

**GOLF
WORLD**

TOP

100

RESORTS

**CONTINENTAL
EUROPE**

COSTA
NAVARINO,
GREECE

**Your indispensable
guide to European golf**

Packed with detail to help you plan your next holiday

WELCOME TO A FEAST OF GOLF RESORTS



Golf du Médoc,
Bordeaux, France.

This might well seem a strange time to be releasing a Top 100 that focuses on resorts overseas.

There was a case for postponing but, in addition to having already completed a lot of work on it in preparation for an autumn release, this ranking also has a great deal longer than a one-month shelf life.

And in one respect it is the most timely publication of this particular Top 100; we might feel almost literally grounded as I write this and you read it, but who among us isn't absolutely bursting for a golf break abroad when it feels vaguely normal again?

Of course, Britain and Ireland has so much to offer. In my opinion it is has the greatest collection of courses in the world.

But a foreign break is special – from the different weather, food and type of course

to the chance you might be visiting a new country. Just the travel there is exciting.

If you are missing that right now, believe me I am missing it at least as much.

I hope reading this supplement gives you as much hope for better times ahead as it did for me putting it together. Yes, on one hand, I was lamenting the restrictions of this year and the lack of travel adventures, but on the other I was daydreaming about so many of these resorts as I wrote the entries and compiled the list.

Clearly no-one will agree with every part of the list, but I am in no doubt that it is the most accurate representation of the finest golf resorts in Continental Europe that we have ever produced. If you'll forgive the confidence, I am also sure no-one else has come close to producing a better list either.

I also think it is the most helpful ranking in terms of planning your next break. In addition to the list itself, with marks indicating each venue's strengths, we also rank the resorts in 12 individual categories. These include everything from accommodation and setting to the best ones for couples, families and groups – so no matter what you really want from your resort and whoever you are travelling with, we have tried to point you towards somewhere that will fulfil your expectations like never before.

Join me by daydreaming about these wonderful resorts and please feed back where you feel we've gone wrong – and also if you think we've got things right, too...

Chris Bertram, Top 100 Editor



HOW WE CREATED THIS RESORTS TOP 100

Who decided which resorts made it in. What the criteria was. And what we think a golf resort actually is...

What is a golf resort? Sounds like a silly question, but it really isn't. Because it's not as straightforward as you might think. It is important we clarify this because otherwise you will wonder why Resort X made it in yet Resort Y didn't. And why what seem like some amazing resorts might not be nearly as high in the list as you might expect.

We define a resort like this: the course and accommodation have to be part of the

same company or group, so they obviously offer a deal to stay and play with them. The accommodation has to be on site or within a short transfer time – and on the occasions where not all the courses within one resort are spread out a little (there are two examples in the top 10), those resorts were marked down in the 'setting' category slightly.

We mark each resort in four categories (see right) and an average of their scores used to calculate their Top 100 positions. Almost more than in courses lists, showing our marks in resorts rankings is even more important, because it shows the emphasis in each of them. Of course our marks are subjective, but they do unquestionably demonstrate relative strengths and weaknesses of each resort – allowing you to decide if it's for you or not.

People often ask whether advertising affects positions? No! Never. The editorial and sales teams have scars to prove the many battles...

On a serious note, advertising does not affect positions in any of our rankings. Some resorts which are advertising move down in this list, for example. We might, however, give a resort or course which is advertising a larger image for their entry, but never anything more than that.

Finally, a note about two resorts we didn't consider this year; Lykia Links in Turkey and Donnafugata in Italy. We really like both, but they are currently undergoing management changes and we couldn't be sure how smooth that will be, so reluctantly left them out. We really hope to have them back in the ranking next time – and indeed in relevant rankings in 2021.

THE CATEGORIES EVERY RESORT WAS MARKED IN

Course/s (marked out of 40)

We largely followed our Top 100 Courses ranking as a guide. We awarded extra marks for resorts with more than one course, which gives the option of never having to leave the resort in search of variety. Even so, those with second (and third) courses do, if anything, may not quite get the extra boost they warrant.

Accommodation (out of 20)

Needs little explanation, but worth pointing out two things: range and quantity of accommodation was looked on favourably, rather than just 10 incredible rooms. Given there is a separate category for non-golf amenities, we focused solely on the accommodation rather than facilities.

Setting (out of 20)

We have increased the marks here because we feel a beachside, cliff-edge or lakeside location – to name three – do make a difference to the enjoyment of a resort. Peaceful countryside gets 15s and 16s in this category, but those with the 'wow' factor gain traction with 17s, 18s and even 19s.

Non-golf amenities (out of 20)

We do not want this to be 'Courses with Rooms'. We have a Continental Courses ranking and a lot of those courses have dormie houses, and we do not want to simply replicate that list here. This list is for golf breaks and holidays, with resorts that will appeal to golfers primarily but also non-golfers too.

OUR PANEL



CHRIS BERTRAM

Our Top 100 editor has been to 91 of the 100 and many of the contenders outside it.



KEVIN BROWN

Travel Editor at *Today's Golfer* for more than 25 years with a wealth of experience.



JOERG BERINGER

The German is widely travelled as a guide to golfing groups.



OLLE DAHLGREN

Hailing from Sweden, Olle was a key advisor on the Scandinavian resorts.



PETER GAMMIE

Based in France and especially strong on France and Spain.



BÖRJE AND GUNNEL LAURINSSON

This Swedish husband and wife are remarkably closing in on having visited all 100 resorts.



DIRK SCHAEFER

A German with a voracious appetite for the lesser-travelled road.

• We also consulted with notable figures in the industry including travel operators, resort management groups and travel writers to make sure no stone was left unturned, but their input played no part in the final positions because we want placings to be decided entirely objectively.

CAN I JOIN THE PANEL?

Yes! If you have knowledge of lots of resorts and courses, we'd love to hear from you. Email chris.bertram@bauermedia.co.uk – male, female, low handicap, high handicap... please get in touch if you're well travelled.



European Tour Destinations offers a host of tournament-worthy courses that let you follow in the footsteps of the game's biggest names

An integral part of the European Tour, European Tour Destinations is a network of world-class golf venues located in key strategic golf markets globally.

Each Destination is part of a select number of prestigious golf and real estate venues, with their identity closely aligned to the European Tour, creating a unique partnership which ensures that all members and guests can enjoy the outstanding experience to be expected from venues that are part of the family of the game's foremost organisation.



Quinta do Lago offers luxury villa stays plus stellar courses.



Terre Blanche Hotel Spa & Golf Course is a world-class resort.

European Tour Destinations is accustomed to hosting events across the European Tour schedule, including Ryder Cups, plus Challenge Tour and Legends Tour events. Our venues are tournament worthy courses that are proud to be associated with European Tour Destinations.



A NETWORK OF WORLD CLASS GOLF VENUES

Play. Stay. Live.

<p> Austria Diamond Country Club, Vienna</p> <p> Bulgaria Lighthouse Golf & Spa Resort, Cape Kaliakra Pirin Golf & Country Club, Bansko</p> <p> China Genzon Golf Club, Shenzhen</p> <p> Czech Republic Albatross Golf Resort, Prague</p> <p> Estonia Estonian Golf & Country Club, Tallinn</p> <p> Finland Linna Golf, Hameenlinna</p> <p> France Terre Blanche Hotel Spa Golf Resort, Provence Le Golf National, Paris Sparben Golf Resort, Bordeaux</p>	<p> Georgia Tbilisi Hills, Tbilisi</p> <p> Germany Golf Club St. Leon-Rot, Heidelberg</p> <p> Italy Villaverde Hotel & Resort, Venice Marco Simone Golf & Country Club, Rome Verdura Resort, Sicily</p> <p> Malaysia Saujana Golf & Country Club, Kuala Lumpur</p> <p> Mauritius Constance Belle Mare Plage, Mauritius</p> <p> The Netherlands The Dutch, Amsterdam</p>	<p> Portugal Bom Sucesso, Óbidos Quinta do Lago, Algarve</p> <p> Seychelles Constance Lemuria, Praslin</p> <p> Spain PGA Catalunya Resort, Barcelona Finca Cortesin Hotel Golf & Spa, Marbella Golf Son Muntaner, Mallorca</p> <p> Thailand Black Mountain Golf Club & Resort, Hua Hin</p> <p> United Kingdom Rossington Hall, Yorkshire London Golf Club, London</p> <p> United Arab Emirates Jumeirah Golf Estates, Dubai Emirates Golf Club, Dubai Dubai Creek Golf & Yacht Club, Dubai</p>
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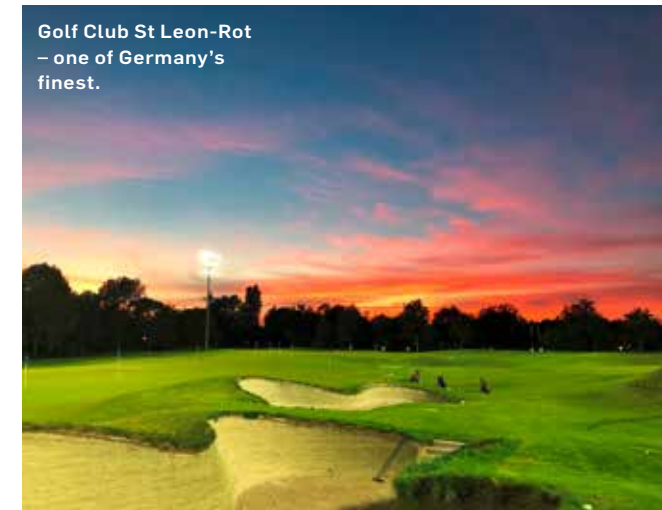
@EuropeanTourETD



Finca Cortesin Hotel Golf & Spa oozes pedigree on and off the course.



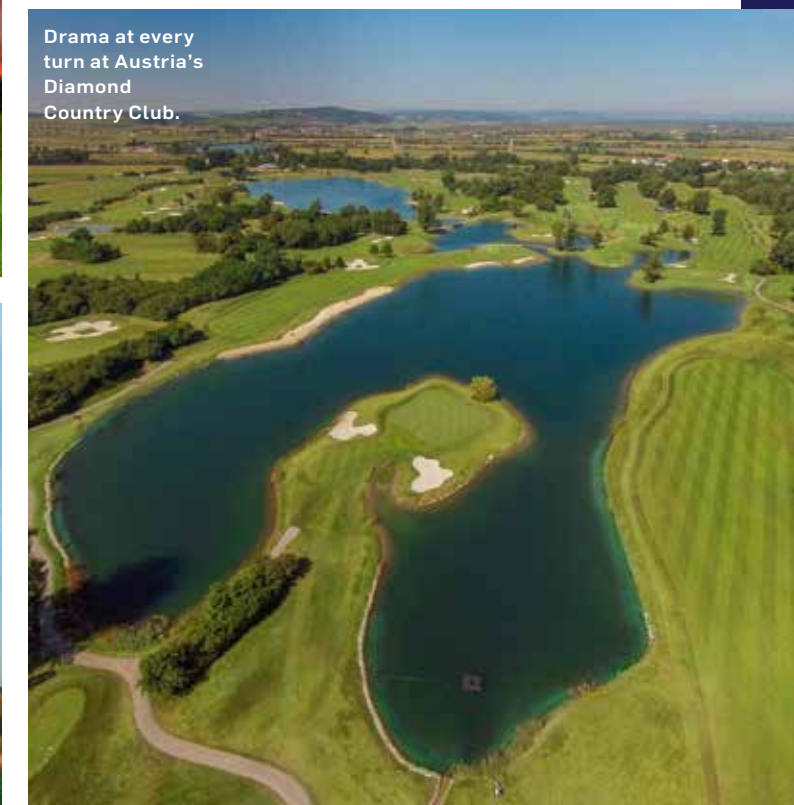
Estonian Golf & Country Club sits on the edge of the Gulf of Finland.



Golf Club St Leon-Rot – one of Germany's finest.



Linna Golf sits in an alluring Scandinavian setting.



Drama at every turn at Austria's Diamond Country Club.



The dramatic Stadium course at PGA Catalunya Resort.



