fort courtyard, Jaipur
Far Right: Semi-precious stone inlays in the Agra Fort



Above: A room with a view. The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra
Middle: Indian wedding hands sparkle with gold
Bottom: Mehndi henna tattoos are works of art



and I'm at the ticket booth, well before sunrise, surprised that several hundred others are already in line. That's when I recall that the Taj Mahal is more than an iconic monument. It's a sacred space where pilgrims and tourists come together to explore the mystery.

When the gates open, I'm caught in the crush of people surging forward, and for a moment or two, a wave of panic washes over me, but my expert guide quickly separates us and allows the crowd to disperse before he finds us a quiet corner in the garden where I can relax and watch the sunrise.

I note a slight tinge of colour in the sky, and then suddenly, the massive onion-shaped white marble dome is awash in a sea of pink. I'm so transfixed that I don't realise I'm holding my breath until my guide, Ashok, reminds me to breathe and feel the magic.

Time stands still as we wander the grounds admiring the reflecting pools, the architecture, the craftsmanship and the landscape. I could linger here for hours, but time is running short, and I must find a sari for the wedding I will be attending in New Delhi.

I begin my quest at Raji Ki Mandi, one of Agra's busiest and most crowded markets. Everyone is eager to help, and I'm presented with a dizzying array of exquisitely embroidered and intricately beaded gowns. Each one is stunning, but I'm overwhelmed by the choices, the salespeople's urgings, and the need to decide, and I leave empty-handed.

I regroup over a long, leisurely lunch at Pinch of Spice, then head to the Sadar Bazaar, confident that I will find what I need.

The first store I enter is devoid of anyone save the shopkeeper and his assistant. Unlike my previous experiences, he doesn't immediately start pulling items from the shelves. Instead, he invites me to sit in the middle of the room while he gently questions me about my likes and dislikes and why I need a sari. With a sage nod, he rises from the floor and disappears through

a door, returning moments later carrying the most beautiful moss green swath of pure silk, adorned with a glittering golden band and a few tiny beads. As I run my hands over the fabric, I feel tears spring to my eyes. It's as if the shopkeeper has known me a lifetime, and this sari had been crafted for me and me alone.

It's twilight when I reach my hotel. I'm weary from the day's activities and not fully present until I open the door to my room. What I see literally takes my breath away. Before me lies the Taj Mahal, shining against the dark sky. As I dine under the stars, I replay the tales I've heard today about the Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan and the shrine he built for his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, that speaks to the power of enduring love.

THE WEDDING

A Hindu wedding is not a one-day affair but a series of events that herald the coming together of two families. I dance through the next three days, thrilled to be invited to the Mehndi party, where I marvel as an artist who creates a henna work of art on the bride's hands and feet. I'm told this ritual is meant to calm the bride's nerves, but legend has it that much like the Taj Mahal, the more intricate the design, the longer the couple's love will grow.

More than five hundred people gather on the wedding day to celebrate and bless the marriage. I revel in the music and the choreographed dances performed by family and friends. Suddenly, the crowd erupts in a cheer as the bride descends from the dais, resplendent in her red wedding dress that symbolises new beginnings, passion, and prosperity. I watch as the groom slips his hand into his wife's and gently guides her through the well-wishers to begin a new chapter. I bow my head and quietly whisper Namaste in gratitude for the generosity of spirit I've been shown as I followed my path throughout incredible India.

"I'm weary from the day's activities and not fully present until I open the door to my room. What I see literally takes my breath away. Before me lies the Taj Mahal, shining against the dark sky"

WHERE TO STAY:

The Oberoi Vanyavilas Wildlife Resort, Ranthambore

The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra

T: +91 11-23890606

E: reservations@oberoigroup.com

W: oberoihotels.com

WHERE TO EAT:

Ziya - The Oberoi, Nariman Point, Mumbai

T: +91 22 6632 6210

W: oberoihotels.com/hotels-in-mumbai/restaurants/ziya/

Pinch of Spice

1076/2 Fatehabad Road, Agra

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WHAT TO DO:

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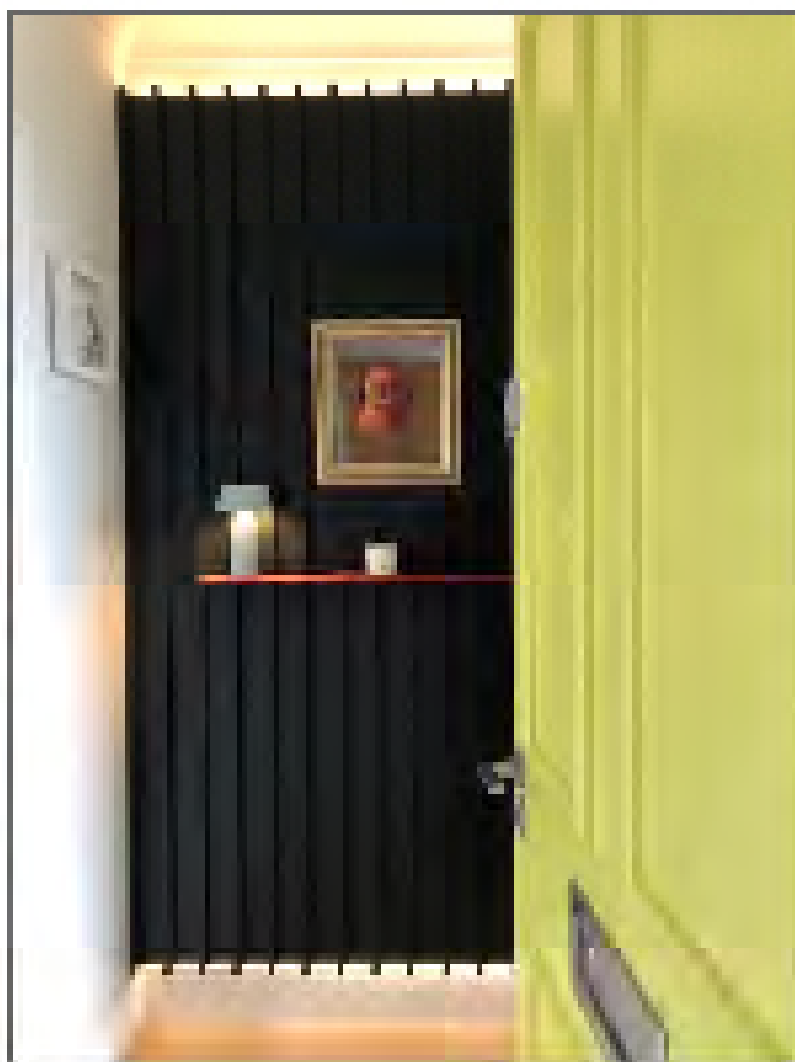
E: bharatdeep.bedi@easternsojourns.com

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Ranthambore National Park

Sawai Madhopar Rajasthan India

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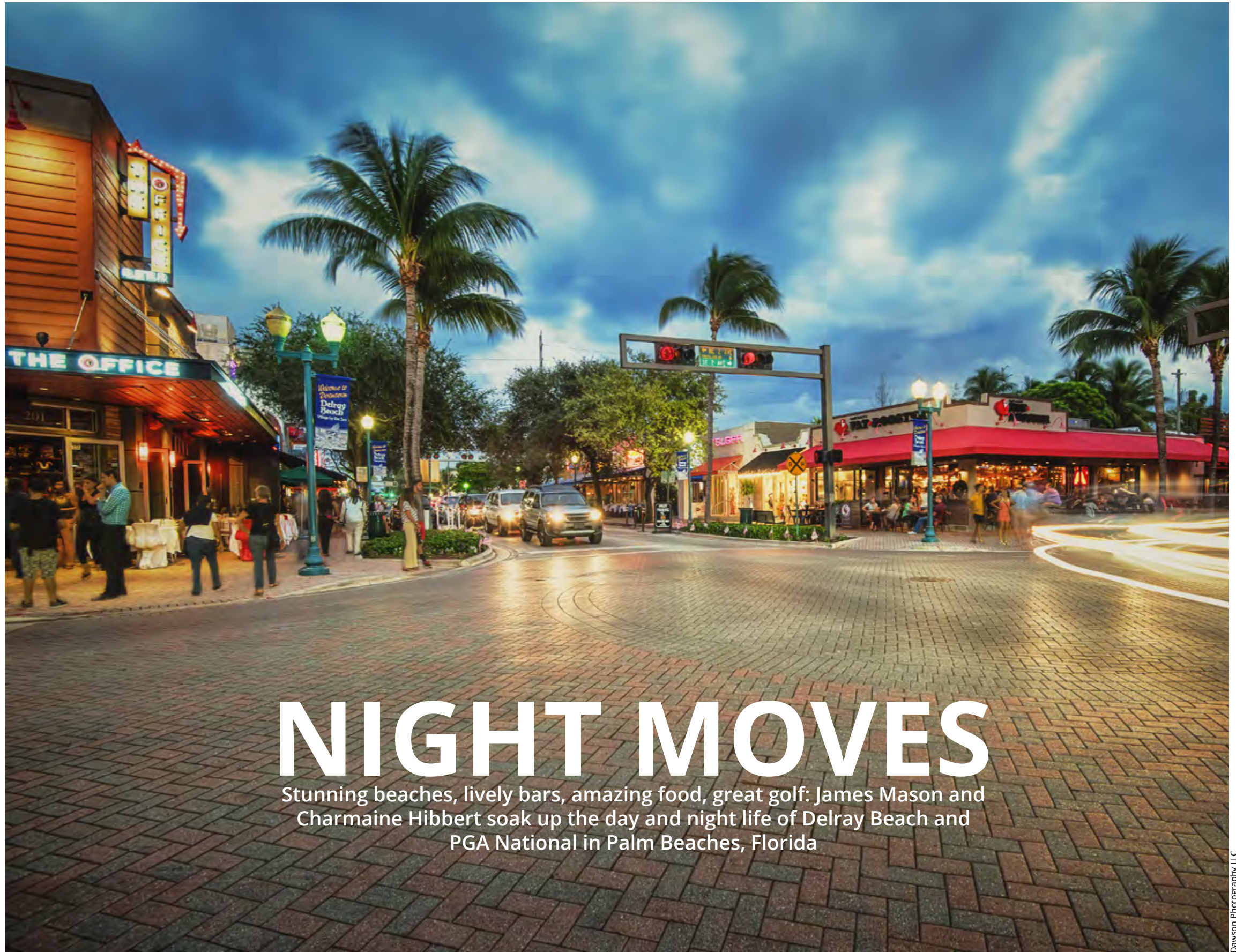
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NIGHT MOVES

Stunning beaches, lively bars, amazing food, great golf: James Mason and Charmaine Hibbert soak up the day and night life of Delray Beach and PGA National in Palm Beaches, Florida



The many faces of Delray Beach, with its sunning beach and nightlife



Dawson Photography



J Rabinowitz Photography

BY CHARMAINE HIBBERT

After being thoroughly looked after by the staff on Virgin Atlantic, we touch down at Miami International and once through customs we're on the Uber app and book Josue, who is only five minutes away. He pulls up in a beautiful new 4x4 that has plenty of room for our luggage and golf clubs and we head to Palm Beaches.