A bar with a view at Lighthouse Golf & Spa Resort.



Le Golf National, host of the 2018 Ryder Cup.



Albatross Golf Resort is Czech Republic's stand-out.

1

TERRE BLANCHE FAYENCE, FRANCE

Courses **34.3** Accommodation **18.7**
Amenities **18.5** Setting **17.6** **TOTAL 89.1**
Getting there Nice airport is 35 minutes away.

The fact Terre Blanche is our No.1 for the third consecutive occasion might suggest a dearth of challengers for the top spot among Continental European resorts. As we feel sure the following pages will amply demonstrate, however, nothing could be further from the truth.

No, the reason for this hat-trick of top spots is simply that this resort in south-east France is the ultimate all-rounder, with no weaknesses across any of our assessment categories.

It has two courses, one that is a fixture in the top 25 of our Continental Top 100, the other that sits prominently in the 'Next 100'.

While these naturally headline the attractions here, they are just the start of them. The courses are enhanced on the golf side by peerless practice facilities that include a rooftop range and a high-tech biomechanics unit devised by the legendary Jean-Jacques Rivet. Trust us, these facilities – under year-round Provençal sunshine – are enough to make even those with minimal enthusiasm for practice spend at least *some* time working on their game.

That said, we don't need much convincing that Terre Blanche's other distractions are even more appealing.

They are centred around a gorgeous five-star hotel with a Michelin star restaurant, a huge spa, beautiful gardens and especially in neat accommodation in the style of a Provençal village, discreetly laid out on a hillside. Terre Blanche does effortless panache extremely well.

Everything is set up for unadulterated enjoyment here. With cars not permitted further than the hotel car park, you hail a buggy to get down to the golf clubhouse (it is actually a lovely walk downhill, but definitely jump on a cart on the way back).

The hotel naturally enjoys a wide range of amenities, as befits accommodation that is frequented by well-heeled holidaymakers, not just golfers. This is far from only a golf resort, even if its golf package is an impressive one.

Le Château is the leading course, a Dave Thomas design skillfully routed over undulating woodland. At very few points over the course of its 7,235 yards does the work of the construction





The terrace... one of the nicer places to find yourself at 7pm on an evening.



One of the best outdoor pools in the Top 100 – we've all been in worse spots.



The spa at Terre Blanche is left in the shade by very few in the list.



The bedrooms are elegant and unfussy, but seriously luxurious.

team come to mind though. Credit to Thomas for assimilating the vast bunkers of white sand, the ravines, the huge greens, the thousands of mature trees and the water features (the man-made creations among the natural landscape) so skillfully. Its sister course, Le Riou, is impressive and enjoyably playable. Both are manicured beautifully.

Part of the European Tour Destinations portfolio, if you analyse the marks (and on pages 48-49 we painstakingly do exactly that) you notice it might not lead any categories, but by no standard does it struggle in any.

Only its setting is not ranked within the top 10 of our four assessment categories, yet we mark it 17.6 out of 20 – testament to the tranquility of a forested location that is naturally scented with native cistus, rosemary, myrtle and lavender.

Instead, Terre Blanche is the great all-rounder. Elegant, sophisticated, opulent and classy, its service standards are without peer. It is especially heavenly for families and couples. And while it is not as lively in the evening as perhaps large groups *might* like, no golfer visiting here will be pleased when it's time to leave.

This French retreat starts a world-class countdown in the top 10, where every resort would be a worthy No.1. But for the third ranking in a row, Terre Blanche has finished atop them all.



Expect a world-class level of conditioning across both courses at Terre Blanche.

2

**COSTA
NAVARINO**
🇬🇷 **MESSINIA,
GREECE**

Courses **32.6** Accommodation **19.2**
Amenities **19.0** Setting **18.2** **TOTAL 89.0**
Getting there Athens is two hours drive,
Kalamata is 30 minutes.

A significant rise for this Greek resort compared to its position in 2018 – and yet we can already say there is every chance it will rise further in 2022... and clearly there is only one place to go. How can we be so sure? Because by then they will have *doubled* the number of courses.

Costa Navarino is adding two courses by Ryder Cup legend Jose Maria Olazabal, and it will make it a four-

course venue that feels like it will make it almost unbeatable in Continental European terms. It will be so good, it would even challenge Gleneagles for the title of Europe's finest... and suggesting that seems almost sacrilegious because the Scottish resort is so good it breaks our marking system.

As it is now, Costa Navarino is plenty good enough to be our No.2.

It already has a course that has been ranked within our Continental Top 100 – the Dunes – and a superb complement, the aesthetically divine Bay.

The Dunes course was designed by

Ross McMurray, of Celtic Manor TwentyTen fame, and mixes fine views with strategic holes. It was created in association with famously demanding German legend Bernhard Langer, so, yes, it is a test.

The Bay was set down by American Robert Trent Jones Jnr and is utterly sensational in terms of views.

I think I counted one hole where Navarino Bay wasn't in view. So, you are pretty much always playing alongside it, towards it or away from it. This is quintessential resort golf at its most breathtaking.

Some will prefer it to the Dunes but safe to say across the two distinctive courses, they have all tastes accounted for. And that's before you factor in the two new ones by Olazabal.

The accommodation is at least as good as the golf and arguably even more impressive. It is unquestionably of the very highest order, with the Westin and the Romanos resort hotels managing the feat of being uber-luxurious while also making you feel completely at ease.

Non-golf facilities range from water slides for the kids to an excellent spa and gym, to myriad restaurants that cater ■



The Bay course offers some stunning views.



Accommodation is uber-luxurious, but makes you feel entirely at ease.

for every taste, from fine dining to kids' favourites to Greek classics. Only Quinta do Lago can match Costa Navarino for dining options in this Top 100.

It's far from the most accessible resort for us, with limited flights from Britain to the convenient Kalamata Airport, but a wonderful way round this is to fly to Athens (lots of direct and cheap flights), spend a night there and then drive down to an incredible resort with a terrific backstory.

Vassilis Constantakopoulos started his working life as a humble deckhand, but ended up owning a container shipping fleet and a property development company.

This proud Greek was captivated by the crescent-shaped Bay of Navarino in the southern Peloponnese and used his financial muscle to make his dream of creating a world-class resort there a reality.

It opened in 2010 and was notable for enhancing the Messinia landscape rather than destroying it – a legacy of Constantakopoulos, known as 'The Captain', being a local man.

So which travelling golfer does Costa Navarino suit most? It's easier to answer who it doesn't suit – no-one. Large groups won't find it raucous at night, yet there is still a great atmosphere in the restaurants and bars. Families and couples will love it, and with the creation of 36 more holes, it might well be the finest resort in Europe. **2**

Romanos offers the ultimate in indulgence.



3

SPAIN'S
NO.1

PGA CATALUNYA

 GIRONA, SPAIN

Courses **34.9** Accommodation **18.6**
Amenities **17.9** Setting **17.0** **TOTAL 88.4**
Getting there Girona airport is 20 minutes away.

Being ranked as the No.3 resort in the whole of Continental Europe is hardly a devastating criticism, but PGA Catalunya, and indeed anyone who has visited it, might quibble with the position. PGA Catalunya certainly would be a very fine and worthy No.1, as would in fact all of the resorts in the top 10. The standard at the top of our ranking is unquestionably exceptional.

The close nature of the marks tells the story, with almost nothing to choose between the very best complexes on the continent.

Whereas in pure courses terms, the best of Britain and Ireland is superior to the best of Continental Europe, when it comes to resorts it is a very balanced comparison.

While the difference between the top continental resorts is negligible there are subtle differences in terms of their emphasis.

PGA Catalunya, for example, is located inland so does not gain marks for a seaside setting as the likes of Costa Navarino, Praia D'El Rey and the Belek contingent do.

And while it has hotels (more of which below) and amenities to match pretty much anywhere, for us, PGA Catalunya's emphasis is golf. It began as a golf resort rather than a resort with golf, and that is still its strength.

This European Tour Destinations member offers one of Europe's leading courses and that is backed up by a very, very good sister course. They are allied to world-class golf facilities including some of the best practice facilities in Europe.

Additionally, there are now also brilliant accommodation options that are light years away from what it used to be able to offer.

So, whereas when we started our Resorts ranking PGA Catalunya was a venue that scored well on its golf offering but which lacked the accommodation and



The Stadium and Tour courses provide a 36-hole experience of the highest order.

Camiral offers a near six-star hotel experience, with the pool perfect by day and the terrace the place to be by night.



Both courses at PGA Catalunya are blessed with thrilling holes where drama and disaster are always companions.



A typical bedroom at Camiral, one of Europe's finest golf hotels.



Both hotels – Camiral and Lavidà – combine luxury and sophistication.

amenities as an all-round resort, the addition of two on-site hotels has changed all that.

Adding Hotel Camiral to the chic villa and apartment rental offering is a huge accommodation advance for the play-and-stay customer.

Camiral is verging on six stars, the interior design having few peers anywhere in Europe – golf resort or otherwise. It was styled by someone with an important-sounding and exotic name, but suffice to say it offers opulence and comfort on a rare level.

Even the golfer without a shred of interest

in style and decor will notice how nicely it has been done. Of more interest might be the to-die-for *entrecôte*, the bewilderingly good wine list, the flawless service and the kid's club (located right next to the pool area, so both parents and kids have the peace of mind).

Lavidà is a less expensive option to stay in, but still modern, fresh and of a high calibre.

Otherwise, much of PGA Catalunya's attractions have been in place for well over a decade. The Stadium and Tour courses combine to provide one of the continent's

finest 36-hole offerings, with the former one of the top 10 in mainland Europe – and close to being a Ryder Cup host – and the latter one of the best No.2 tracks you can find.

Elevation change is a strong feature on both tracks, and is experienced with the opening scene on the Stadium, a tee shot hit downhill to a narrow fairway that turns right to left. Daunting but thrilling, it is one of the better starts to a round in Europe.

The courses have always been strong here, now they are backed up by accommodation and amenities. Yes, the most stellar No.3. **2**



Belek's outstanding course offers a mix of Surrey and Berkshire's best.



Unwind in style in one of the luxurious family rooms.



The breathtaking view of the exterior as daylight fades.

4

BEST IN BELEK

CARYA

BELEK, TURKEY

Courses **34.5** Accommodation **18.6**
Amenities **18.7** Setting **16.6** **TOTAL 88.4**
Getting there Antalya is 30 minutes away.

One of the best No.4s you can ever imagine. Carya would be a very fine No.1. It has two courses within our Continental European Top 100 Courses and a luxury hotel that is less than 10 years old and is packed full of amenities – everything from water slides to a bowling alley and so much in between!

The eponymous on-site course is Belek's outstanding offering, a Turkish track with hints of the heathland classics in Surrey and Berkshire.

We rank it as the finest in Belek (no mean achievement) and one of the top 35 in the whole of Continental Europe.

Designed by Thomson, Perrett and Lobb, it sits among pines and heather and offers a delightful mix of holes.

The resort now also boasts The National in its portfolio, located a couple of minutes away. It is Belek's original course and

remains one of its best, entering our Continental Top 100 in 2017.

The hotel is five-star-plus luxury with decadence and comfort wherever you look, starting with a jaw-dropping lobby area and continuing into spacious, opulent bedrooms with every 'mod con' you can imagine.

There are various pools, one of which is heated to make this a truly year-round resort when you also consider Belek's wonderful climate. Bar staff on rollerskates bring ice-cold beers to your sunbed on order... and, of course, there's no need to even so much as sign for them, because Carya is all-inclusive. Value makes no difference to our ranking, but the value for money offered by Carya is exceptional.

It's a fabulous all-round resort that can entertain golfers of all types; couples, groups and families.



5

THREE COURSES

QUINTA DO LAGO

 **ALMANCIL, PORTUGAL**

Courses **35.8** Accommodation **17.4**
Amenities **17.7** Setting **17.3** **TOTAL 88.2**
Getting there Faro airport is 20 minutes away.

Quinta do Lago has been transformed as a resort entry by the addition of the Magnolia Hotel. Prior to the acquisition of this cute, funky hotel in the heart of the 'super resort', QdL relied on villas for its accommodation because even though there are hotels within the town-like complex, they are not owned

by the same company as the golf courses. Now, the picture is different. And while Magnolia isn't the biggest or most luxurious hotel in the top 10, we absolutely love it! It has a vibrant atmosphere, neat bedrooms, a lively pool area and excellent bar and restaurant. The gym is world-class (international rugby teams train there) and there is also a good but relatively small spa. Other facilities include myriad restaurants – this might be the entry in the list with the best dining options, given the six restaurants

– plus terrific practice facilities in the Paul McGinley Academy. There is also a brand-new sports campus where tennis, cycling, tennis, padel and swimming offer extended facilities that help move QdL into the top five for the first time. And did we mention the three high-calibre courses? Two Continental Top 100 courses and a third 18-holer just five minutes away – Laranjal, a contender for the list. A member of European Tour Destinations, the courses have never been in better condition.



6

PRAIA D'EL REY

 **OBIDOS, PORTUGAL**

Courses **36.9** Accommodation **16.6**
Amenities **16.0** Setting **18.7** **TOTAL 88.2**
Getting there Lisbon is 60 mins away.

Add one of the best courses within this list to one of the most distinctive courses in the list, then combine them with a refurbished Marriott hotel and you have a resort of rare class. With the seaside classic of the same name and outstanding newcomer West Cliffs, this is the highest-class golf offering in the 100. Scores well for location, but brutally loses a little in that category as West Cliffs is a 10-minute drive away.




7

VERDURA

 **SCIACCA, SICILY**

Courses **31.8** Accommodation **18.7**
Amenities **18.2** Setting **19.2** **TOTAL 87.9**
Getting there Palermo is 50 minutes away.

Seventh is very much an anomaly in our eyes, because Verdura would ordinarily be in the top three. However, its courses were ravaged by a freak storm last year and won't be back to full capacity 'til next year after a revision by Kyle Phillips. We were tempted to rank it as the resort we know – two Phillips seaside courses of equal class and a chic Rocco Forte Hotel with bags of leisure facilities, plus a peerless beachside setting. But for a good deal of this ranking's two-year shelf life, that won't be the case. Trust us, though, it is still utterly amazing. 

THE TOP 10 RESORTS FOR... **FEMALE GROUPS**

1 Verdura
The scenery, spa, beach, and Insta-worthy golf.

2 Peralada
There's something called a 'Wine Spa'.

3 Terre Blanche
A heavenly pool plus immaculate courses.

4 Evian
Hosts a ladies Major, plus amazing location.

5 Bad Ragaz
The best wellness facilities in the list.

6 Palazzo Arzaga
Elegant, characterful rooms, fun course.

7 Penha Longa
The Ritz Carlton hotel. A course of real drama.

8 Argentario
Achingly stylish hotel and a playable course.

9 Abama
Tricky but gorgeous course, special hotel.

10 St Endreol
Ticks all the boxes on and off the course.



The outdoor pool at Argentario.

THE TOP 10 RESORTS FOR... FAMILIES

1 Pine Cliffs

Every amenity you can ever imagine wanting.

2 Gloria

Best waterpark in the list, playable courses.

3 Costa Navarino

Great restaurant, pool and amenities choices.

4 PGA Catalunya

Choice of hotels to suit. Fun place to practise.

5 Quinta da Marinha

Scenic course. Hotel is packed full of facilities.

6 Son Antem

Relaxed golf, hotel or villa choice, amenities.

7 Penina

The list's best kids' club & a fun short course.

8 Aphrodite Hills

Year-round weather for pool. Breathtaking golf.

9 Carya

Another awesome kids club & mini water park.

10 Lighthouse

Lots of facilities, brilliant pool, relaxed golf.



The hotel pool at Quinta da Marinha.

8

THREE HOTELS

GLORIA BELEK, TURKEY

Courses **30.9** Accommodation **18.4**
Amenities **19.3** Setting **16.9** **TOTAL 85.5**
Getting there Antalya is 30 mins away.

With three hotels and three courses, Gloria is one of the biggest – and finest – golf resorts in Europe.

None of the courses is in the Continental Top 100, but both the New and the Old are always strong contenders for it and anyone who

has played them would not raise an eyebrow if either of them were.

Both are in the 'Next 100', so you get the idea of how good they are.

They are also incredibly evenly matched... it is a hard but happy task to decide which impresses more.

Then you have three awesome, amenity-packed hotels – Serenity, Verde and Golf – which all have slightly different emphases, so you can find the perfect one for you.

Their names give a strong hint as to what they all offer, but even if you

go for Serenity or Verde, be assured the three courses are all still on hand for you. All are within a couple of minutes' drive of the golf clubhouse.

The hotels are 'typical Belek'... which is extremely high praise; terrific facilities, a wide choice of restaurants and high-class bedrooms. There's now even an elite-level sports centre, used by Turkey's football team.

The amenities include the best on-site water park in Belek – one of the reasons we think this is an amazing resort for families.



GOLF WORLD
TOP 100



9 DOM PEDRO

VILAMOURA, PORTUGAL

Courses **34.3** Accommodation **18.3**
Amenities **16.8** Setting **16.0** **TOTAL 85.4**
Getting there Faro airport is 25 minutes away.

Five courses plus three four-star hotels: Dom Pedro is clearly comprehensive! It has so many rooms and amenities across the Vilamoura, Portobelo and Marina hotels, while the Old is the pick of the 90 holes. Loses marks for being relatively spread out but none of the hotel-course trips is onerous.



10 GOLF DU MEDOC

BORDEAUX, FRANCE

Courses **36.4** Accommodation **16.5**
Amenities **13.9** Setting **17.7** **TOTAL 84.5**
Getting there Bordeaux airport is 25 mins away.

The connoisseur's choice. GdM has a course designed by Bill Coore and another by his associate, Rod Whitman; both are in our Continental Top 100. They are heathland-woodlands with hints of Walton Heath. Plus a neat hotel with superb food and wine. If non-golf options are not key, this is heaven.



11 FINCA CORTESIN

CASARES, SPAIN

Course **31.8** Accommodation **19.5**
Amenities **15.2** Setting **17.9** **TOTAL 84.4**
Getting there Fly into Gibraltar or Malaga.

If you don't mind only playing one course on your trip, this should be near the top of your list. That Finca ranks so highly despite having 'only' one course shows how highly we rate the all-round resort. The hotel is as good as anything here, the service peerless and the course is in impeccable condition. **2**



f LasColinasGolf @lascolinagolf @lascolinagolf

Las Colinas Golf & Country Club

Add one of Europe's Top 100 golf courses to stylish accommodation and numerous amenities and you have a resort that has something for everyone

Las Colinas is consistently ranked among the Top 100 courses in Europe.

Only a 40-minute drive from both Alicante and Murcia International airports, this unique, award-winning Spanish resort boasts a stunning par-71, 18-hole golf course, designed by renowned golf course architect Cabell Robinson.

The challenging course runs seamlessly between the hills and adapts to the unusual

lie of the land, with perfectly manicured fairways, pristine putting surfaces and breathtaking views of the Mediterranean.

For those looking to experience something a little bit different during their round, golfers have the option of 'surfing' through nine or 18 holes using Golf Boards. Guests can also brush up on their skills at the Las Colinas Golf Academy, which includes a

world-class conditioned short-game facility designed by the Spanish legend Miguel Ángel Jiménez.

Spacious grass playing areas, an immaculate green and two large practice bunkers provide the perfect facilities for golfers to practise their full short-game repertoire over a 75-yard distance.

Las Colinas is not only about first-class golf; it offers something for the whole family.

The Sports and Health Club only strengthens its offering to guests. It includes a state-of-the-art gymnasium, massage and wellness area, a swimming pool and sunbathing area and the multi-sports courts, where the brand new Adriano Tavelli's Tennis and Padel Academy is located.

The academy offers a variety of programmes that adapt to any game play and level, ranging from beginners' lessons to advanced programmes.

Explore the extraordinary beauty of the surrounding area on the 3km nature trail or



Enjoy fine Italian dining at il Palco.

5km mountain bike circuit. Those with a keen eye may also spot one of the many species of birds inhabiting the area.

A Spanish holiday would not be complete without the option to relax and soak up the sunshine. The private infinity pool and restaurant at Las Colinas Beach Club provide the perfect private hideaway, with idyllic views over the Mediterranean Sea, La Glea Beach and the quaint village of Campoamor.

The calm waters are also ideal for sailing, windsurfing, canoeing and water-skiing.



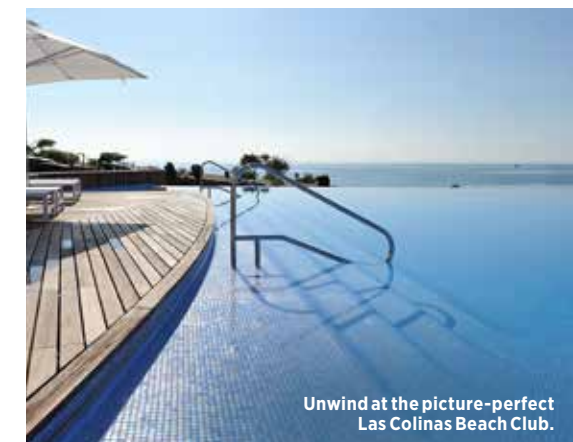
Señor Jiménez will sharpen your short game.

The leisure facilities also feature a new world-class Italian restaurant, il Palco, located near the clubhouse. Il Palco serves a menu based on the essence of traditional Italian cuisine. The celebrated Italian chef Fabio Morisi has carefully designed the menu to bring creative and authentic recipes to the table that will delight the most demanding palates.

Il Palco restaurant has expanded the world-class dining options available at Las Colinas; the stylish international UNiK



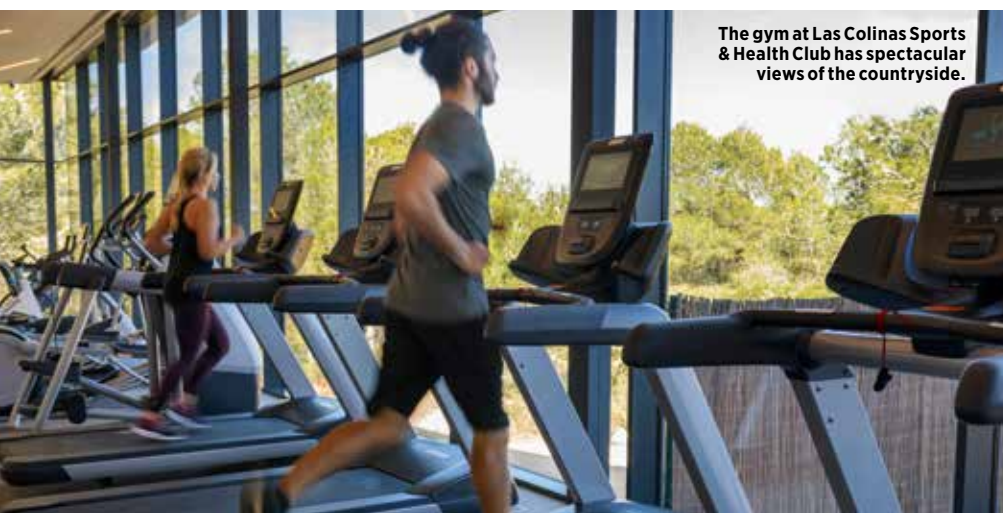
Stay active at the world-class Las Colinas Sports & Health Club.



Unwind at the picture-perfect Las Colinas Beach Club.



The ultimate in luxury – a villa with private pool.



The gym at Las Colinas Sports & Health Club has spectacular views of the countryside.

Café offers spectacular views over the 18th green whilst Enso Sushibar is renowned in the area for serving the highest quality sashimi and sushi that is freshly prepared and cooked live in front of guests.

Las Colinas offers a world of different accommodation choices for guests – from modern two- or three-bedroom apartments with access to private gardens and swimming pools, to luxurious three- or four-bedroom villas.