Composed of 39 southeast Florida cities and towns between Fort Lauderdale and Orlando, the 2,300-square-mile region of Palm Beach County is referred to as The Palm Beaches. It has the Atlantic Ocean on its eastern coast and Lake Okeechobee to its west. The Palm Beaches stretch from the coastal towns of Tequesta and Jupiter in the north to Loxahatchee, Belle Glade and Pahokee in the west and south to the beachside cities of Boca Raton and Highland Beach.

Located about two hours or 168 miles

southeast of Orlando and about one hour north of Miami (67 miles) Palm Beaches offer visitors everything from classic luxury to natural wonder. Its diverse collection of accommodation options range from luxurious properties to trusted brand hotels. The county offers an innovative culinary landscape, eclectic range of shopping venues and attractions for every age group.

FLORIDA'S GOLF CAPITAL

Visitors of all skill levels can play on 160+ public and private golf courses, including PGA National Resort, Okeethee Golf Course, Palm Beach Par 3, The Breakers Palm Beach, The Seagate Hotel & Spa's Seagate Country Club and The Boca Raton.

It is also home to numerous teaching facilities, including Leadbetter Golf Academy

and the John Webster Golf Academy, where more than 60 current and past professional golfers, including Ernie Els, Rickie Fowler, Rory McIlroy, Jack Nicklaus, Camilo Villegas and Tiger Woods have resided in The Palm Beaches.

THROW SOCIAL:

Delray Beach is perfect as all the bars and restaurants and activities are within walking distance; it also means Atlantic Avenue is the place to be. We are heading to Throw Social for some axe throwing. Now I will say upfront that putting a weapon in my hands is probably not a good idea as I am pretty competitive.

As we make our way in and meet John, the manager, who gives us a tour, The Samantha Russel Band are on stage playing and John is showing us the large connect four, table →

Images below:
Delray Beach
where art and
history collide

"Delray Beach is perfect as all the bars and restaurants and activities are within walking distance; it also means Atlantic Avenue is the place to be"



Peter W. Cross



tennis, darts and of course axe throwing. After a quick lesson and signing our life away, its game on and axes are flying everywhere except the target. A quick reminder by my tutor to step into the throw and not stand and throw, I actually hit the target. And on my sixth throw its bullseye! I am walking away and admit to John it's all downhill from that point... James can't believe he's lost!

Throw Social has VIP areas where you can lounge under a cabana or sit at one of the many bars or tables. You can order food along with cocktails, beer, Champagne and wine, while taking selfies by many of the kitsch 60s neon signs. The place is lively, Samantha has the dance floor buzzing and in between her band's

sets there is a DJ on hand to keep the good vibes going.

After way too many cocktails we are heading back to the hotel, which is about a five-minute walk, and with smiles on our faces and my imaginary axe throwing trophy tucked under my arm. It's been an amazing night.

ELISABETTA'S

We passed Elisabetta's yesterday on our tour of Delray Beach and I have to say I was looking forward to tonight, and after requesting a table on the upstairs balcony so we could also take in the vibe of Atlantic Avenue, David Weiss, our waiter, introduces himself. We order some drinks and after a discussion about the menu

we let David recommend the starter and our eyes nearly pop out when it arrives.

The Salami & Formaggio board consists of Coppa Ham, Soppressata Salami, Spicy Picante Pepperoni, Robiola cheese, Fontina cheese and Burrata mozzarella, Sicilian olives, black truffle honey, dried fruit, Giardiniera vegetables, and house-made bread crisps. The whole thing was amazing!

For the main meal we have decided to split a dry aged 16oz bone ribeye steak from Nebraska. Cooked on a wood fire grill with Carolina white oak, it is garnished with roasted garlic, fried rosemary and garlic butter... And Cacio Pepe served with spaghetti chitarra pasta and sauce made from fresh grated pecorino

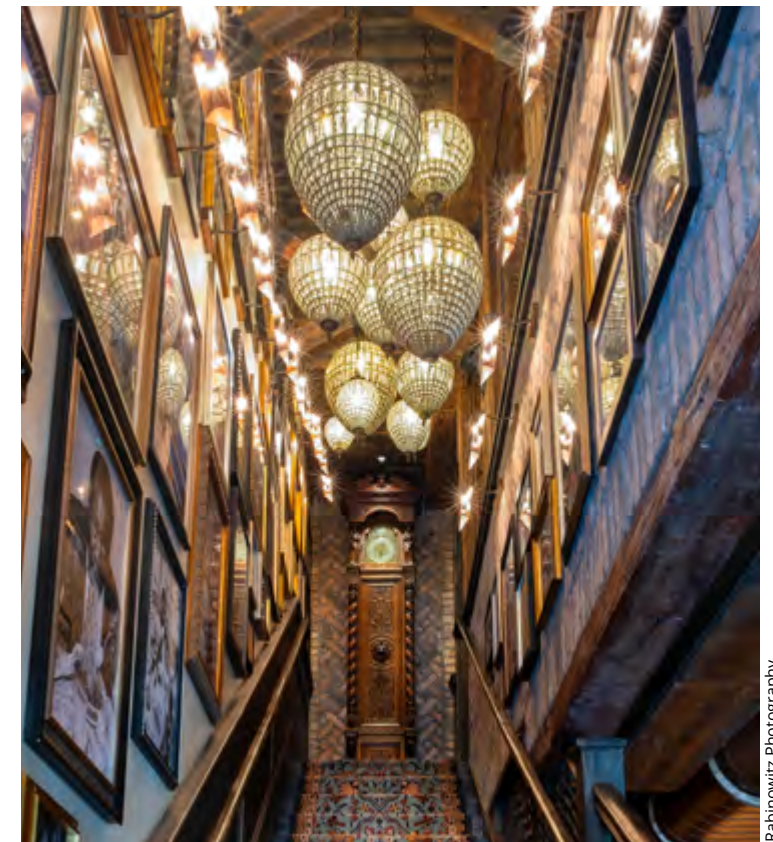
cheese, cracked black pepper and pasta water.

The steak as you can imagine was cooked to perfection and the spaghetti strangely enough was the perfect partner, which David said it would be. I am stuffed but James always insists a meal isn't complete without cheesecake. Where he managed to tuck that away I don't know!

We decide to chill on the balcony people watching, with a few more drinks and some coffee. The food at Elisabetta's has been amazing and sitting on the balcony sampling this wonderful gastronomy was the perfect ending to what has been a busy few days.

Left and top middle: Throw social axe throwing and cabanas
Bottom middle and right: Elisabetta's restaurant

"After way too many cocktails we are heading back to the hotel, which is about a five-minute walk, and with smiles on our faces and my imaginary axe throwing trophy tucked under my arm. It's been an amazing night"



JRabinowitz Photography

THE PERFECT MIX

Golf, sun, cocktails and great food: James Mason discovers Delray Beach and The Palm Beaches have everything you need both on and off the golf course



SEAGATE COUNTRY CLUB

After a short drive in one of The Seagate Hotel courtesy cars we arrive at the gates to the Country Club and I make my way to the proshop where one of the guys has set me up with a buggy, the practice ground is right by the proshop and balls are already set up and each bag holder has an alignment stick and tees waiting for you.

I go through my normal warm-up routine and Brian Corbitt my playing partner and head professional at Seagate Country Club arrives and we head to the par 5, 1st tee. I video from the back tees which are black today and weighing in at 533 yards. There are six teeing options to choose from – 7,124 yards to 5,267 yards – so you can choose what best suits your game or you can mix and match as you play.

Florida is fairly flat so there are normally no great elevation changes, with courses being designed to be more strategic for the better players and tend to have fairly wide fairways so all standard of players can enjoy the course, and from my initial observations Seagate CC is no different with seven bunkers strategically placed.

There are two placed either side of the fairway in the landing zone, two more for those landing short of the green with their lay-up shots and three more protecting a small subtle undulating green – one at the front, one right side and one at the back.

The 2nd hole has water short right of the green and having said the fairways are normally wide this is a fairly tight driving hole. The 3rd brings up the first of the two par 3s on the front nine and measures 198 yards to a raised green that is protected by two bunkers at the front and one back left. Again it's a small green. Don't be short and put it in the bunker like I have managed to do!

Making my way round, Brian explains to me the changes that are going to happen to the course next year as they will be going through a renovation, with trees being taken out, tees moving and greens and fairways being relayed with different grasses for more consistency.

The 6th brings up the other par 3, that is played over water and a water fountain which are going to be extended to bring the water more into play during the renovation. But at 214 yards from the black tees it's already a tough hole.

The back nine finishes with a 613-yard, par 5 and has nine strategically placed bunkers in the driving zone. More bunkers protect the second shot landing zone and three more protecting the three tired green.

The course is in wonderful condition as you would expect and the first of the par 3s on the back nine arrives at the 12th with water protecting the left. It has three bunkers, two short with the right bunker having a tree in the middle of it – not a place you want to be – and

one back right. It's a great design, measuring 205 yards from the tips.

Water features from the 14th to the 17th but doesn't always come into play. Some of the renovation changes are going to help bring some of the water features into play, but it's certainly prominent on the par 3, 17th where you play over the water to a semi-island green,. It's a beautiful little hole that measures between 150 and 101 yards depending on your teeing option choice.

The 18th is a subtle dogleg right again with bunkers placed either side of the landing zone right and left of the fairway and two more bunkers protecting the raised green. That tilts from left to right and has a ridge running through the middle, so making sure you hit the right section is important. It's a fitting finale to what has been a wonderful day's golf and gets me off to a great start on my Palm Beaches visit. →



COURSE VIDEO

Top left: Raised green at the 14th
 Left: Approach to the 8th green
 Below left: Fountain at the par 3, 6th hole. Below right: Semi-island green at the 17th





OSPREY POINT

After a 30-minute Uber journey from The Seagate Hotel I arrive at Osprey Point Golf Course and as the car makes its way to the clubhouse I immediately notice that the terrain of the holes I can see isn't your typical flat piece of land, which seems to have me slightly excited for some reason.

After a quick chat with Susan Kipp, who is the assistant manager of Osprey Point, she teams me up with Anthony who works between both Osprey Point and Okeeheelee Golf Courses – if you are thinking of spending the winter or summer down here then it is worth looking into the Palm Beach County Frequent Player Card.

A quick warm up on the amazing practice facilities and we head out to the 1st tee on

the Falcon course. There are three loops of nine here at Osprey Point: Falcon, Raven and Hawk. Unfortunately I am not getting to play all 27 holes today as the course is very busy, but thankfully the Falcon nine is closed to the public because they have recently hollow tined the greens so we have this nine to ourselves.

Standing on the 1st tee I remark to Anthony that there must have been a lot of earth moving to build this course, which opened for play back in November 2010 and was originally farm and shellrock mining land, and he replies with a big smile stating that there certainly was!