Whether it's a long weekend, family holiday or group trip, Las Colinas Golf & Country Club has something for everyone and is dedicated to offering a world apart experience to all of their guests.

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13

HIGH
RISER

LA CALA

 **MARBELLA, SPAIN**

Courses **33.0** Accommodation **16.8**
Amenities **18.1** Setting **16.4** **TOTAL 84.3**
Getting there Marbella airport is 25 mins away.

This represents a huge leap up the list from its 2018 position. How can that happen? Two reasons: firstly, we made an error with where it was ranked two years ago, mainly on the back of it not being visited by sufficient numbers on the panel in recent times; but also, secondly, because La Cala has indubitably got significantly better under new owners since then – to the point where it is now comfortably one of Europe's top 20.

That has manifested itself firstly in a thorough renovation of the courses. None are Continental Top 100 entrants, but Europa has the potential to nudge close to the fringes. Nevertheless, it's true there isn't a jewel in La Cala's crown... but what it does have are 54 evenly-balanced holes.

The Asia might be the 'third' course, but it is in our Spanish Top 70, so it's the real

deal, rest assured. While Europa and America are impossible to split in terms of quality, crucially they are different in terms of character. The America offers thrilling elevated tee shots while the Europa a more strategic, nuanced examination.


So a key appeal of La Cala is in the strength in depth to its courses. You can hunker down here for five days and never yearn to leave for a change of scene.

La Cala has also improved off the course. The hotel is cosy and neat, with all the bedrooms arranged around the pool so you are never more than two minutes from your lounge or room. There are three restaurants, with recently opened La Bodega offering terrific tapas. There is an award-winning spa (and yes, they all say that, but this one really is good – and huge!), plus tennis courts and a gym.

For groups of golf-mad holidaymakers, it's perfect. For couples, it offers something for both, if one is a non-golfer, and the relaxed atmosphere in the evening is heavenly.



12 ANTALYA GC

 **BELEK, TURKEY**

Courses **33.5** Accommodation **17.6**
Amenities **17.5** Setting **15.8** **TOTAL 84.4**
Getting there Antalya airport is 30 mins away.

You get two fine courses of differing appeal at Antalya. One is a European Tour venue – the Sultan – while the other is fun and very playable, the Pasha. They are both in immaculate condition and complemented by a choice of two excellent hotels – the Sirene and the uber-luxurious Kempinski are both on the doorstep.



14 LA MANGA CLUB

 **MURCIA, SPAIN**

Courses **31.5** Accommodation **17.4**
Amenities **19.4** Setting **16.0** **TOTAL 84.3**
Getting there Murcia airport is 35 mins away.

Three courses – with the West the pick – and accommodation that ranges from the large hotel to townhouses plus sports heaven, with football, tennis, horse riding, pools, a new gym and even cricket backing up 54 holes. The panel felt a little investment, especially to the hotel, would see it reclaim its position in the top 10.



15 TROIA

 **LISBON, PORTUGAL**

Course **33.1** Accommodation **17.1**
Amenities **16.0** Setting **17.9** **TOTAL 84.1**
Getting there Lisbon airport is 80 mins away.

A one-course resort among all these multi-course complexes tells you how highly we rate Troia. The course is fabulous – witness its position in the top 10 of our Continental courses list. It's a Robert Trent Jones masterpiece by the seaside with springy turf, sea views and atmospheric pines. The hotel has lots of amenities. Super setting.



16 LE TOUQUET

 **LE TOUQUET, FRANCE**

Courses **34.3** Accommodation **17.9**
Amenities **12.9** Setting **17.9** **TOTAL 83.0**
Getting there An hour's drive south of Calais.

The highest-ever position for this Opal Coast resort after serious investment, most recently to the hotel. Le Manoir was always characterful and charming, but now all the pedigree, elegance and effortless allure has been restored. Frank Pont's restoration of Harry Colt's seaside classic La Mer is terrific, and there is another 18-holer, too.



17 MONTGOMERIE MAXX ROYALE

 **BELEK, TURKEY**

Course **29.8** Accommodation **18.3**
Amenities **17.9** Setting **16.6** **TOTAL 82.6**
Getting there Antalya airport is 30 mins away.

Typical Belek decadence off the course in a hotel that might even top the whole lot of them; Maxx Royale is glitz, sparkle and opulence writ large. The very solid Tour-calibre course by European Golf Design and Colin Montgomerie is expertly manicured and complements things very nicely.



18 EL SALER

 **VALENCIA, SPAIN**

Course **33.0** Accommodation **15.3**
Amenities **16.0** Setting **17.9** **TOTAL 82.2**
Getting there Valencia airport is 20 mins away.

The course is king here. El Saler by Javier Arana enjoys a potent mix of a seaside setting with cerebral holes further inland among woodland. It is a course good enough for our Continental top 10. The Parador hotel that overlooks the 9th (pictured) and 18th is really nice and this is a very fine one-course venue.

HOW TO SAVE MONEY (ON BORING STUFF)

Never get ripped off again – or lose your temper – with our indispensable guide to car hire, airport parking, club carriage and insurance

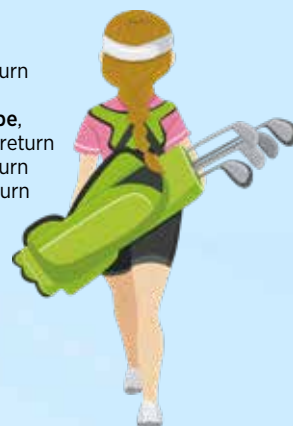
None of us mind spending cash on gorgeous courses or amazing hotels. They give us memories that last a lifetime. But no-one ever reflects back on that car they hired or the place they parked their car at the airport – unless that sort of thing goes badly. It's not glamorous or exciting stuff, but is important. To save you the boring research, we've done the hard yards to bring you the lowdown on the nitty gritty of a golf break. It will help ensure you spend your cash on the things you get pleasure from – not be red-faced at the car hire desk when you're slapped with a ludicrous €40 'out of hours' fee, or miss your flight because the transfer to the airport took nearly an hour. It's boring, but it could save you hassle on your long-anticipated golf break... as well as money.

Take your own clubs vs hiring a set there
It's a tricky one – but with today's steep airline golf clubs carriage costs (see right), it's no wonder increasing numbers of golfers are booking rental equipment – primarily with Clubstohire, who operate at 25 locations worldwide including nine in Spain. The advantages of hiring clubs out there are...

- There's no risk of your own clubs being broken or going missing.
- You have the convenience of not dragging your clubs around with you, so can travel with a (probably free) small carry-on bag.
- With hire clubs available from £40 per set per week, it's usually significantly cheaper than most of the airline charges.
- It presents a very good opportunity to try out the latest sets on the market...

But, there are no clubs like your own clubs and if you're a keen golfer playing several rounds in gorgeous weather, you'll probably prefer your own bats. This is what you can expect to pay to take your own clubs overseas...

- TUI £45 return
- Ryanair £70 return
- Jet2 £74 return
- Aer Lingus, Flybe, SAS, Finnair £80 return
- easyJet £84 return
- Vueling £90 return
- Eurowing £100 return
- Virgin Atlantic, British Airways £140 return
- Lufthansa £160 return



Car hire – 10 things you need to know

Hiring a car can be a key part of a golf holiday. Here's how to ensure there are no sickening extra costs lurking around the corner...

Check the car Always thoroughly check the car before you accept delivery or drive away. Any damage should be noted on the pre-rental condition report – if it's not, you might find repair fees are charged for damage you may not have caused. Take photos of all sides of the car for your records. Then check it again. Companies are looking for you to miss things.

Read the small print Again, some companies want to trip you up – like the time we picked up a car in Majorca at 10.05pm at night and were charged an 'out of hours' fee...

Excess Check the excess deposit – the maximum amount you could be liable for should you damage the car – and expect an excess of between £800-£2,000 depending on the class of car. Excess insurance options are available.

Fuel policy Beware of some smaller rental agents offering 'pre-paid' or 'return empty' policies. There is no need to refuel before returning the car, but there is no refund for remaining fuel and you'll pay for the full tank, often at an inflated price, whether you use it all or not.

One-way fees If you're returning the car to a different location from where you collected, you will likely face a 'one-way fee'. Some car rental

companies include this in their overall fee (such as Rhinocarhire.com), but some apply an additional fee as an 'extra' – and it can be a lot. **Upgrades** Rental agents will often suggest an upgrade on arrival, but it'll likely come at a cost so always check before you accept. That said, it never hurts to ask for a 'free' upgrade... if the rental agent has lots of cars in a certain category but few in the category you've initially chosen, they may offer a free upgrade.

Sat Nav You can probably get away without one as it can add to the cost and some higher spec rental cars come equipped with Sat Nav as standard anyway, so you might want to consider using a properly positioned/fitted phone navigation app instead.

Be punctual If you're late returning the car, you could end up paying for an extra day's rental. Most agents offer a 'grace' period of up to 30 minutes, but that's not always the case.

Slow down! Getting a speeding fine is worse with a hire car – you have to pay an admin fee to them on top of the fine. It is a very costly scenario, so watch your speed.

Hire insurance We use this every year – and on the one occasion we needed to claim, the process wasn't totally agonising.

Save money on airport parking

It's where that eagerly-anticipated golf holiday begins... and ends. So it's important you get it right... and don't spend unnecessary money.

■ For the most affordable option, pre-book Park & Ride parking – one week costs from around £50. But, on these budget options be aware of the transfer times and how often they operate. If a transfer takes 15 minutes and they come along every 30 minutes, if you just miss one you have suddenly added on three-quarters of an hour to your journey... and that could be a flight-missing length of time.

■ To avoid any potential hassle or aggravation, book a meet-and-greet service. Obviously you'll pay extra, but do it once and you might never return to any other airport parking again!

■ Combine an overnight stay at an airport hotel with parking – usually, with APH's Hotel and Parking packages, combining a room with a car park space costs just a few pounds more than parking alone.

■ At the moment, book a flexible option in case plans change – this has already saved us £60 this autumn, in return for a £1.99 flexi-ticket.

■ Finally, do take note of exactly where you've parked (we've now



OUR TOP FIVE TRAVEL TIPS (based on experience!)

- 1 Insurance is a painful little expense, but we think it is necessary. Travel insurance is a must and we recommend car hire insurance too. Golf Care are specialists in all things golf insurance.
- 2 If you and a friend buy a pencil bag each you can squeeze two sets of clubs into one travel bag. Plus shoes. And balls – but, note well, they are the heavy items!
- 3 Book with ATOL-bonded companies – a lot of non-bonded companies are cropping up, especially in Turkey.
- 4 If going with a golf tour operator, such as Golf Escapes, don't book flights until the accommodation is totally guaranteed.
- 5 Manage your money abroad with free, easy-to-use Revolut cards – revolut.com.

resorted to taking photographic evidence) – because there is nothing worse on your return than stumbling around in the dark looking for a car among thousands of others. ■

22

VILLA PADIERNA

 **MARBELLA, SPAIN**

Courses **28.9** Accommodation **19.2**
Amenities **17.3** Setting **16.8** **TOTAL 82.2**
Getting there Malaga is an hour away.

The highest entry you've never heard of? It's not especially well known to the British market, but, trust us, it deserves this slot – at least. It has three courses, with the Flamingos and Alferini backed up by the short Tramores, while the hotel has very few peers in this ranking – it's that good.



19 REAL CLUB EL PRAT

 **BARCELONA, SPAIN**

Courses **33.5** Accommodation **18.0**
Amenities **14.3** Setting **16.4** **TOTAL 82.2**
Getting there Barcelona airport is 35 mins away.

With five loops of nine and an excellent hotel on site, El Prat gets into the top 20 with plenty to spare. It enjoys a tranquil location in which to play the loops of stringent Greg Norman-designed holes. Perfect for those who want golf, golf and more golf, although the hotel is, of course, a very pleasant spot in which to unwind.



20 OITAVOS DUNES

 **LISBON, PORTUGAL**

Course **31.9** Accommodation **17.6**
Amenities **14.7** Setting **18.0** **TOTAL 82.2**
Getting there Lisbon airport is 35 mins away.

A Continental Top 100 (usually in the top 25) course with fabulous Atlantic views are the highlight of this entry. But the hotel is no letdown, being uber-minimalist in style and just a few steps from the 18th green. The setting, on the outskirts of the gorgeous coastal resort town of Cascais, is a boon.



21 LE GOLF NATIONAL

 **PARIS, FRANCE**

Courses **32.8** Accommodation **17.2**
Amenities **15.9** Setting **16.3** **TOTAL 82.2**
Getting there Paris CDG Airport is an hour away.

The main course you know all about, thanks to numerous French Opens and the victorious Ryder Cup of 2018. But did you know there is also a second course to the headline-grabbing Albatross? The Eagle isn't quite so dramatic but is sufficiently solid, and along with the on-site hotel it gets Le Golf National to the fringe of the top 20.

THE TOP10 RESORTS FOR... VALUE

1 Korineum

All-inclusive luxury for a price that looks B&B.

2 Penati

Top 100-calibre courses for 'hidden gem' prices.

3 Modry Las

Gary Player course in top nick and neat chalets.

4 Aroeira

Two courses, one in Top 100. Brand-new hotel.

5 Pirin

Woosnam course. High-end hotel. And scenic.

6 Grado

Seaside course and stay in chalets or marina flats.

7 Morgado

Two courses and delightful apartments.

8 Lighthouse

Cliff views, five-star hotel, amazing value.

9 Zala Springs

Super-chic hotel and a Trent Jones layout.

10 BlackSeaRama

Villa accommodation and a cliff-edge track.



Korineum offers affordable all-inclusive.

23

CORNELIA

 **BELEK, TURKEY**

Courses **31.5** Accommodation **17.8**
Amenities **16.7** Setting **16.2** **TOTAL 82.2**
Getting there Antalya is 30 mins away.

That Cornelia is only just inside the top 25 shows how ludicrously good the top end of the list is. It has Nick Faldo-designed loops of nine that are Top 100 calibre, as well as 'standard' Belek luxury in the accommodation and its amenities. It ticks all the boxes.




24

PENHA LONGA

 **LISBON, PORTUGAL**

Courses **31.9** Accommodation **18.0**
Amenities **16.0** Setting **16.3** **TOTAL 82.2**
Getting there Lisbon airport is 30 mins away.

A Kyle Phillips-designed course (under the Robert Trent Jones banner) that does a brilliant job of tackling significant elevation changes – and that means there is almost constant drama and excitement. The on-site hotel is arguably even better, offering a chic look and terrific amenities. Brilliant for families, perhaps even better for couples. 



26 EVIAN

🇫🇷 GENEVA, FRANCE

Course **29.4** Accommodation **18.2**
Amenities **16.5** Setting **18.0** **TOTAL 82.1**
Getting there Geneva airport is 30 mins away.

A top-25 slot for this elegant French resort, headlined by a renovated 'Next 100' course, which is the host of a ladies' Major, and complemented by superb practice facilities. There is a choice of hotels – all exquisite – and the location overlooking Lake Geneva is as good in reality as it sounds on paper.



27 SOTOGRANDE

🇪🇸 SOTOGRANDE, SPAIN

Courses **32.7** Accommodation **16.2**
Amenities **17.4** Setting **15.8** **TOTAL 82.1**
Getting there Fly into Gibraltar or Marbella.

Combining Top 100-ranked course La Reserva with the nearby hotel formerly known as Almenara is one of golf's better collaborations. La Reserva is in its best ever condition (and has luxury villas and its own on-site facilities) while the hotel – which has its own golf too – is now high calibre.



28 AMENDOEIRA

🇵🇹 ALCANTARILHA, PORTUGAL

Courses **33.1** Accommodation **17.7**
Amenities **14.5** Setting **16.8** **TOTAL 82.1**
Getting there Faro airport is 55 mins away.

A significant rise for this Algarve resort in the hills above charming Armacao de Pera. It has a Top 100 course in the Faldo, which is complemented by the O'Connor – and they are so close in quality that some prefer the latter. The accommodation is in the form of apartments and luxury villas.

MORE ROOMS

25

MONTE REI

🇵🇹 TAVIRA, PORTUGAL

Course **33.4** Accommodation **17.9**
Amenities **13.3** Setting **17.5** **TOTAL 82.1**
Getting there Faro airport is 50 minutes away.

The quality of Monte Rei's course has never been in doubt and even with limited accommodation and facilities it got in our Resorts ranking from day one. However, with 142 rooms available on-resort from 2021, and with the restaurant Michelin-starred, this high-end resort had to climb. The ultimate in quality, service and a feeling of being somewhere very special. A bucket-list destination.



29 SALOBRE

🇪🇸 GRAN CANARIA, SPAIN

Courses **32.0** Accommodation **15.7**
Amenities **16.4** Setting **17.9** **TOTAL 82.0**
Getting there G Canaria airport 25 mins away.

Salobre thoroughly deserves its position inside the top 30. For a start, there is a fabulous desert-style setting that is tranquil and distinctive. Then you add in two exciting courses, with the Old being very good and the New verging on our Continental Top 100. Plus an excellent hotel.



30 ROYAL OBIDOS

🇵🇹 OBIDOS, PORTUGAL

Course **31.0** Accommodation **17.7**
Amenities **15.8** Setting **17.5** **TOTAL 82.0**
Getting there Lisbon airport is an hour away.

There's lots to like about Obidos' Seve-designed course, a fixture in our Continental Top 100 since it opened in 2012. The stylish, modern hotel set into the hill overlooking the course does not disappoint either. Investment is being made in this resort close to Obidos on Lisbon's Silver Coast to make it all even better.



31 SUENO

🇹🇷 BELEK, TURKEY

Courses **31.0** Accommodation **18.0**
Amenities **17.2** Setting **15.8** **TOTAL 82.0**
Getting there Antalya is 30 minutes away.

Two courses, the Pines and Dunes, that are a lot better than just 'resort golf'. The Dunes is regarded as better, but there is little between them – so if you aren't desperate for a Top 100-ranked course, this is a super option. Trust us, the courses are good. And it's a hotel in Belek, so obviously awesome.



32 VIDAGO PALACE

🇵🇹 PORTO, PORTUGAL

Course **29.4** Accommodation **18.5**
Amenities **16.6** Setting **16.9** **TOTAL 81.4**
Getting there Porto airport is 1hr 20 mins away.

The golf is key for us all, but we have to start by talking about this hotel. It is breathtaking. If you prefer character and pedigree over glitz and dazzle, this is for you. Strolling around the grounds of this mini Gleneagles is a treat. The course mixes historic woodland and modern parkland.



33 ARABELLA

🇪🇸 PALMA, MAJORCA

Courses **30.1** Accommodation **17.8**
Amenities **16.8** Setting **16.4** **TOTAL 81.1**
Getting there Palma airport is 20 minutes away.

Arabella is one of the most comprehensive resorts in this whole list – which is saying something. So if you like checking in and not leaving your resort 'til it's time for your flight, consider this. Three 18-hole courses – all solid if not spectacular – and two excellent hotels make this a great option. **2**

SO WHAT MAKES A GOOD GOLF RESORT?

This much-debated question – and much more – is answered by three golf travel industry experts

There are hundreds of golf resorts across Europe, most trying to entice UK golfers to spend money with them. So how do you choose one over the other? The answer is different for everyone – some of us want value, some of us want quality, most of us want value and quality, along with good courses, good accommodation, good food, things to do in the evening, things to do when not playing golf,

things to do for non-golfing partners, or families... This list of requirements is long – but there are boxes that need ticking for a majority of visitors. To find out what they might be, we spoke to three golf travel titans – Ian Knox of European Tour Destinations, Jon Ruben of Golf Escapes and writer and photographer Charles Briscoe-Knight. Their knowledge and insight may well help you find your next perfect break.



Praia D'El Rey, Portugal.



Quinta do Lago (South), Portugal.



The beach at Verdura, Sicily.



Verdura, Sicily.

What is the single most important aspect of a good golf resort?

IK The culture of the staff. Obviously the golf course and accommodation need to be at a certain level, but it is the quality and interaction with the staff that will often leave the most lasting impression on guests.

JR Quality and playability of the golf course(s).

CBK Location, location, location... oh and good dining!

Should resort courses be designed and presented in a more forgiving and playable way than members' courses?

IK Resort courses do need to reflect the wide variety, nature and standards of the golfers playing them. For example, US Open rough isn't going to make it a fun experience for anyone bar the sadist, but likewise the quality of design layout, coupled with a selection of tee options should be strong enough to challenge all levels of players.

JR No. Although there is an argument for offering a mix of holes if there is only one course at the resort.

CBK No. Lessening the course reduces the

experience – but it must have a degree of forgiveness so we don't have four- or even five-hour rounds.

What is the worst mistake you see golf resorts making?

IK Taking the customer for granted. There is, as this list proves, a wealth of excellent resorts to choose from and customers will choose to return to those that made them feel welcomed as individuals. They'll return to those that reacted to their specific needs rather than just treating them as any other guest.

JR Trying to squeeze too many players on the course in peak season. It creates slow play.

CBK I have to agree. Packing in tee times and thus making for slow play.

Which resort has improved most in the past five years?

IK Quinta do Lago has invested heavily in both the North and now South courses as well as focusing on many lifestyle and dining features in the resort, making it one of the premium resorts in not only Europe but also world golf.

JR Fairplay Golf Resort in Cadiz Province, Spain. The hotel and course closed for a few years and were completely renovated. The changes they've made are amazing.

CBK In all of Europe, Adare Manor.

Can you give examples of the best resorts for the following: couples; families; male groups; female group?

IK Finca Cortesin for couples, Verdura for families and PGA Catalunya for groups.

JR Couples: Costa Navarino in Greece. Families: Monte Rei in the Algarve. Male groups: La Manga Club in Murcia. Female groups: La Cala in Costa del Sol.

CBK In order, Four Seasons Terre Blanche, Gleneagles, Quinta da Marinha, Quinta do Lago.

Name your favourite resort(s) for its/their breadth of golf courses, and what do you like most about them?

IK The Algarve and Turkey always feature highly, but Bulgaria is also well worth a look. Lighthouse Resort on the Cape Kaliakra coast has its own 18 holes that has hosted a Senior Classic, in addition to the breathtaking Thracian

Cliffs and BlackSeaRama courses on its doorstep. Lighthouse has an excellent hotel to use as a base for the trip.

JR PGA Catalunya in Costa Brava for the two superb courses on site, and they have a five- and three-star hotel on site to cater for different budgets. The new Aroeira Lisbon Hotel has two excellent courses on site and is ultra modern. Praia D'El Rey now has two courses with West Cliffs opening. El Rompido has two very playable courses on site and amazing value golf packages.

CBK Turnberry. But on mainland Europe, Terre Blanche takes some beating with its views and topography.

Name your favourite resort(s) for setting, and what do you like most about them?

IK Linna in Finland winds its way through a stunning pine and birch forest.

JR La Cala is hard to beat – surrounded by mountains but just 10 minutes to the beach and nightlife of the Costa del Sol. Verdura in Sicily is in a beautiful spot. Guadalmina on the Costa del Sol is right on the beach and a short hop to Puerto Banus for the party animals, Marbella

for culture and gastronomy, and the mountains for nature-lovers.

CBK Arzaga, Lombardy, Italy.

Name your favourite resort(s) for accommodation, and what do you like most about them?

IK Terre Blanche with its selection of luxury suites and villas is a veritable golfing oasis in the south of France.

JR Las Madrigueras in Tenerife has beautiful guest rooms. Bom Sucesso north of Lisbon has fantastic villa accommodation.

CBK Kulm Hotel, St. Moritz is easily the best hotel/venue in Europe.

Which golf resort do you think deserves a higher profile and why?

IK Well that depends where you've ranked them! What number is Arabella in Mallorca, for example? Think it was 28 last time around so if it is still around that I'd pick that one and say it has three courses, excellent quality in its hotels and a great location.

JR Some of the Italian resorts like Villaverde, Acaya and Il Picciolo are underrated and

overlooked as they are off the beaten track. All exude quality in accommodations and golf.