The 377-yard hole rises gently before you with water to the left of the tee box and is framed by a variety of native trees and bushes, with the emerald carpet-like fairway meandering through the middle. It

Top left: Tee shot at the Falcon 8th hole. Above: Sunset over the Hawk 9th hole. Top right: 7th hole on the Raven course. Below: Open tee shot on the Falcon 1st hole

COURSE VIDEO

looks stunning, manicured perfectly and just begging you to put your ball in the middle and fortunately I duly oblige.

The green is raised and some wonderful pines at the back look down like sentinels watching over you. The front has run offs, but the surprise is that there are no bunkers surrounding it.

As I make my way round, raised greens and perfectly manicured fairways become a theme and I really like the movement they have built into the greens. Even though they have been recently hollow tined you could see how tricky they will be once the growth is back and when they get quick you will really need to be on your green reading game when you tee it up here.

Water first comes into play at the par 5, 3rd hole where the longer hitters will have to choose whether to take the risk and carry over it. Another fabulous risk and reward hole is the 325-yard, 4th hole where you can take the short cut over water and foliage or go right and hit a long iron and wedge. The first par 3 rocks up at the 5th and the other is the 7th.

The Falcon course closes with two wonderful golf holes. The 434-yard, par 4, 8th is today playing into the wind so the water on the left is in play, the tee is slightly elevated and you play down and then back up to the green. The 510-yard, par 5, 9th is the perfect finishing hole with water all the way down the left hand side, and again it is risk and reward for the longer hitters if they want to take on the water for the second shot.

Now standing on the par 4, opening hole of the Hawk course I have to admit I'm not

impressed, but as we pull up to the tee of the 577-yard, par 5, 2nd hole my heart starts to race again, framed perfectly by palms and other trees and bushes, the fairway rising slightly as you make your way up the hole.

The first of the par 3s on the back nine arrives at the 3rd and is an improvement on the front nine. Again framed by trees and bushes and at 175 yards, with a green that has lots of movement it is a well designed hole. Water comes into play on the 405-yard tee shot of the par 4, 4th hole, which is aesthetically beautiful as you play over some wonderfully coloured foliage with hints of reds, browns, purple and yellow.

The second of the three par 3s arrives at the 5th and is played over water, but it's the 190-yard, par 3, 8th that takes all the accolades. There are five teeing options on the courses but from the black tees it is all carry over the lake to a raised green and can make or break your scorecard.

Like the Falcon course, the 9th is a fitting finale to the Hawk course and again is a par 5, this time weighing in at 555 yards. I am making my way up the fairway as the sun starts to set and reggae music is pumping out across the course from the amphitheatre on the other side of the park and like the bands that have appeared on stage during the course of our play they and the course have just got better and better with each hole. It has been a wonderful day's golf and Osprey Point is certainly not your typical Florida course. As the band plays Bob Marley's One Love when I putt out, I'll have to admit it certainly has been. →



PGA NATION: THE MATCH

Now I will say upfront that I did have the choice of playing the back nine of the Stadium Course twice as PGA National were undertaking some work on the front nine, but I was intrigued by the new The Match course. Originally designed as The Squire back in 1983 by Tom and George Fazio, the redesign was undertaken by Andy Staples.

As I pull up next to one of the marshals of the course he explains the thinking behind the new design. There are no set teeing options, it is up to the winner of the previous hole – the choice on the 1st would be whoever wins the toss to start – to decide where they want to tee from between two tethered posts, which in some cases can be over a 150 yard difference.

Take the 1st hole; you can choose between playing the hole at 427 yards or as short as 269 yards. There is also no par, because you are not playing the course you are playing your opponent. Some of the tees have also been intentionally designed to give a downhill, uphill or sideways lie. The idea is to play to your strengths or your opponents weaknesses.

The greens have to be some of the most unique I have putted on, there are so many ridges, tiers and green complexes, the Enigma code breakers would have their work cut out. So if you're a great putter and your opponent isn't you will want to get to the green as soon as possible so you would probably choose the minimum teeing option giving you a chance to get close with your tee shots to chip and putt.

You can also turn the par 3s into a chipping contest. The beautiful 2nd measures 163 yards and has a bunker wrapped around the front of the green that has small sleeper ties as a face. Now if your wedge play is better than your mid-irons and you won the first hole, you can now play from 69 yards out and turn this hole into a chipping competition.

The same with the stunning 4th hole that has a stream running down the right of the hole and comes very close to the left hand side of the green and from the back tees that measure 166 yards you have to play over part of that stream. Again if you won the previous hole and you fancy your wedge game you can make the hole 84 yards.

The front nine comes to a close with a wonderful hole that has water running down the left and can be played from the 403-yard



BY WINNING THE FIRST HOLE AND HAVE THEM CRYING IN FRUSTRATION BY THE TIME THEY WALK OFF THE 18TH – YES I WOULD CERTAINLY LOVE TO PLAY A COMPETITIVE MATCH HERE!

post or as short as 238 yards or anywhere in between. But it's the green that will have your eyes popping with its ridges, complexes and a wall of death that some of those daredevil bike riders would enjoy.

This is my first time here so I don't really know the changes that were made to the actual Squire course, but I love the layout and the aesthetics of the course. It is a very pretty course, it's Florida but unlike yesterday it's fairly flat.

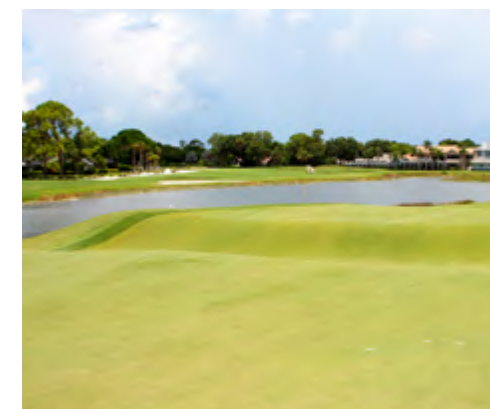
The 11th is another wonderfully designed hole played over bunkers with short sleeping ties and water. You tee over water at the 12th which has whispery grass surrounding more bunkers with sleeper ties and is played to a raised green. The course is fairly open but does have a lot of trees that not only shape the holes but enhances the course's aesthetics.

The course comes to a close with another "par 3", remember there are no pars on the course, but measures 198 yards down to 120 yards played over water to a green that basically has a valley in it. Believe me being on the wrong tier certainly brings a four-putt into the equation!

As I walk off the green my overriding feeling is one of fun. I loved the look of the course and the design, but I would certainly love to play a match-play competition here, especially a competitive one. You could really get on someone's nerves. If your opponent is a bomber you can certainly take that weapon out of their hands, by winning the first hole and have them crying in frustration by the time they walk off the 18th – yes I would certainly love to play a competitive match here! →

COURSE VIDEO

Top left: The beautiful par 3, 2nd Top right: Raised green and bunkering at the 12th hole. Middle right: Horseshoe green around the bunker at the 3rd Right: Valley of sin on the 18th green!



PGA NATION: THE STAPLE

After the perfect golfers' lunch of chilli dog, fries and a couple of local IPAs at Birdie's, which is loosely based on a 50s style diner, I am back on the tee of The Stable course which is basically a par 3 course. Now I played my first Par 3, or what they call in the US a short course in Alabama and I was blown away at just how well designed they were.

The Stable is no different and opens up with a 119-yard hole, which with today's wind is playing near 130 yards, to a raised green and over water. You can tee up anywhere from where the deck chair is placed. But, it's when you reach the greens and see the contours in them and how well they're cut and the speed

COURSE VIDEO

Below right: 4th hole with the 5th in the background
Bottom left: Opening hole on The Staple. Bottom right: Looking back down the 9th hole

that you realise this isn't your average chip and putt course.

The 87-yard 2nd is played to another raised green with run-off areas and again ridges running through it, so to be honest reaching the green is the easy part. The green on the 90-yard 3rd is basically a horseshoe shape and today's pin is on the far part of the horseshoe and sits in a dip.

The 5th hole has water and bunkers protecting the green and is visually stunning The 6th may be the shortest hole on the course at 48 yards, but if you miss left you have bunkers waiting for you and there are so many pin placement options with each one a potential four-putt just waiting to happen.

The 7th is another aesthetically pleasing hole with its front bunker and rock wall, but the 9th is truly a fitting finale to this course, playing the longest of the holes at 130 yards, over water to a wide green that not only has more contours than Keith Richards' face, but they decided to put a bunker right in the middle of it!

But, to be honest we've had so much fun we are going to play it again! What is also great to see are a father and daughter playing together and having a lot of fun. No matter which course you are playing at the PGA National Resort, make time to play The Stable course. Not only will you be glad you did, I bet you go round at least one more time!



NO MATTER WHAT COURSE YOU ARE PLAYING AT THE PGA NATIONAL RESORT, MAKE TIME TO PLAY THE STABLE COURSE NOT ONLY WILL YOU BE GLAD YOU DID, I BET YOU GO ROUND AT LEAST ONE MORE TIME!

JOURNEY PLANNER

GETTING THERE:

Virgin Atlantic
W: virginatlantic.com
T: +44 344 209 7777

WHERE TO STAY

The Seagate Hotel & Spa
W: seagatedelray.com
T: +1 561-665-4800

PGA National Resort

W: pgaresort.com
T: +1 800-863-2819

WHERE TO EAT

Throw Social
W: throwsocial.com/delray
T: +1 800-561-0755

Elisabetta's

W: elisabettas.com
T: +1 561-560-6699

The Butcher's Club

W: pgaresort.com/dine/the-butchers-club
T: +1 561-627-4852

THINGS TO DO

Silverball Museum
W: silverballmuseum.com/delray-beach
T: +1 561-266-3294

WHERE TO PLAY

Seagate Country Club
W: seagatedelray.com/
T: +1 561-498-7600

Osprey Point Golf Course

W: pbcospreypointgolf.com
T: +1 561-482-2868

PGA National

W: pgaresort.com
T: +1 800-863-2819



THE SEAGATE HOTEL & SPA

Florida, USA

By CHARMAINE HIBBERT

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Looking to party at night and relax by day? **Charmaine Hibbert** finds The Seagate Hotel & Spa is perfectly placed for both

After a 45-minute drive from Miami International Airport, our Uber driver pulls up outside The Seagate hotel and spa, a swift check-in and I am heading to my room. We are running an hour late because of delays at Heathrow but opening the door to my room all that stress disappears as a beaming smile hits my face.

Big enough to place a pool table and a table tennis table and still have room to play and keep my king sized bed, my usual face dive into the pillows reveals fresh cotton linens, but the special touch was the sealed →



key card on the outside of the door informing me no one had been in the room after it had been cleaned and sanitised, which was a nice little touch as I peeled it off.

I am writing this review from the desk by my patio doors. The balcony has two chairs and a table so you can watch the world go by. Not my style, but a little romantic touch for couples is the sliding wooden louvre window between the bedroom and bathroom so you can have those open and watch your partner in the glass enclosed stand up shower or taking a bath in the jetted tub.