CBK Rosapenna. Two great golf courses, with a wonderful beach and view.

Which golf resort is top of your wish list?

IK Lofoten Links in Norway and Costa Navarino in Greece are two that I'd really like to get to.

JR I haven't visited some of the better French resorts like Deauville, Terre Blanche and Les Bordes. But if you are asking where I'd go back to tomorrow, probably Fairplay Golf Resort.

CBK Sperone, Corsica.

About our experts

- Ian Knox is the Head of Operations of European Tour Destinations, a network of world class venues which have a close association with the European Tour.
- Jon Ruben runs Golf Escapes, one of Europe's leading golf travel companies.
- Charles is one of the most experienced travel writers & photographers in Europe.



**TOTAL
REFURB**

35

EMPORDA

**TORROELLA,
CATALONIA**

Courses **32.0** Accommodation **17.6**
Amenities **16.5** Setting **14.9** **TOTAL 81.0**
Getting there Girona is 40 minutes away.

A significant rise for Emporda, but likely to be only the first – because we admit we haven't yet fully experienced the revamped resort.

It has only just reopened owing to Covid-19, during which time an extensive overhaul was undertaken on and off the course.

Under new owners and new management, both courses as well as the hotel are benefiting from significant investment.

The hotel reopened after a six-month overhaul in what was the first part of a multi-million pound programme of improvements.

The swish, refurbished accommodation boasts stylish bedrooms overlooking the courses as well as a new outdoor saltwater pool, gym, spa and numerous other activities ranging from cycling to water sports.

The hotel building has been given a makeover, but still sits nicely in its tranquil environment; this is not a garish building sticking out like a sore thumb among the rolling, wooded land of this leafy part of Catalonia.

The Forest and Links courses are similarly being improved, both

were in our Spanish Top 70 last month and both are by architect Robert von Hagge. The renovations include the reconstruction of all bunkers using the Better Billy Bunker method, a comprehensive tree clearance programme, and new greenkeeping equipment to improve the conditioning.

The Forest is, as its name partly suggests, routed through umbrella pines, its land varying from the gentle ripples to more dramatic mounds. The Links is even better, set down on gorgeous undulating land with water in play at times.



34 BUDERSAND

SYLT, GERMANY

Course **32.9** Accommodation **17.5**
Amenities **12.8** Setting **17.9** **TOTAL 81.1**
Getting there Fly to Sylt airport from Germany, or get to the island via ferry/Sylt Shuttle.

A genuine links laid out on the remote island of Sylt that is ranked inside our top 30, plus a minimalist hotel. The hotel lacks non-golf facilities, hence this slot, but for connoisseurs it is idyllic and worth the multi-stop journey to get there.



37 PENINA

PORTIMAO, PORTUGAL

Course **27.7** Accommodation **18.2**
Amenities **18.5** Setting **16.4** **TOTAL 80.8**
Getting there Faro is 45 minutes away.

You get the chance to play the original course in the Algarve here so, relatively speaking, a bit of history. The Henry Cotton design among mature woodland still has much to commend it. The excellent, large hotel is arguably even better with – as the marks suggest – plenty for the non-golfer.



39 QUINTA DA RIA

TAVIRA, PORTUGAL

Courses **31.6** Accommodation **16.3**
Amenities **14.9** Setting **18.0** **TOTAL 80.8**
Getting there Faro is 25 minutes away.

There's every chance many haven't heard of this low-profile Algarve resort; it is often drowned out by bigger names. But there's also every chance of a quietly excellent golf break in an unfussy yet super Robinson hotel, with two fine courses – the seaside Ria and the woodland Cima.



36 QUINTA DA MARINHA

LISBON, PORTUGAL

Course **27.0** Accommodation **18.2**
Amenities **17.7** Setting **18.0** **TOTAL 80.9**
Getting there Lisbon is 45 minutes away.

One of Portugal's biggest and best hotels is the star attraction here, making it one of this list's premier destinations for families. The course is very pleasant, scenic resort golf with some dramatic holes around water and on clifftops. Non-golf facilities for all ages and tastes are hard to beat.



38 APHRODITE HILLS

PAPHOS, CYPRUS

Course **28.4** Accommodation **17.4**
Amenities **17.0** Setting **18.0** **TOTAL 80.8**
Getting there Paphos is 20 minutes away.

Aphrodite was offering year-round golf breaks long before Belek arrived on the scene. This Cypriot resort boasts a course of spectacular views and spectacular holes, led by the famous downhill, short 7th. The golf is backed up very well by the all-round appeal of the hotel. A very good No.38!



40 PALMARES

PORTIMÃO, PORTUGAL

Courses **32.4** Accommodation **18.0**
Amenities **13.0** Setting **17.4** **TOTAL 80.8**
Getting there Faro is 30 minutes away.

Since we started ranking Continental courses and resorts, none has evolved more than Palmares. First this long-time favourite got Robert Trent Jones to overhaul their three loops of nine, then they added a neat on-site hotel. That all adds up to a top-40 slot in our ranking.

THE TOP 10 RESORTS FOR... BEACH BREAKS

1 Verdura

A 'where did it all go right?' feeling here.

2 Salgados

Gorgeous sand just yards from the hotels.

3 Praia D'el Rey

Miles of golden beach along the whole resort.

4 Gloria

Peek between the pines and the sand's right there.

5 Carya

Chill out on the cool pier, above the shore.

6 Quinta da Ria

Perfect for a barefoot stroll from the hotel.

7 Antalya

Kempinski hotel has a superb private beach.

8 Troia

It's on a peninsula... beaches everywhere.

9 Cornelia

Another saunter to the sand in seconds.

10 Grado

Yet another activity at this Italian resort.



Quinta da Ria, washed by the Atlantic.



42 AROEIRA

LISBON, PORTUGAL

Courses **31.9** Accommodation **17.6**
Amenities **15.0** Setting **16.0** **TOTAL 80.5**
Getting there Lisbon airport is 50 minutes away.

Aroeira is one of several entries this year to be transformed by the addition of a hotel. The hotel only opened in autumn last year, but we've already been so know how good it is. It is super-stylish and a great base from where to play Aroeira's two courses, with No.1 a regular in our Top 100 list.



43 BOGOGNO

MILAN, ITALY

Courses **31.4** Accommodation **17.3**
Amenities **15.3** Setting **16.4** **TOTAL 80.4**
Getting there Milan Malpensa is 50 mins away.

Charismatic designer Robert von Hagge is responsible for two evenly balanced courses here; they are impossible to split and could undoubtedly grace our Continental Top 100 list. To those 36 holes of parkland golf add a slick hotel and a good selection of non-golf amenities that make this an all-rounder.



44 PGA NATIONAL SWEDEN

MALMÖ, SWEDEN

Courses **32.9** Accommodation **16.8**
Amenities **13.9** Setting **16.6** **TOTAL 80.2**
Getting there Malmö airport is 30 minutes away.

The accommodation is on the first floor of the clubhouse. It is extremely nice but limited in scope, as are the amenities, hence this overall position. The Links course is superb and the Lakes a very good No.2. It's really one for golfers, with not much else in the way of other facilities... so we loved it!



45 LA BAGNAIA

PISA, ITALY

Course **30.0** Accommodation **17.9**
Amenities **16.3** Setting **16.0** **TOTAL 80.2**
Getting there Pisa airport is 50 minutes away.

A new entry – and look where it has landed in the ranking. To crack the top 50 on debut illustrates how highly we rate this Tuscan resort, which is part of the IMG Prestige stable. The course by Robert Trent Jones Jnr is entertaining and immaculate. The hotel is a pleasing mix of character and luxury.



46 CHÂTEAU DES VIGIERS

BORDEAUX, FRANCE

Courses **29.1** Accommodation **17.9**
Amenities **16.3** Setting **16.8** **TOTAL 80.1**
Getting there Bordeaux airport is 50 mins away.

In among all the gleaming modern resorts is this pedigree offering. CdV's allure begins with its château-based hotel, which oozes class, and continues with its three distinctive loops of nine. Then add in world-class dining and a refurbished spa and pool and you have a fabulous bolthole.



47 LA FINCA

VALENCIA, SPAIN

Courses **30.0** Accommodation **17.6**
Amenities **16.5** Setting **15.9** **TOTAL 80.0**
Getting there Alicante airport is 45 minutes away.

A key new entry. Three courses – with one in our Spain Top 70 – and a five-star hotel make it one of Europe's finest resorts. The courses are a little spread out so it is marked down for that but La Finca's comprehensive offering may surprise Britons unfamiliar with this relatively low-profile complex.



48 KORINEUM

NORTHERN AREA, CYPRUS

Course **28.9** Accommodation **17.6**
Amenities **15.9** Setting **17.3** **TOTAL 79.7**
Getting there Fly to Paphos or preferably Ercan.

Situated in the northern part of Cyprus, Korineum will surprise you. The course is uber-dramatic because of the undulating topography and the views are breathtaking. The all-inclusive hotel will not leave you hungry and you'll absolutely love the beach club that's just a three-minute drive away.

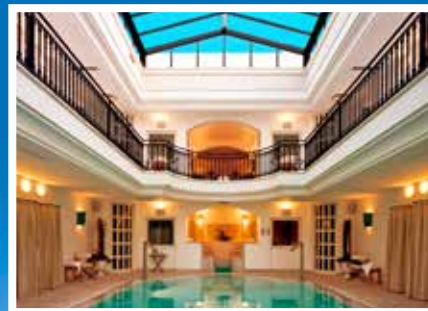
52

SAN DOMENICO

 PUGLIA, ITALY

Course **27.5** Accommodation **18.4**
Amenities **15.9** Setting **17.7** **TOTAL 79.5**
Getting there Fly to Bari or Brindisi.

Puglia, in the heel of Italy's boot, is now one of Europe's most fashionable holiday destinations and this resort fits right in. The course is by European Golf Design and offers spectacular views of the Adriatic. Then, off the course, Masseria San Domenico, Masseria Cimino and Borgo Egnazia offer accommodation in the top 10 of this list, all whitewashed buildings and authentic, traditional Italian luxury. Absolutely heavenly for couples.



The course is good; off the course it's wonderful.



49 CASTELFALFI

 FLORENCE, ITALY

Courses **26.3** Accommodation **18.0**
Amenities **18.2** Setting **17.2** **TOTAL 79.7**
Getting there Fly to Florence or Pisa.

Enters our top 50 for the first time and is one of the list's most intriguing entries. It has a highly entertaining course (plus nine extra holes) routed over undulating land, while the rest of the resort is like a charming old Tuscan town; the two hotels sit discreetly in the middle. One of the best 'couples' options.



50 MONTECASTILLO

 JEREZ, SPAIN

Course **30.0** Accommodation **17.8**
Amenities **15.9** Setting **15.8** **TOTAL 79.5**
Getting there Fly to Jerez or Seville (one hour).

A luxury hotel added to a Tour-quality course at this Jerez-based complex. Doesn't quite get the pulses racing as it used to, but a fine option nonetheless. Get a flight to Jerez and you have a very efficient winter break, given the weather here is superb most of the year. Barceló hotel is arguably the highlight.



51 ABAMA

 TENERIFE, SPAIN

Course **27.2** Accommodation **17.9**
Amenities **16.9** Setting **17.5** **TOTAL 79.5**
Getting there Tenerife South is 40 minutes away.