ATLANTIC RESTAURANT

We decide to sit at the bar for dinner although there are options to sit at a table inside or outside, but there is something about being in America and eating and drinking at the bar. We both order the grilled salmon and sweet potato fries with some refreshing locally crafted IPA.

I have never been asked how I would like my salmon cooked. I went for medium and James went for medium/rare and as you would expect they are both perfectly cooked, and another beer to wash them down brings a long day to a very positive end.

FACILITIES

After a wonderful night's sleep we meet up at the etc. cafe which is part of the hotel that serves a light breakfast menu. We opt for the egg, bacon and cheese wrap and coffee. I, of course, had to sample one of the pastries, just to make sure they were up to your standards you understand!

Today I am off to sample the spa and then head to The Seagate Hotel's private beach club and James is off to play golf at The Seagate Country Club.

After a quick change I catch the lift down from my third floor room to the spa. I don't have any treatments booked so I head to the steam room and then relax in the tranquility room... I am aware that I am about doze off so I take a walk to the outdoor pool and then check the gym facilities – now when I say check out the gym facilities, I take a walkthrough and nod that they have all you need for a good gym workout. James will no doubt tell me if there are any problems later.

BEACH CLUB

My focus is now heading to the pool at The Seagate Hotel private beach club, which is about a 5-10 minute walk depending on your walking pace. The beach club offers a private pool with poolside drinks service. Now the beach is inviting and there is a section for residents with umbrellas and chairs and it does look beautiful... but then my mind wanders and I think about all that sand in my toes, shoes, bikini... And “yes I will have a strawberry daiquiri, thank you” and just relax here by the pool. Oh did I mention there's an upstairs to the beach club where you can dine and watch the sunset... oh another daiquiri, thank you!

The Seagate Hotel & Spa

1000 E Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach,
FL 33483, United States

T: +1 561-665-4800

W: seagatedelray.com



Top left: Large room and balcony. Top right: Décor on the way to the spa
Middle left: Aerial view of the hotel pool. Middle right: Sunrise at the Beach Club. Below left: The Atlantic restaurant. Below right: Watching the sun go down, upstairs dining at the Beach Club





PGA NATIONAL RESORT & SPA

Florida, USA

By CHARMAINE HIBBERT

Our journey from Seagate Hotel to PGA National takes us around 40-minutes and as we pull up outside the entrance to the main resort area you can already feel that we are taking a step up. The reception area with its ample seating and oblong bar in the centre dominate and I already know this is going to be the place to hang out and have a few drinks tonight.

Another swift check-in and we are both heading up to the fourth floor, although James goes straight on and I go right. I love entering hotel rooms in the US; yes I have that slight trepidation of what awaits behind the door, but the rooms are always the perfect temperature.

I am staying in a resort room view - but first it's the nose dive into the pillows time. I must say I love the design of this bed with its curved shaped head rest that has built in lights, as well as the two side lights on the side →

Top: Lobby bar

Below: Resort room

INVEST TO IMPRESS

What does \$100 million dollars buy you? **Charmaine Hibbert** heads to the Avenue of Champions to find out





Top row Left to right:
 Resort room view
 Entrance to the spa
 Spa pool
 Bottom row left to right:
 Resort room
 Birdie's diner
 Spa mirror



tables.

The walk-in shower has black tiling with gold fixings, a comfortable sofa which sits in front of a large TV screen. We are only at the resort for one night but there is plenty of space to work, relax on the balcony or just chill in front of the TV.

THE SPA AT PGA NATIONAL

James is off to play golf while I am off to the spa and have been told that I need to sample the Golfers Massage at The Spa at PGA National. I am shown around the changing room that also has a sauna, steam room, whirlpool and there is also the relaxation room where I am told to change and wait for my masseuse.

After a few minutes Toby calls my name and introduces herself and leads me to one of the many treatment rooms – there are both couple and

single treatments rooms here. After checking which oils I would like to be used on me, Toby slips out while I get myself comfortable on the table, head up as Toby likes to start from the front first.

After a few minutes of Toby weaving her magic with her very soft hands, I am feeling tranquil, but boy when she wants to apply some pressure this petite little woman could have you crying like a baby.

I know I am slowly slipping in and out of sleep and suddenly I am asked to turn over and Toby starts to work from my head down to my legs or was it the other way round! Whichever way it was, I know that in between the naps it was great to just let go of all the stress and drift in and out and feel my body relax and just feel totally rested.

It turns out the Golfers Massage must be 90 minutes, which seem to go so quick. I remember Toby taking me back to the relaxation area and drinking water and then basically passing out on one of the full body length

reclining chairs that contours with your shape, now was trying to fit Toby into James's golf bag a dream or a cunning plan!

BIRDIE'S DINER

James has just texted me to say he has finished his first round and will meet me in the Birdie's Diner. As I arrive my eyes light up as it's a real throwback to the 50s. The only thing that is missing is a juke box in the corner and the colour scheme is brown, beige and a mint green rather than the 50s red, white and black, but the booths and the leather cushioned chairs and bar stools at the counter are all there.

We decide to go all out 50s Americana with James opting for the All-beer hot dog and I go for the classic all-American wayu cheeseburger with a vanilla milkshake and James decides to try a local beer called the Funky Buddha Floridian Hefeweizen, which he enjoyed so much that he →

“needed to make sure it was that good!” and orders another.

The food is cooked perfectly and both look impressive, although the melted cheese over the chilli dog does look lip-smackingly tempting and I use all my persuasive skills to remind James that I need to sample his food for the review! After some negotiation we decide to go half and half so we can each try both American classics!

THE BUTCHER'S CLUB

To be honest, making our way down to the evening meal at the Butcher's Club we are like a couple of kids heading down to see what is under the tree Christmas morning. I know for a fact if James had to live on one food for the rest of his life it would be steak cooked Pittsburgh style and although I wouldn't go that far, I do love a good steak.

The Butcher's Club continues the American 50s era theme, but this time with sophistication, mood lighting and lots of gold and brown details with a slight Art Deco twist. We are shown to our table and order cocktails; I order the Mezcalado which consists of Sombra Mezcal, Espolon Tequila, strawberry, coconut milk and honey and James goes for the Cantaloupe in Palm Beach which is Plantation rum, cantaloupe, pamplemousse and fresh lime.

Now for the highlight of the night, we decide on the 10oz wagyu filet mignon, I go for medium/rare and James of course goes for the Pittsburgh style, we share the Yukon gold potato puree with roasted roasted garlic, maldon, chives, frantoia olive oil and the local gratitude garden mushrooms with the Butcher's Club signature steak glaze.

As you would imagine from Floridian native Jeremy Ford, who was the winner of Top Chef season 13 in the US, the steak is just mouth-wateringly tasty and James is really impressed with how good the Pittsburgh style cooking is, but we both agree the creamed potatoes, which nearly steal the show. They are truly amazing and all washed down with a 2018 Vaglio Malbac from Agrelo, Argentina.

The evening comes to a close with a coconut ice cream, which again is so nice, and another round of cocktails. As we make our way to the rooms, we both agree it was one of our best dining experiences on a press trip. Whether you are staying at the PGA National Resort or not, dinner reservations at the Butcher's Club to taste Jeremy Fords cooking is a must when you go to The Palm Beaches.

CONCLUSION

It has been a wonderful stay at the PGA National Resort, and the \$100 million investment to both interior and exterior designs, new restaurants, activities, and amenities shows. With six championship golf courses, state-of-the-art Sports & Racquet Club with 19 tennis courts, a 40,000-square-foot spa with exclusive Waters of the World outdoor mineral pools, PGA National Resort has something for everyone and we can't wait to return.

PGA National Resor & Spa

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 Palm Beach Gardens
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Images on this page:

The sophistication,
 mood lighting and
 gold and brown details
 with a slight Art Deco
 twist of the Butcher's
 Club



SLEEPING ABOVE THE CLOUDS

How do you walk off a transatlantic flight with a five-hour time difference and feel refreshed enough to go straight out and party?
Charmaine Hibbert unlocks Virgin Atlantic's secret



Standing in the lift on the way up to the Virgin Clubhouse at Terminal 3, I am secretly counting our blessings having just passed the queue that is winding around the terminal just to get through security and we are told as we arrived that it could take up to three hours!

Going through Virgin Atlantic's own security took 40 minutes, but apparently this wasn't as quick as normal. Thankfully we are now sitting here in one of the booths in the Clubhouse with Virgin Red cocktails in hand waiting for eggs Benedict and fresh fruit salads to arrive; 40 minutes compared to the other possibility was a godsend in this heat.

We are informed by one of the Virgin staff that our flight has been delayed due to the problems that Heathrow is experiencing at the moment, but

she also lets us know that they will come and tell us when we should go down to the plane to board. Several more Virgin Reds and a few snacks and we are now heading down to the flight gate.

A swift check-in and we are heading to seats 9 and 10, which turns out to be right by the Virgin bar and while the steward is showing us to our seats he also asks what we would like to drink. Now having had a few Virgin Reds already and being right by the bar I take the sensible option and go with a fresh orange juice and James decides to have a beer!

Once we are in the air, my feet are up on the padded stool provided and I select Dune on the movie channel and lay back to enjoy the film, with a nice chilled glass of white wine from the steward, which I had ordered as he was

taking my choices from the a la carte menu. The food is amazing: smoke salmon salad to start, followed by prawns cooked in coconut and the perfect apple crumble and cream for desert, all accompanied by a South African Sauvignon Blanc.

After finishing my meal and movie, we decide to sit at the bar and do some work as no one else has decided to use the bar. There are wines, beers and soft drinks on the bar that we help ourselves to, but if you are looking for something more specific you can just ask.

After writing up a few reviews that I had to do, I decided to sample the full bed mode of my chair and catch up on a few hours' sleep. I was out like a light as I had a fairly early start.

CONCLUSION:

From the moment we arrived at the airport, the Virgin Atlantic Upper Class experience was perfect. The staff in the Clubhouse kept us fully informed of what was happening, the time it took to get through security, the check-in onto the flight and the service and food just turned a normal transatlantic flight into its own, most-do experience. Last but by no means least, the option to just fully lie down and crash out – now that has to be the best part of the Upper Class experience; feeling fully refreshed and ready to go when you land.

W: virginatlantic.com
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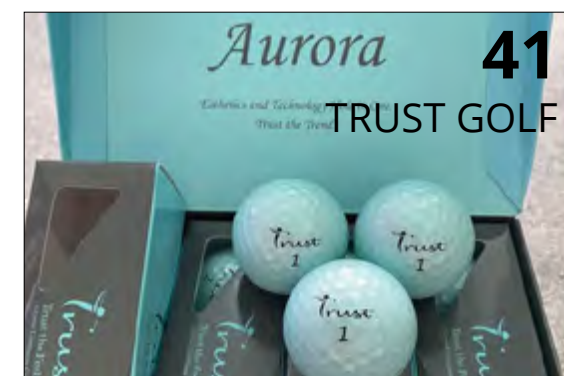
34 COBRA LTDx



37 CLEVELAND
LAUNCHER XL



33 SCOTTY
CAMERON
PHANTOM X 11



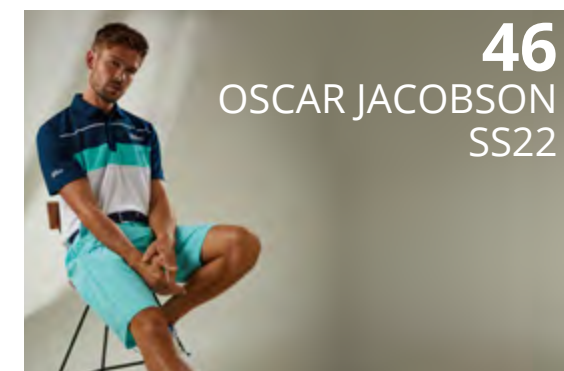
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EQUIPMENT

& APPAREL

REVIEW



Farleigh



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Contact Michael Day on 01883 627711
or email michael@farleighfox.co.uk

VIPER BITE

James Mason takes the Cobra LTDx driver and puts its H.O.T face to the test in the heat of a Palm Beaches summer



TECHNOLOGY

The Cobra LTDx driver has a lighter, stronger construction than previous Cobra models and the new multi-material construction features up to 30% more carbon with a lighter more stable titanium chassis. With this weight saving, Cobra have

been able to introduce their PWR-COR Technology, which is a multi-material weighting system positioned low and forward in the club face.

A total of 19 grams (a 14g machined steel internal weight and a 5g exterior aluminum

weight) is positioned right behind the face, helping transfer all the speed you have generated into the golf ball at impact with reduced spin.

At the back of the club, Cobra have added a 15g back weight, which is made up of a 10g fixed

weight and a 5g tungsten weight and these help balance the low spin from the face with a higher launch angle while also helping with forgiveness.

Cobra have also used a new CNC milled infinity H.O.T face design using machine learning and

data from thousands of impact simulations and created multiple zones with various thicknesses, which helps increase ball speeds across a larger area of the club face →



Left top: 10g tungsten back weight. Left below: CNC Milled infinity H.O.T face



VIDEO REVIEW ▶

Cobra LTDx

LOFT 10.5°

SHAFT UST Mamiya Helium 5F4

FLEX Stiff

SET UP Std

RRP £399 / €499 / \$499

CONCLUSION

I really enjoyed putting the Cobra LTDx driver through its paces in Tunisia and I enjoyed everything about it: the distance, the sound at impact and the look at address and, most importantly, the forgiveness.

With the price of drivers now getting ever more expensive, making sure you get the

maximum value for money is imperative. Cobra gives you everything you need at a great price and I would make sure you put this on your testing list. I know you are going to love the results as well as the price impact, which a lot of drivers have struggled with, and of course, distance.

This is a driver aimed at the

lower handicap market, but with its adjustability and forgiveness I am sure there are mid handicap players who would enjoy this club and get a few extra yards with its low spinning, penetrating ball flight, especially with that added forgiveness.



Above: Toe view.
Above right:
Address view





TRY A LITTLE FORGIVENESS

With golf booming and new golfers hitting the fairways, having the right equipment in your hands can get you off to a flying start. James Mason puts Cleveland's new Launcher XL game improvement irons to the test

TECHNOLOGY

The new larger head design in the XL irons has increased the clubs' MOI and what this basically means is more forgiveness while also increasing distance. Cleveland have also introduced an AI designed variable face which helps increase ball speed and weight pads that help forgiveness on miss-hit shots across the clubface.

An 8g weight has also been placed inside the grip end of the club helping with balance and control and they have also redesigned the leading edge of the club so it is now elevated. This helps reduce drag through longer grass and helps maintain your clubhead speed.

The laser milled grooves are shallower and wider in the longer irons from 4-7 that have a hollow body design, and deeper and more closely spaced in the cavity backed designed 8-pw, giving you more spin and control.



CONCLUSION

Everything in the new Cleveland Launcher XL irons is geared towards helping higher handicapped golfers and beginners get the most enjoyment from their game.

From the design of the larger head, the leading edge to help maintain speed through longer grasses, the deeper grooves in the scoring irons and the AI designed variable face and weight pads are all there to increase forgiveness and help get you more distance.

If you are new to golf or a higher handicapped player that wants a club that is going to give you more forgiveness as well as increased distance, then you need to test the new Cleveland XL irons.



VIDEO REVIEW

Cleveland Launcher XL

SHAFT Project X 6.0

FLEX Stiff

RRP £699 / €699 / \$999.99

5 Iron -Pw / 6 Iron - Pw / 4 Iron-Pw

PHANTOM STROKE

Drive for show, putt for dough is the old adage that still holds true today. Putting is an art form and you need the right brush in your hands if you want to become an artist on the greens

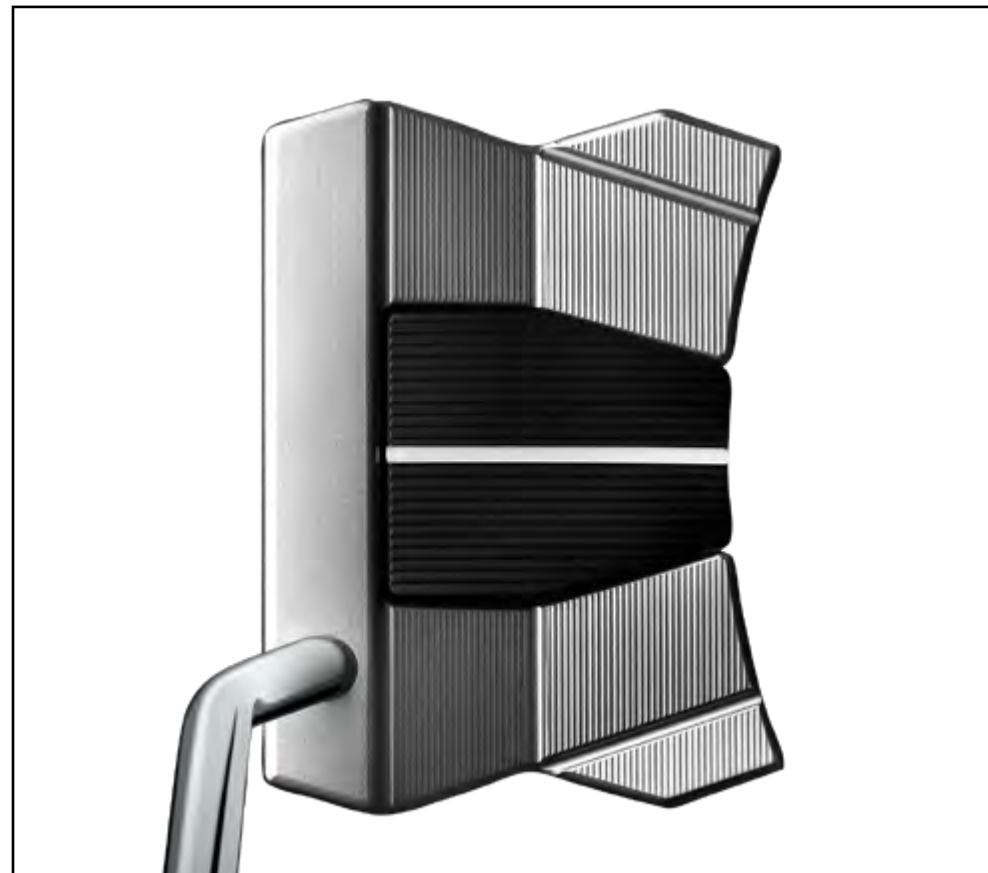
TECHNOLOGY

The new range of Phantom X putters use an integration of steel and aluminium and are engineered from precision-milled 303 stainless steel topline, face and body, that has been fused with 6061 aircraft-grade aluminium for the sole and flange components.

The Phantom X 11 has a face balanced wingback design with a mid-bend shaft and simple alignment cues and utilises customisable stainless steel sole weights. The X11 shares similar wingback design elements to the X12 and X5 models, but this new option is a performance-oriented mallet aimed at players seeking a higher MOI and more stability in a more compact head design.

The X 11 has a new Pistolero Plus grip, that has been revamped for 2022 with a decorative, non-slip texture and comes in 33" 34" and 35" length options and has four specific neck/shaft configurations. →





CONCLUSION

I tested the Phantom X 11 out in Florida and immediately loved the weight of it. I am normally a blade design putter person and use a pendulum like putting stroke and the weight and balance during my putting stroke felt really effortless.

To be honest I don't like big putter heads, but the black and silver design didn't jar with me at address and I actually really liked the design when looking down on the putter and felt the alignment aids really helped.

The new Pistolero plus grip also sat in my hands perfectly and the thicker design at the top of the grip gave me better control over the putter face which in turn gave me better pace and distance control.

As I always say, putting and putters are very much an individual thing. But if you are someone who loves a mallet style design and a face balanced putter, that you can adjust the weight of so it feels best for you and your putting stroke, that also looks great at address, then get the Phantom X11 in your hands.

VIDEO REVIEW

Scotty Cameron Phantom X11

LENGTH 33"

RRP £389 / €479 / \$429

Top left: Sole and face view. Top right: Address view and alignment aid. Bottom left: Back view and alignment aid. Left: Precision milled face



AURORA RISING

We have tested quite a few ball over recent years. Some make it on to these pages, others don't, but I think you will be hearing a lot about Trust golf balls over the next few years

TECHNOLOGY

The Aurora ball utilises a three-piece construction, which the R&D guys at Trust have developed with their own design, stating that they have made their crystal urethane cover with a softer feel, but still retaining its durability, high spin rate while not sacrificing distance. It also comes with an Icy Blue coating which makes the ball easy to spot in the rough

The ball uses a K8 reactive core that helps boosts ball speed to gain the maximum distance from your swing speed, while also helping increase the rate of