The most distinctive hotel in the whole list? Very possibly. This burnt-orange Moorish building houses fabulous accommodation that you will absolutely love. It is a terrific complement to a Spain Top 70 course in impeccable condition – with super slick, sloping greens – and wide Atlantic views. ▶

BEST OF THE BEST – THE

Overall courses, accommodation, setting and non-golf amenities are the categories we use



CATEGORY LEADERS

to ‘mark’ resorts – these are the top 10 in each of those (plus a couple of bonus rankings)

Overall courses	Accommodation	Setting	Non-golf amenities	Individual courses	Single-course resorts
1 Praia D’El Rey Two Top 25 Continental European courses make this the top choice for purely courses: PDR and West Cliffs together... wow.	1 Finca Cortesin Exquisite small hotel with great attention to detail. Has a Moorish feel and gains marks for its cosiness allied to patent luxury.	1 Lofoten Links Ben Nevis meets Turnberry. Utterly spellbinding. No better setting in the world than at this Norwegian outpost.	1 Pine Cliffs Rain or shine (it’s the Algarve so it’s usually sun), it has 10 different activities per day for you and your family/partner/group to do.	1 Monte Rei A course we have ranked in our European top five, a Jack Nicklaus design in immaculate condition.	1 Finca Cortesin Just one course but the resort is so good it’s on the cusp of the top 10. Solid, immaculate course and the hotel of your dreams.
2 Golf du Médoc Two Continental Top 100 courses – Château and Vignes. By Bill Coore and Rod Whitman. On sandy soil. We suspect you’re sold...	2 Costa Navarino The Westin here is opulent, the Romanos off the scale. Indubitably the best ‘bigger’ hotel accommodation in the ranking. Immense.	2 Verdura The most gorgeous white sand beach is just yards from the breakfast patio – is there a better way to start a day?	2 La Manga Club Sport heaven. In addition to the three courses, there are world-class cricket, football, tennis and gym facilities.	2 Troia A Robert Trent Jones Snr seaside course as aesthetically pleasing as it is exacting. Doesn’t get the credit it deserves.	2 Troia The Robert Trent Jones Snr seaside course is scenic, challenging and memorable. The hotel is part of a huge complex.
3 Quinta do Lago A fixture in the Continental Top 100, the South. A newcomer to that list, the revamped North. And a contender, Laranjal.	3 Villa Padierna An unmistakable feeling of being somewhere very special. Villa Padierna is all class; the Roger Federer of golf resorts.	3 Tecina Atlantic Ocean panoramas from Tecina’s sloping fairways and its hotel on La Gomera island in the Canaries.	3 Gloria Belek’s resorts could fill this amenities list; they are that good. Gloria is the best... such as this Top 100’s best on-site waterpark!	3 Lofoten Links A bucket list destination for any intrepid golfer. You know the setting is incredible, but the course also fits it beautifully.	3 Montgomerie Maxx Royale A course by Colin Montgomerie and EGD that has hosted the European Tour, plus arguably the most glitzy hotel in the ranking.
4 Carya The best course in Belek, a heathland-style adventure among heather and pines. Plus a second Top 100 course, the National.	4 Terre Blanche The accommodation is arranged like a Provencal hillside village. Public rooms are just as swish, yet comfortable.	4 Thracian Cliffs The clue is in the name; sits on the edge of the Black Sea, whether atop the bluffs or down by the pebble and sand shore.	4 Costa Navarino Various pools, a waterpark, spa and gym, beach and the best range of restaurants at this magnificent Greek complex.	4 El Saler Javier Arana is Spain’s iconic architect and this is his seminal seaside-woodland track. Endlessly interesting.	4 El Saler Javier Arana’s Valencia masterpiece is allied to a really good Parador hotel that overlooks the 9th and 18th greens.
5 Dom Pedro Five courses! The Old is the clear standout but, in terms of quantity, nothing can touch this collection and we duly reward its depth.	5 Verdura This Rocco Forte hotel is set down in a series of one-storey sea, pool or course view apartments. That is a good start...	5 Praia D’El Rey This Silver Coast resort is set down along miles of beach. Nearby West Cliffs, just along the coast, is also spectacular.	5 Carya Belek again, and this one includes a bowling alley and its own ice cream parlour – plus one of the list’s best kids’ clubs.	5 Budersand Created out of an old military base on the German island of Sylt off Denmark, this is a taste of a British links.	5 Oitavos Dunes Arthur Hills designed this seaside course on sandy soil and native vegetation. The hotel is minimalism writ large.
6 Le Touquet Frank Pont’s astute revision of Harry Colt’s La Mer has made it one of Europe’s greats again. Plus La Foret (18) and Manoir (9)!	6 Carya Lacks the charm of Vidago or San Domenico, but offers modern, spacious luxury rooms with so many amenities.	6 Costa Navarino The Bay course here – with almost constant views of Navarino Bay – is 10/10 for views. The Dunes ‘just’ 8/10. The hotel 9/10.	6 Penina Might just top Carya as the best kids’ club in the ranking and the activities just keep appearing before your eyes here.	6 Oitavos Dunes Built on piles and piles and piles of sand, stabilised by vegetation and pines, it is an awesome site. Atlantic views too.	6 Monte Rei Jack Nicklaus design is the top-ranked course in the resorts list. Increasing range of villas. Fine dining. In summary: pure class.
7 PGA Catalunya A course that nearly (possibly should have) hosted the Ryder Cup, the Stadium, and the very, very good Tour – a top No.2.	7 PGA Catalunya Seventh is crazy given how good the hotels (especially majestic Camiral) are, but look at the marks; literally nothing to separate them.	7 Royal Bled Spectacular mountain scenes everywhere you turn and then, in the town a mile away, Lake Bled itself is absolutely epic.	7 Terre Blanche One of the list’s biggest and best spas leads the attractions here. Plus one of the best outdoor pools.	7 Royal Bled Swan Designs, armed with investment from new owners, have returned this Slovenian beauty back to its imperious best.	7 Royal Obidos Seve designed the course, which has two phases as it moves over an undulating landscape. Modern hotel has lots of appeal.
8 Terre Blanche A fixture in the top end of the Continental Top 100, Le Châteaux and the excellent back-up Le Riou. Tranquil, but testing.	8 Vidago Palace If you like pedigree – grand hallways, epic dining rooms, individual bedrooms – and a touch of class, you’ll love it here.	8 Anfi Tauro The Arizona desert is somehow perched on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean here. Sensational views from the rocky landscape.	8 Verdura One of the best spas allied to a kids’ club, gorgeous pool, bike hire, brilliant gym and watersports on the idyllic beach.	8 Thracian Cliffs Gary Player calls it Europe’s Pebble Beach, and guess what? He’s not being hyperbolic! Dramatic holes on clifftops.	8 Vidago Palace Palace by name and nature – has some of our favourite bedrooms in the list, oozing class and character. Course is often quirky.
9 El Prat Forty-five Greg Norman-designed holes on undulating land that cuts through woodland. The loops are evenly balanced, too.	9 San Domenico The whitewashed walls, the cerebral interior design, the effortless charm... San Domenico oozes Italian allure.	9 Kytaja Lakes... pines... tranquility... this Finnish retreat serves up a classic Scandinavian scene and is all the better for that.	9 Son Antem The golf might not be outstanding here, but in the Marriott hotel you have a wealth of classic Majorcan resort activities.	9 Las Colinas Cabell Robinson made a terrific job of laying this out, so it is playable for the higher handicapper but tests the best.	9 Budersand One of the best-ranked courses, this links on the island of Sylt is backed up by a neat hotel in an upmarket setting.
10 Antalya A Continental Top 100 fixture in the Sultan, which has hosted Tiger and Rory, plus the Pasha, which is arguably more enjoyable.	10 Montgomerie Maxx Royale If ostentatious glitz and opulence are your thing, you’ll love it here. It’s dazzling and in other lists would be even higher.	10 Oitavos Dunes An hour to the west of Lisbon near cute Cascais, it lets you take in sights, sounds and smells of the Atlantic waves.	10 Castelfalfi Different sort of amenities in this Tuscan village; hiking, cycling, cooking classes, wine tasting, horse riding & truffle hunting.	10 Finca Cortesin The best greens in the ranking? Very possibly. Awesome conditioning and another fine Robinson design.	10 Quinta da Marinha The hotel and its facilities help propel this long-standing favourite into this top 10. Resort golf and great fun all round.



53 LOFOTEN LINKS

 **LOFOTEN ISLANDS, NORWAY**

Course **33.0** Accommodation **17.0**
Amenities **9.6** Setting **19.9** **TOTAL 79.5**
Getting there Fly to Oslo-Bodø-Svolvaer.

Probably the best setting for a golf course in Europe, if not the world, helps Lofoten to this lofty spot. Accommodation is limited but nice, in the form of traditional chalets. Amenities are restricted to horse riding, boating and walking. But, like us, if you make it here, you'll never want to leave...



56 SAN ROQUE

 **SOTOGRADE, SPAIN**

Courses **33.0** Accommodation **16.4**
Amenities **14.3** Setting **15.4** **TOTAL 79.1**
Getting there Malaga airport is 30 minutes away.

Mainly a golf offering, with two Top 70 Spain courses... or so you'd think. Right next to the courses are The Suites, which hosted both 1997 Ryder Cup sides and encompass 50 apartments around a pool with a gym, sauna and steam room, football pitch, equestrian centre and kids' club.



58 SPORTING CLUB BERLIN

 **BERLIN, GERMANY**

Courses **32.9** Accommodation **17.5**
Amenities **12.5** Setting **16.2** **TOTAL 79.1**
Getting there Berlin airport is 30 minutes away.

There are a staggering 63 holes here, designed by Arnold Palmer, Stan Eby and Nick Faldo among others – The Faldo regularly gets in our Continental Top 100. The hotel is a wellness resort set on a lake in an area bigger than Monaco and offers lots of other activities. In short, comprehensive.



54 ARGENTARIO

 **ORBETELLO, ITALY**

Course **27.9** Accommodation **18.0**
Amenities **15.9** Setting **17.6** **TOTAL 79.4**
Getting there Rome Fiumicino is an hour away.

The designer hotel is a real attraction here – for lovers of interior design and chic accommodation, it will go down very well. Add in a sumptuous spa plus heated indoor swimming pool, outdoor pools, a high-tech gym and tennis courts. And the course sits uber-naturally in the Tuscan landscape.



57 PINE CLIFFS

 **VILAMOURA, PORTUGAL**

Course **23.9** Accommodation **18.2**
Amenities **19.5** Setting **17.5** **TOTAL 79.1**
Getting there Faro airport is 40 minutes away.

Can a resort with 'just' nine holes be good enough for the top 60? Easily. Some on the panel would have it 20 places higher. The nine cliff-top holes are predictably scenic and playable. The accommodation (hotel and villas) is exquisite. The non-golf amenities are sensational. Family utopia.



59 LIGHTHOUSE

 **CAPE KALIAKRA, BULGARIA**

Course **27.4** Accommodation **17.8**
Amenities **16.6** Setting **17.3** **TOTAL 79.1**
Getting there Varna airport is an hour away.

This is the Cape Kaliakra course with a hotel, so is the best base for a trip to this three-course area on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. The course, by Ian Woosnam, is perfectly enjoyable and the hotel has lots of leisure facilities, a state-of-the-art spa, various restaurants and bars.



55

EPIC
SETTING

ROYAL BLEĐ

 **BLEĐ, SLOVENIA**

Course **32.4** Accommodation **15.9**
Amenities **12.9** Setting **18.2** **TOTAL 79.4**
Getting there Fly to either Ljubljana or Trieste.

If a gorgeous setting, a beautifully-manicured course, classy accommodation and magnificent dining are what you look for in a golf break, put Royal Bled to the top of your list of options for 2021. There aren't lots of non-golf amenities here, though a new spa and pool has been opened, but frankly the golf and dining and just the 'glad to be alive aspect' is more than enough for us. The course has been restored wonderfully by Swan Designs – it's now a fixture in the first half of our Continental Top 100 – and the clubhouse similarly refurbished to a high spec. It would be much higher in this list, but for the limited number of rooms and relative lack of amenities. The truly awesome Lake Bled is 10 minutes away, too, and so this is a majestic weekend break waiting to happen.



60 LINNA

 **VANAJANLINNANTIE, FINLAND**

Course **29.4** Accommodation **16.8**
Amenities **15.9** Setting **17.0** **TOTAL 79.1**
Getting there Helsinki airport is an hour away.

This European Golf Design course – with Tim Lobb the main man on it – cuts through classic Scandinavian scenes of rolling land decorated with towering pines and lakes. Off the course, the adjoining hotel maintains the standard, making for one of the list's most tranquil breaks.