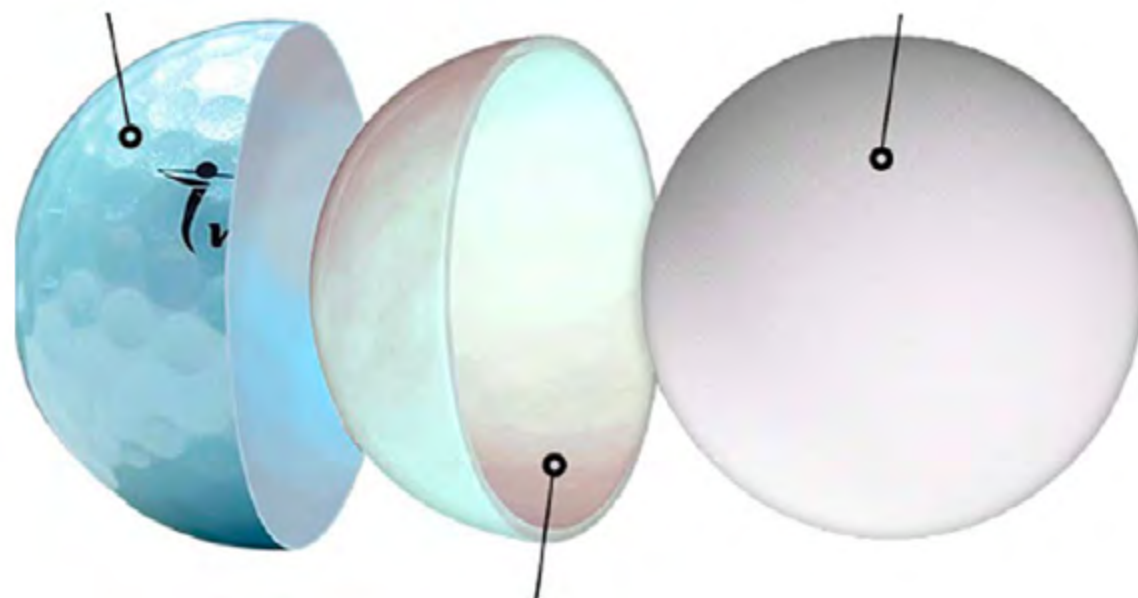
accuracy, but not compromising on that soft feel off the face at impact. This works with the Ionomer Mantle, which Trust have customised to help reduce backspin and wind interference off the driver face

The materials scientists, engineers and designers at Trust handle the entire golf ball-making process in-house - design, materials, core and cover. Trust are official partners of the TLPGA (Taiwan LPGA Tour) and the ball conforms to all USGA/R&A regulations. →



CRYSTAL URETHANE COVER

Durable, aesthetic and advanced greenside control



IONOMER MANTLE

Custom Formula to reduce backspin off the driver and the affect of wind.

REACTIVE CORE

Boosts ball speed without compromising on softness. Increase the rate of accuracy and maximises distance

CONCLUSION

The first thing you are going to notice about the Trust Aurora ball is the colour. The Icy Blue finish does make it unique but there really is a purpose behind the technology, because as soon as you are in the area of your ball you can spot it. Obviously if it is under leaf's and bracken etc and is hidden you won't be able to spot it, but if it's lying in rough you can spot it fairly quickly once you are in the area - and believe me the way my eyes are going that is a godsend at the moment.

On the performance front, it compares well with all the top brands' 3-piece balls that I

have played, and I do like the way it looks at address - which I originally thought maybe off putting. Around the greens it isn't as soft as the premium golf balls on the market but does have a softer feel to it than other 3-piece balls that I have played which slightly jump off the face at impact.

If you use a 3-piece ball, enjoy the distance it gives you, and if you want durability as well as a slightly softer feel, with the bonus of having a ball that is easier to find in the rough and retails at a decent price, then the Trust Aurora is a must-try for you.

GOLF BALL TESTED

Trust Aurora

RRP £33 / €49 / \$35 per dozen

PLAYING BY NUMBERS

Having the right club in your hands for the distance required is essential to scoring well. Having a trusted rangefinder that locks on to the target quickly in different lighting conditions? Now that could be a game changer





TECHNOLOGY

The 3 Max laser boasts x7 magnification and includes an Adaptive Slope option, which takes the player's elevation in comparison to your target into account and can be switched off when you play in official club competitions using the button on the side of the unit.

The Active Flag Lock function helps the laser quickly lock onto your intended target rather than a tree or object directly behind it and you get a gentle pulse to let you know when your target is secured. The rangefinder also has a range of 900+ yards and accuracy rate of +/- 1 yard and is

also water resistant

The unit also has an Auto-Ambient Display which automatically adjusts colour to ensure that the display is crystal clear in all weather conditions. This is achieved because the unit automatically adjusts to the amount of light in the

environment,

There is also a built-in magnetic strip that allows you to attach the rangefinder to the struts of a buggy, trolley, or any other metallic surface.

CONCLUSION

I tested both the ladies' pink version and the men's black version of the rangefinder. Both sat in my hands perfectly and I loved the design of the unit, but what I was most impressed with was the Active Flag Lock function. It really picks up the pin quickly and locks onto it; even with just

as slight passing motion it will instantly pick it up.

As you look through the lens the display is crystal clear and playing in Turkey as the sun started to set, the Auto Ambient Display kicked in, keeping everything bright and easy to read.

The matt finish of both the pink and black cases give the rangefinder an exclusive feel. As I have not seen anything on the market like it and it comes with a magnetic strap to hold it in place while you are playing so you don't have to zip the case up each time after use.

When you think that some rangefinders go for over £350 and the Blue Tees 3 Max goes for a price of £199 then you are getting a rangefinder that has all the features of the top brands on the market with a pin lock system that I feel is the best out there, but at a fraction of the cost.

RANGEFINDER TESTED

Blue Tees 3 Max

RRP £199 / €199 / \$199

OSCAR JACOBSON

AUTUMN / WINTER 2022



OSCAR JACOBSON GOLF



Cool Summer

OSCAR JACOBSON'S LATEST SS22 RANGE BRINGS TOGETHER THEIR DESIGN PHILOSOPHY BASED ON SCANDINAVIAN SIMPLICITY COMBINED WITH THE INSPIRATION OF ITALIAN TAILORING AND BRITISH TEXTILE TRADITION. WE PUT THEIR NEW COLLECTION TO THE TEST IN PALM BEACHES, FLORIDA

TECHNOLOGY:

MEN'S POLO SHIRTS:

Both the Dodman and Whitby polo shirts use a durable and light four way stretch fabric, which offers the golfer freedom of movement, breathability, and comfort. The Croft polo uses an extremely light, ultimate modern stretch performance fabric, which also offers freedom of movement and breathability in all playing conditions, with a contemporary relaxed fit, soft handle, construction and durability.

TRENT TOUR SLEEVELESS MID LAYER

Polyester and elastane fabric blend offers versatility, durability as well as freedom of movement.

TRAVIS HOODIE

A modern full zip design consisting of brushed inner fleece and a self-fabric

branded hem and cuffs, which provides comfort and warmth without hindering performance. The top uses a moisture wicking material; it's purpose is to wicker sweat to create less distraction for the golfer during play.

DARWIN QUARTER ZIP NECK TOP

The Darwin has a quarter zip neck and uses a lightweight, water resistant four way stretch fabric, which offers freedom of movement, breathability, and comfort.

DAVENPORT TROUSERS

A lightweight tapered trouser, constructed with a four way stretch fabric to allow comfort and mobility with a polyester composition for breathability. The trousers also use an internal gripper to the waistband to keep your shirt in →



CROFT POLO
£64.99 €76.95 \$64



DAVENPORT SHORT
£49.99 €59.95 \$49



LODSTOCK TOUR MID LAYER
£62.99 €74.95 \$62



MADDIX CAP
£21.99 €25.95 \$22



DODMAN POLO
£59.99 €70.95 \$59



DAVENPORT SHORT
£49.99 €59.95 \$49



**TRENT TOUR SLEEVELESS
MID LAYER**
£64.99 €76.95 \$64



LEATHER BELT
£39.99 €47.95 \$40



WHITBY POLO
£59.99 €70.95 \$59



DOUGLAS TROUSERS
£79.99 €94.95 \$79



TRAVIS HOODIE
£89.99 €106.95 \$89



**PHOENIX ZIP NECK
WINDPROOF**
£109.99 €125.95 \$125

place and has two rear welt pockets, two front slash pockets and an additional tee pocket.

PHOENIX ZIP NECK WINDPROOF

Extremely lightweight water and wind resistant technical fabric allows you to play in light rain and windy weather conditions, while not restricting comfort and movement.

LEATHER BELT

The leather golf belt comes with an engineered ratchet system for total flexibility in sizing and features a chrome finish metal buckle with embossed Oscar Jacobson branding.

MADDIX CAP

There is a contrast colour inside the peak of the cap and an adjustable Velcro strap for a secure fit. It has a laser perforated design for added breathability.

CONCLUSION:

The first thing I always notice when I get an OJ delivery is the quality feel of the fabrics that they use. Oscar Jacobson are renowned for delivering fabrics that reflect quality in terms of performance and luxury and this new SS22 range is no different where they have utilised bespoke fabrics that deliver function and form.

The new range uses classic tones of navy, white and grey which epitomise the OJ brand, but the seasonal updates of aqua, ochre and teal bring a new freshness and vibrancy showing a brighter side to the Oscar Jacobson brand name with new, bolder logos on show

I loved wearing these out in Florida. Not only did they look good, but the fabrics really got to work helping me keep cool in the heat with their wicking technology. As I have said before, with the weight restrictions on airlines you need apparel that works both on and off the golf course and the SS22 Oscar Jacobson range certainly does just that and more.

PRO TIP



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Farleigh Golf Club
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W: farleighfox.co.uk
E: paul@farleighfox.co.uk

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

**ALGARVE COACHING TRIP
WITH PAUL BABBAGE**
12 October 2022

4-NIGHT ITINERARY:

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

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

CHIPPING FROM A DOWNSLOPE

We may have a perfect lie on the practice ground but out on the course we rarely have that luxury. **Paul Babbage** explains how to play a chip shot from a downslope



Step one: Take a more lofted club if you're on a downslope or a less lofted club on upslopes



Step two: Stand a little wider than normal for balance, with your ball position central and lean into left leg



Step three: Swing 3/4 length and smooth at 75 per cent

Video watch: A smooth swing and balance are keys to a crisp contact



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 mens 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](#)

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

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





51 THE DILLY



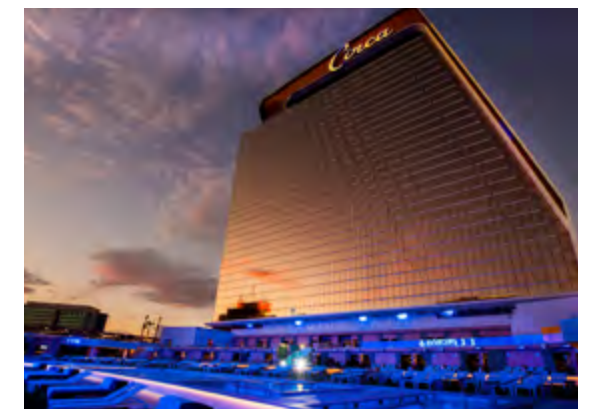
55 PRECISE RESORT
EL ROMPIDO



REVIEW



59 CIRCA RESORT & CASINO



VIEW.COM

STAY, PLAY & SPA

THE DILLY

London, England

By JAMES MASON

HOT IN THE CITY

Golf in the heart of London? **James Mason** heads to Piccadilly Circus and finds several hidden gems and not just golf ones in the basement of the perfectly placed Dilly Hotel





Above: The Dilly hotel lobby and reception. Below: The Oak Room featuring Madhu's Mayfair a fine dining Indian restaurant featuring Punjabi cuisine with a Kenyan twist

THE DILLY HOTEL REVIEW



A two-minute walk from Piccadilly tube station and I arrive at the Dilly Hotel and my first thoughts is for tourists visiting London. What a great place to be staying, right in the heart of London and by one of its most famous meeting places. For the record I have lived in London most of my life and when meeting people for a night out in this part of town, Piccadilly is where we meet.

The Dilly was one of London's first grand hotels dating back to Edwardian times. In the 1930s, an outdoor pool on the terrace was centre stage for high class London's social life and now the hotel has one of London's largest indoor luxury pools, now part of the new health club →

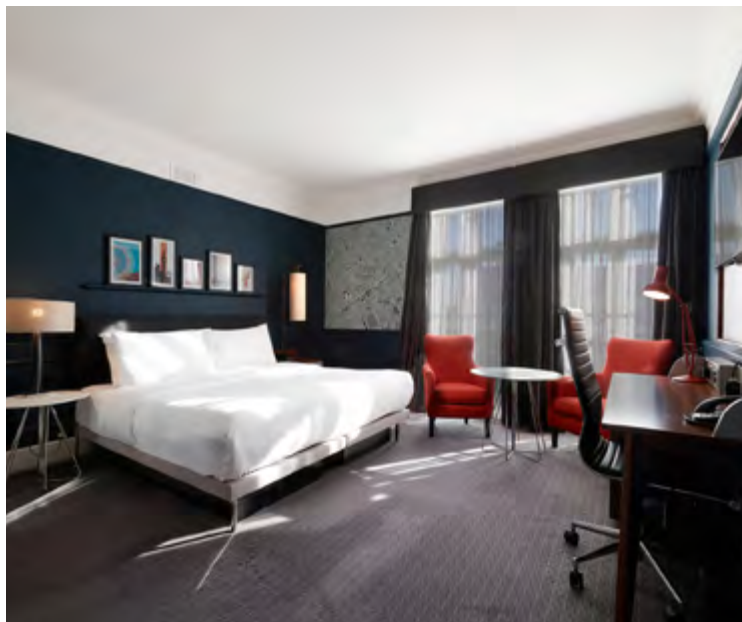
GOLFZON AT THE DILLY REVIEW

With golf becoming ever more popular, what better way to get to show your children the joys of the game of golf than to spend a few hours on a golf simulator playing one of the most iconic golf courses in the world, Pebble Beach? Ok I will admit that was my choice but, if I am going to see them hacking it all around the place I may as well pick a course I want to play!

For those staying at The Dilly the simulator is located within the amazing leisure facilities - but more of those in my hotel review. The hotel has installed a state-of-the-art Golfzon simulator which has been voted the world's best golf simulator by Golf Digest 5 years in a row.

The Dilly's General Manager, James Olivier, who is also a keen golfer himself, stated: "Whether you are an avid golfer or looking for an alternative after work social for friends or colleagues, the Golfzon simulator is highly sophisticated, easy to use and fun. We are very proud to introduce this to Londoners and our in-house guests, which allows players →





Above and below: The different room options and room decor at The Dilly

at The Dilly. The hotel's meeting and function rooms - designed in the style of Louis XIV with epoque chandeliers and detailed oak panelling - have been the destination for many weddings, dinner dances and private events.

After checking in I head up to my room and for the security conscious you will be pleased to know you can only access the room floors with your room key card. The big part for me when staying in a hotel is when you open the door to your room. For me first impressions at this moment really do count and I love the white, black and red décor. Now I have been told by Charmaine I must do the nosedive into the pillows to test the bed and linens and I can confirm the bed was nice and firm and the linens were crisp and fresh.

I head to the bathroom which is a step up and the crisp white design continues with a subway tile design and stainless steel fittings. The transformation of the property has seen a new exterior design to the entrance of the hotel and an extensive lobby refurbishment. The redesign of the 255 bedrooms and 28 suites is ongoing. →



“So, with a bucket of beers, a bottle of Champagne and some snacks on the side, me and my two daughters, my nephew and his lad hit the first tee at Pebble Beach!”

to enjoy a round of golf and/or work on their game, in the heart of central London, all year round, whatever the weather.”

So, with a bucket of beers, a bottle of Champagne and some snacks on the side, me and my two daughters, my nephew and his lad hit the first tee at Pebble Beach! The Dilly has Titleist golf clubs for both women and men and free golf balls to use and of course you can also bring your own clubs if you just fancy hitting some balls during your lunch break or after work if you have a weekend competition you need to practice for.

Well, beers flowed, Champagne was consumed and of course I won, but most importantly we found out my oldest daughter has a bit of knack for the game of golf and my youngest daughter and nephew's son had a great time hacking away and my nephew who thought he →

Above: Me playing the famous 7th hole at Pebble Beach on the Golfzon simulator



Far left: Views from The Terrace Restaurant
Left: Cocktails at Downstairs at The Dilly



Far left: My steak main at The Terrace restaurant. Middle left: Honey roasted pear dessert. Left: Downstairs at The Dilly bar



FACILITIES

I head down to the lower ground floor to check out the the new health club and while at this moment the spa treatment section isn't up and running, the gym and fitness facilities look amazing. They are split into four sections with main weight machines, rowing machines etc by the reception desk then there is a cardio section with treadmill, cycles, xtrainers etc and then a few steps up is an open section with mats, free weights etc. It really is a perfect use of space. There is also a beautiful dance studio that can also be used for classes. Heading towards the pool there are squash courts but it's as I open the door to the pool that I'm taken back. It really is a beautiful place and I am gutted that I didn't bring any swimwear with me. Swimming here is far from just a workout, I could float on my back just taking in these surroundings for hours. It's defiantly a must-do when staying at this hotel. The Dilly have also just installed a new Golfzon simulator, and that review is alongside this hotel review.

RESTAURANTS

After taking a nap due to my exertions on the golf simulator and a shower, I am heading down to the Terrace at The Dilly restaurant. I ask to be seated near the window so I can look down on Piccadilly and people watch while I enjoy my meal. I have gone for the pan roasted scallops, pea puree, caper brown butter as the starter, and the 8oz rib eye steak with rocket garnish, tomato peppercorn sauce, garlic, pesto mushrooms and hand-cut chips as the main, cooked rare but burnt on the outside and a glass of Argentinian Malbec.

The view and the food are amazing, but I still have room for dessert and as there is no cheesecake on the menu, I have decided to go for the honey roasted pear, ginger ganache, oat crumble, caramelised pastry and honeycomb and I am so glad I have. It's delicious and the views looking down on Piccadilly at night are so good I have decided to enjoy a couple of beers and just watch Londoners and visitors from this perfect vantage point.

CONCLUSION

For those visiting London or Londoners who are on a night out or a weekend away and want to stay in town, The Dilly is perfectly placed next to Piccadilly Circus and in the heart of London and all its attractions. The food in The Terrace restaurant is wonderful and so too are the facilities, especially the Golfzon simulator. Don't make my mistake and not bring your swimming shorts/costume as the swimming pool is a must-do/see while you are staying here.

The Dilly
21 Piccadilly
London
W1J 0BH

T: 020 7734 8000
W: thedillylondon.com

was going to give me a game was soundly put back in his place!

Up to 12 people can join the golf experience, with up to six people at a time playing a multi-player traditional round, over some of the top courses in the world, including, including St Andrews Old Course, Celtic Manor or like me Pebble Beach. Two hours is recommended for groups of six-plus, as only six players can compete individually at any one time.

No matter which course or playing format you decide, golf on the Golfzon simulator at The Dilly is great fun, whether with the family, like I was, with a group of friends, a work team bonding day or just getting some practice in while working or staying in London. I know you will have a great time and my daughters can't wait to do it again.

Above: My daughter giving golf a try for the first time and not only loving it, but looking like a natural golfer in the making

PRECISE RESORT EL ROMPIDO

Huelva, Spain

By PETER ELLEGARD

MARSH MELLOW

Step back in time with **Peter Ellegard** to enjoy a stay on a hidden Spanish costa where German efficiency meets laid-back contentment, nature and empty beaches



Just 15 minutes from the border with Portugal’s Algarve, Precise Resort El Rompido lies on a sleepy Spanish costa in Huelva province that is overlooked by many holidaymakers.

The Costa de la Luz is Spain’s Atlantic coastline in the country’s far south-west and also stretches into neighbouring Cadiz province. It is a world away from the better-known Mediterranean beach areas with their high-rise hotels and sun-seeking masses.

Here, you will find unspoilt and uncrowded beaches, abundant nature and charming fishing villages – not to mention excellent golf for those wanting to hit the fairways.

It is also easy to reach. The airports of Seville and Faro are both just an hour away in either direction from the resort, allowing rounds on either of its golf courses after you arrive and before you leave if flight times allow.

Costa de la Luz means Coast of Light, named for the vivid sunshine (it has 300 sunny days a year) and clarity of its air, and that is precisely how a stay at the five-star resort feels from the moment you step inside.

Glass panels in the high, sloping roof over the spacious lobby fill it with brightness and airiness. The soft, neutral tones of the décor are repeated throughout the hotel, adding to the sense of calm.

The resort’s surroundings also imbue tranquillity. On the outskirts of the quiet fishing village of El Rompido, it is set amidst the coastal marshes of the Marismas del Rio Piedras nature reserve that is edged by the Piedras River and protected from Atlantic →



Left: Soft, muted tones in one of the bars
Below left: The resort and pool at night
Below right: The Piedras River and El Rompido

“The Costa de la Luz is Spain’s Atlantic coastline in the country’s far south-west and also stretches into neighbouring Cadiz province. It is a world away from the better-known Mediterranean beach areas with their high-rise hotels and sun-seeking masses”



“Beyond the resort, guests can stroll the alleyways and waterside promenade of El Rompido, stopping to savour local appetisers at one of its tapas bars. It has a yacht marina where excursions can be taken across the Piedras River to the glorious, soft-sand beaches of El Rompido del Flecha”

waves by the long Flecha del Rompido sand spit.

ROOMS

The hotel has 184 rooms as well as 10 junior suites and two suites, all featuring a contemporary design with soothing colours and with free Wi-Fi.

I’m in a standard room with a king-sized bed. It has air conditioning, satellite TV, armchairs and side table, desk, safe, minibar with regional products and a free bottle of water – something I wish all hotels offered rather than charge for water, although filling stations for water bottles on every floor would be even better.

The marble-floored bathroom has a bath and separate shower and there are bathrobes and slippers, again more plus points in my book. There is also a hairdryer, not that I need one these days!

I also have my own small balcony which overlooks the pool and has a table and two chairs.

Superior rooms have the same amenities but with more space and, like standard rooms, offer

pool or golf course views. Suites and junior suites have a lounge with a sofa bed, the suites having two bedrooms and two bathrooms. They also have a private terrace with sunbeds and sea, pool or golf course views.

In addition to the hotel, the resort has 305 apartments with either one or two bedrooms, ideal for families. Both feature a living room with a sofa bed and dining area, a fully-equipped kitchen, bathroom with a tub or shower and a terrace or balcony.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

There are two restaurants in the hotel. The main one, Binidali, is a buffet restaurant with indoor and terrace dining that offers international cuisine and regional specialities with live cooking stations. El Faro, next to the swimming pool, serves grilled fish and oven-baked dishes.

The golf clubhouse is a short walk from the hotel and has its own restaurant with a terrace giving views over the South Course and marshes.

The resort’s apartments complex also has two restaurants and there are six bars to chill

out in across the entire resort.

SPA AND WELLNESS

The spa has wet and dry treatment rooms offering a range of massage, facial, body and nail treatments. Massage options include treatments using citrus fruits and hot stones.

There is also a sauna and a steam room, and the resort’s pool complex includes a freeform outdoor pool, an indoor pool with water jets and a whirlpool. The resort also has a gym looking out onto the gardens.

ACTIVITIES

The resort’s sports centre has courts for tennis and paddle tennis, and five-a-side and full-size football pitches.

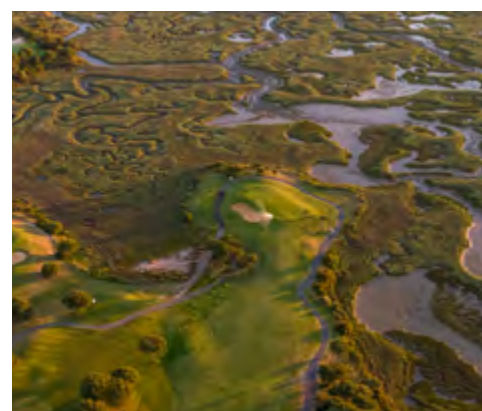
For families, there’s a Kids Club and Mini Club with all-day activities and games for youngsters. Evening entertainment for the family includes theatre and musical shows.

Two highly-rated 18-hole golf courses that skirt the marshland are complemented by a golf school headed by Scottish pro and golf book author Peter Ballingall. →



Right: Superior room
Far right, top: Indoor pool
Right middle: Binidali restaurant
Far right bottom: The hotel's gym





Left top: Church bell tower in El Rompido
Left middle: El Rompido's two lighthouses
Left: Lounge with a view

Beyond the resort, guests can stroll the alleyways and waterside promenade of El Rompido, stopping to savour local appetisers at one of its tapas bars. It has a yacht marina where excursions can be taken across the Piedras River to the glorious, soft-sand beaches of El Rompido del Flecha. Sailing, diving, fishing, windsurfing and kite surfing are also available there.

Family activities nearby include a water park and go-karting, while those who want to get close to nature can ramble along trails and boardwalks through the wetlands of the adjacent Marismas del Rio Piedras nature reserve.

CONCLUSION

If you fancy a relaxing holiday with golf on a Spanish costa without all the crowds, English bars and fast food takeaways, El Rompido is the perfect place. It is like going back to how Spain was 30 or 40 years ago. But being part of a German hotel chain, Precise Resorts El Rompido provides its guests with efficient service that's right on the mark – and the staff do it with a welcoming and friendly smile. Precisely what you want for a week or so in the sun.

Precise Resort El Rompido
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Far left: Another of the resort's bars
Left middle: El Rompido marina
Left bottom: Fairways and greens amidst the marshes

CIRCA RESORT
& CASINO

Las Vegas, USA

By PETER ELLEGARD



EXCESS ALL AREAS

It's mad and it's bad, so bad it's known as Sin City. **Peter Ellegard** revisits Las Vegas and checks out the city's first adults-only resort in the heart of downtown



It's nearly 11pm as I enter my room on the 25th floor of the hotel, having grabbed dinner first after a late arrival from London.

Drawing the curtains to shut out dazzling lights from outside, I look down to see them coming from a giant outdoor screen showing baseball and other sports to an audience lazing in and around several swimming pools. Beyond that, crowds throng a pedestrian precinct below a curved roof where loud rock music is blaring – thankfully muffled by the floor-to-ceiling windows.

I'm staying at the Circa Resort & Casino in downtown Las Vegas, one of the newest hotels in the city and where you have to be over 21 to stay.

Las Vegas is like nowhere else on earth. I have been around a dozen times and love the place, as do the 40 million visitors who head

there each year to play the casinos, see the shows, dine out, shop and generally have a good time.

The Vegas casino hotel boom began in downtown in the 1940s with Fremont Street nicknamed Glitter Gulch for its casinos and clubs before mega resorts sprang up along the Strip and became the focal point for visitors.

The area has undergone a renaissance in recent years, the heart of downtown being the pedestrianised Fremont Street Experience with its curved roof featuring two million LED lights that shimmer in constantly changing patterns.

Circa now stands where neon cowgirl Vegas Vickie famously kicked a leg above the Glitter Gulch sign for nearly 30 years on Fremont Street. However, 25-foot-tall Vickie lives on as the centrepiece of the hotel's lobby →

Left: Circa's stylish accommodation tower, its Stadium Swim and the Fremont Experience

Below: Vegas Vickie now graces the hotel's lobby

“Circa now stands where neon cowgirl Vegas Vickie famously kicked a leg above the Glitter Gulch sign for nearly 30 years on Fremont Street. However, 25-foot-tall Vickie lives on as the centrepiece of the hotel's lobby following restoration”



following restoration.

The first new casino hotel built in downtown for 40 years, Circa opened in late 2020 and features a two-level casino with 1,350 slot machines, almost 50 gaming tables and dancing dealers as well as an array of amenities such as its Stadium Swim multi-tiered pool amphitheatre and the world’s largest sportsbook – essentially a vast bookies seating 1,000 gamblers in tiers in front of a three-floor, 78-million-pixel screen.

ROOMS

The resort contains 512 rooms and suites. I stay at Circa twice on my Nevada trip, the first occasion prior to playing some of southern Nevada’s golf courses before returning to spend three nights exploring Vegas.

Both times I stay in a single king room, the second time looking out to desert mountains to the north. Measuring 439 square feet, there is ample space to relax in and there’s a comfortable couch and footstool complete with handy side table.

My golf bag stands unobtrusively in a corner, although on my first stay the bellman who brings my luggage won’t let me keep it in the room and takes it back down to the luggage store room. It seems a previous golfing guest had been practising his swing and it didn’t end well!

Next to the bed is a tablet that you can use to view restaurant menus and make reservations, check the resort’s amenities, make phone calls, read digital news including from the UK and other functions. Lighting and room temperature are controlled from digital panels.

The room also has a desk, mini fridge, wall-mounted TV, clothes steamer and a safe although, disappointingly, no tea or coffee making facilities. In the bathroom there are dual vanity sinks and a walk-in shower with a bench.

Other rooms offer either a second king bed or a large sofa that converts to another king. Suites feature separate living and sleeping rooms each with a TV while premium suites provide stylish decadence, some with sunrise or sunset views.

RESTAURANTS AND BAR

As you would expect with a Vegas resort, there’s a multitude of dining and drinking



options.

Barry’s Downtown Prime specialises in steaks and seafood in a setting that harks back to the 1950s and 60s. Saginaw’s Delicatessen is the first concept by famed Michigan restaurateur Paul Saginaw outside Detroit. Pan-Asian restaurant 8 East serves up a melange of the region’s cuisines and diners can tuck in to hearty American favourites overlooking the hotel’s sportsbook at Victory Burger & Wings Co.

Project BBQ is the Fremont Street Experience’s only permanent food truck and its Carolina-based fare include the Hogstavaganza platter comprising a whole barbecued pig and side dishes.

Circa also boasts a 24-hour café called Jack Pots, also by Saginaw, plus four bars and rooftop lounge Legacy Club perched on the resort’s 60th floor.

Inside, it features metal busts of the early movers and shakers of Vegas and a display of 500 gold bars, all stamped Circa. My partner and I enjoy cocktails in a cosy booth before taking in spectacular panoramic views of downtown and the Strip at sunset on the glass-walled outdoor terrace where a firepit keeps you warm in cooler months – although not in late June’s sweltering 43°C heat. At weekends the lounge stays open until 4am. →

Top left: Junior suite
Top right: Circa End Suite
Right: Firepit on the glass-walled Legacy Club terrace



Right: Bar lounge area in Barry's Downtown Prime
Middle: Barry's steak
Far right: Whole Maine lobster mac and cheese
Bottom right: Organic Mary's Farm chicken



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At 165 feet long, MEGA BAR is Nevada’s longest indoor bar. Circa Bar, the longest outdoor bar on Fremont Street, features performing flair bartenders. Overhang Bar is a sports bar overlooking Circa’s sportsbook and Vegas Vickie’s lobby cocktail bar is watched over by its celebrated namesake.

SPA AND WELLNESS

There is no spa at Circa, but its Stadium Swim extravaganza more than makes up for it. Open until 11pm 365 days a year to guests of the resort and sister properties D Las Vegas

and Golden Gate Hotel & Casino as well as paying members of the public, its six tiered pools are each heated to different temperatures, depending on weather conditions. All are guarded by young, red-costumed lifeguards doing their best Baywatch impressions. There are also two spa pools, two swim-up bars and a DJ booth playing upbeat music. But the star feature is its enormous 143-foot screen showing multiple sports games and events that you can watch while swimming, laying back on a lounge or a day bed, or relaxing in cabanas and poolside boxes.

You can have a massage at Stadium Swim or, if you prefer, at a gaming table or in your room using the services of an external company. Circa also has a 24-hour fitness centre.

ACTIVITIES

If you want a break from gambling, eating, drinking and lazing by a pool, just step out of Circa and you’re in the crazy but entertaining Fremont Street Experience where free concerts feature well-known bands and people watching is taken to new heights. Look up and you’ll see zip line riders whizzing past under the neon- →



Left and far left: Owner's Suite at Stadium Swim
Right: Stadium Swim at night



lit roof.

Downtown has many bars and restaurants to try at night and by day. Among attractions close to Circa are the fascinating Mob Museum, which sheds light on the shady past of Vegas and other American cities, and the Neon Museum, the resting place for familiar signs and placenames that adorned long-gone buildings.

The Strip’s resorts and attractions are just a bus, taxi or Uber ride away. Escape the city on tours to explore desert parks Red Rock Canyon and Valley of Fire.

A helicopter ride gives a bird’s eye view of Las Vegas lit up at night. Even better, take a helicopter tour to the Grand Canyon, 45 minutes away by air. Maverick Helicopters’ four-hour Wind Dancer tour flies over Lake Mead and Hoover Dam, landing at the bottom of the canyon for a bubbly and snacks breakfast.

CONCLUSION

Circa Resort & Casino and its pulsating downtown setting embody the sensory overload that is Las Vegas. It’s bizarre but fun and it makes a great base in the city. You will have, as the 22-foot chandelier in its transport hub Garage Mahal has emblazoned across it multiple times in neon, the time of your life.

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Top: MEGA BAR
Middle left: Circa's sportsbook and three-floor screen
Middle: Gold bars in the Legacy Club
Middle right: Legacy Club interior
Left: Dusk view over downtown and the Las Vegas Strip from the rooftop Legacy Club

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