61 VILA SOL

 **VILAMOURA, ALGARVE**

Course **27.9** Accommodation **17.9**
Amenities **16.2** Setting **16.8** **TOTAL 78.8**
Getting there Faro airport is 40 minutes away.

The three Donald Steel-designed loops of nine among pine trees equate to one of the most pleasant rounds in the Algarve. To that you can add hotel and villa accommodation as well as good amenities. If Top 100-calibre golf isn't essential, this is a very good option, particularly for families.



62 PULA

 **MAJORCA, SPAIN**

Course **28.9** Accommodation **17.5**
Amenities **16.5** Setting **15.9** **TOTAL 78.8**
Getting there Palma airport is 45 minutes away.


There is a Jose Maria Olazabal-renovated course here, one that has hosted several European Tour events in recent years. It's perhaps overshadowed by a hotel set within a refurbished ancient castle steeped in an authentic Majorcan style. A heated pool, Jacuzzi and spa lead the amenities.



63 LA QUINTA

 **MARBELLA, SPAIN**

Courses **28.0** Accommodation **17.7**
Amenities **17.5** Setting **15.5** **TOTAL 78.7**
Getting there Malaga airport is 40 minutes away.

There are three loops of nine designed by former Ryder Cup player Manuel Pinero at this resort, set in the hills away from the Marbella coastline. At times quirky and often fun, they are backed up by a five-star hotel with three restaurants and also apartments and villas. Bags of amenities. 

68

DREAMLAND

 **BAKU, AZERBAIJAN**

Course **28.9** Accommodation **17.8**
Amenities **14.9** Setting **17.0** **TOTAL 78.6**
Getting there Baku airport in 20 mins.

Yes, Azerbaijan. The country itself may surprise you – it is a fascinating mix of old (such as its medieval walled ‘Inner City’) and new (being enriched by oil money). So, Baku is one of the great cities for a golf break with a difference – and Dreamland will not disappoint. It is a sparkling new resort close to the airport that comprises a terrific Cynthia Dye-designed parkland with impressive variety and some thrilling moments. There is also now a hotel on site too, making it the perfect base for a trip you’ll be reminiscing about forever.



64 HOTEL DU GOLF BARRIERE

 **DEAUVILLE, FRANCE**

Course **29.9** Accommodation **17.0**
Amenities **15.8** Setting **15.9** **TOTAL 78.6**
Getting there Ferry to Le Havre/tunnel to Calais.

Three loops of nine designed by Tom Simpson with some input from Henry Cotton give Deauville a pedigree few in the list can match. Non-golf amenities in the fine hotel include a tennis court and padel court, as well as an outdoor heated pool plus fitness room, a sauna and a Turkish bath.



67 PALAZZO ARZAGA

 **MILAN, ITALY**

Courses **28.4** Accommodation **17.1**
Amenities **17.2** Setting **15.9** **TOTAL 78.6**
Getting there Milan Bergamo is 50 mins away.

This ranking highlights how strong Italy’s resort portfolio is and here’s another, with an 18-hole course by Jack Nicklaus and nine holes by Gary Player complemented by a fabulous hotel set within a 15th Century palace. There’s a renowned wellness centre including pool. Arzaga oozes character.



71 BARSEBACK

 **MALMÖ, SWEDEN**

Courses **31.7** Accommodation **16.6**
Amenities **12.3** Setting **17.4** **TOTAL 78.0**
Getting there Fly to Malmö and drive up the coast, or fly to Copenhagen and drive to Sweden.

There are 36 distinctive rooms at this resort north of Malmö, host of the 2003 Solheim Cup. There are two courses, the Masters and the Donald Steel, plus a nine-hole Par 3. Relatively limited accommodation and especially amenities, but bags of golf.



65 CASTELCONTURBIA

 **MILAN, ITALY**

Courses **30.9** Accommodation **17.9**
Amenities **12.9** Setting **16.9** **TOTAL 78.6**
Getting there Milan Malpensa is 30 mins away.

There are 27 holes laid out among woodland punctuated by water hazards at this resort to the west of Milan. All were designed by Robert Trent Jones Jnr. Two loops – Yellow and Blue – have been in our Continental Top 100. The neat on-site accommodation gives it a very cosy feel. One for the purists.



69 DIAMOND COUNTRY CLUB

 **ATZENBRUGG, AUSTRIA**

Courses **30.0** Accommodation **16.4**
Amenities **14.5** Setting **17.7** **TOTAL 78.6**
Getting there Vienna airport is an hour away.

A new entry for this Austrian resort, which is another to be managed by European Tour Destinations. It has two accommodation options on-site – rooms within the clubhouse as well as an apartment complex. The No.1 course is Tour calibre with water hazards galore. Also boasts two more short courses.



72 ANFI TAURO

 **GRAN CANARIA, SPAIN**

Course **30.7** Accommodation **15.9**
Amenities **12.9** Setting **18.3** **TOTAL 77.8**
Getting there Gran Canaria airport is 30 mins.

The setting – basically Arizona-by-the-Sea – helped this Gran Canaria course by designer Robert Von Hagge usurp many bigger names in our Spain Top 70. The apartments and villas overlooking the breathtaking but exacting course offer chic accommodation. Numerous other sports facilities on site, too.



66 THRACIAN CLIFFS

 **CAPE KALIAKRA, BULGARIA**

Course **32.0** Accommodation **15.4**
Amenities **12.0** Setting **19.2** **TOTAL 78.6**
Getting there Varna airport is 40 mins away.

There are plans for a hotel for Thracian Cliffs and when that is built this will be at least 40 places higher. As it is, the aptly-named and sensational Gary Player course has ‘only’ high-end villa accommodation as well as decent non-golf amenities. The setting is, as the marks suggest, hard to top.



70 LÜBKER

 **AARHUS, DENMARK**

Courses **33.0** Accommodation **17.3**
Amenities **11.4** Setting **16.8** **TOTAL 78.5**
Getting there Aarhus is 20 minutes.

The 27 holes by Robert Trent Jones Jnr – in our Top 100 Courses – gets Lübker this top-70 slot because it is a very ‘golfy’ option with ‘only’ luxury houses or apartments to stay in. They are, however, astonishingly well equipped. There’s a big wellness centre with spa, fitness and subtropical swimming pool.



73 ROBINSON NOBILIS

 **BELEK, TURKEY**

Course **27.6** Accommodation **17.4**
Amenities **16.6** Setting **16.2** **TOTAL 77.8**
Getting there Antalya airport is 40 mins away.

Belek just doesn’t do things badly – the bar is set extremely high. This might be one of the lower-profile of Belek’s resorts but it’s still top quality, with a course that is as good as some of the big names in the area and a well-equipped hotel offering tennis, archery, water sports and kids’ club. ■



74 PIRIN

RAZLOG, BULGARIA

Courses **29.7** Accommodation **15.8**
Amenities **14.9** Setting **17.3** **TOTAL 77.7**
Getting there Under two hours from Sofia.

A notable new entry in the west of Bulgaria, far away from the east coast resorts of Cape Kaliakra. Pirin's first advantage is its location, a pine and mountain utopia that is skiing heaven in winter. Then add in an Ian Woosnam course and a second 18, plus lots of accommodation options and amenities.



75 DESERT SPRINGS

ALMANZORA, SPAIN

Course **27.5** Accommodation **17.2**
Amenities **15.5** Setting **17.5** **TOTAL 77.7**
Getting there Murcia airport is 80 minutes away.

A town-like resort in the La Manga mould, Desert Springs boasts apartments and town houses as well as cottages and villas with their own pool. The resort's name gives a clue as to the style of the Indiana course; expect lush green fairways, arid red soil, cacti and rock.



76 CAMPO REAL

LISBON, PORTUGAL

Course **28.1** Accommodation **17.5**
Amenities **15.9** Setting **16.1** **TOTAL 77.6**
Getting there Lisbon airport is 30 minutes away.

Campo Real boasts a Donald Steel-designed course set among the hills and valleys of a former royal hunting reserve north of the capital. The 151-room stylish hotel has indoor and outdoor pools, an outdoor jacuzzi, a large spa, equestrian centre, kids club and tennis courts. Solid all-rounder.



77 PENATI

SENICA, SLOVAKIA

Courses **32.9** Accommodation **15.8**
Amenities **12.2** Setting **16.6** **TOTAL 77.5**
Getting there Bratislava is an hour away.

A brilliant option for groups wanting amazing value and plenty of high-class holes on-site but aren't bothered by non-golf facilities. The Heritage course by Jonathan Davison is in our Top 100, the other by Nicklaus Design just outside it. There are neat villas to stay in.



78 VALE DO LOBO

VILAMOURA, PORTUGAL

Courses **30.0** Accommodation **16.4**
Amenities **12.9** Setting **18.0** **TOTAL 77.3**
Getting there Faro airport is 40 minutes away.

On first glance its position may look oddly low. But Vale do Lobo – which is really a small town more than just a golf complex – 'only' has apartments as accommodation. Its two courses – the Ocean and Royal – are, however, two of the most scenic in the Algarve.



79 PALHEIRO

MADEIRA, PORTUGAL

Course **27.5** Accommodation **17.8**
Amenities **14.4** Setting **17.6** **TOTAL 77.3**
Getting there Funchal airport is 30 minutes away.

The course offers expansive views over Madeira's capital Funchal and the Atlantic from fairways set among the hills. Colourful native flora make the quirky course a scenic delight. The wonderful, cosy hotel mixes super service and excellent food with unobtrusive luxurious touches.



80 PERALADA

GIRONA, SPAIN

Course **27.0** Accommodation **17.8**
Amenities **16.6** Setting **15.6** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Fly to Girona, 30 minutes away.

There is a 'Wine Spa' here, so that will immediately appeal to some of you. It's more than a chance to indulge yourself though, with a 6,600-yard parkland course that travels over undulating ground and winds between lakes and mature trees. The small hotel is high-end but relaxing.



81 CHATEAU AUGERVILLE

NEMOURS, FRANCE

Course **27.1** Accommodation **17.5**
Amenities **16.1** Setting **16.3** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Paris Charles de Gaulle is 80 mins.

A touch of class at this French resort. The course was laid out by Olivier Dongradi in 1995 among woodland, with the l'Essonne river meandering through it and dominating the finishing hole in front of the Château. There are 40 characterful rooms in the stately building.



82 BAD RAGAZ

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

Course **25.5** Accommodation **17.5**
Amenities **17.5** Setting **16.5** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Zurich airport is an hour away.

This is one of Europe's leading wellness hotels, with a world-leading spa plus wellness and medical facilities along with luxury accommodation, a casino and exquisite food. The parkland course by Donald Harradine might be overshadowed but is still a very pleasant experience.

THE TOP 10 RESORTS FOR... COUPLES

1 Vidago Palace

Gleneagles in Portugal.
Need we say more?

2 Finca Cortesin

Proof that a golf resort
can be romantic.

3 San Domenico

Puglia is in vogue. SD is
authentic & charming.

4 Royal Bled

The course, setting and
its story are a fairytale.

5 Chateau des Vigiers

Playable loops of nine.
Fine dining and wine.

6 Castelfalfi

Perfect taste of true
Tuscany (with luxury).

7 Palheiro

Cosy hotel. Forgiving
course. Heavenly food.

8 Villa Padierna

Rivals Finca as list's
best hotel. So, so good.

9 Quinta da Ria

For peace. For beach
walks. For recharging.

10 Bogogno

For the serious golf
couple, this is immense.



For wine lovers, Chateau des Vigiers.

ENTRIES FOR 2022?

Okol in Bulgaria will be open
in 2022 and promises much.
Titanic in Belek is undergoing
a huge refurbishment so will
be back in the mix. Lykia and
Donnafugata should be too –
so 2022's list will be even
more competitive...



83 SON ANTEM

MAJORCA, SPAIN

Courses **26.2** Accommodation **17.4**
Amenities **18.2** Setting **15.2** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Palma airport is 30 minutes away.

The golf here is fine but unspectacular – it is perfectly good fun, but very much in the 'resort' category. But while you shouldn't expect Turnberry or Sunningdale, *do* expect amazing amenities – from pools to tennis courts to a big spa – plus villas or a Marriott hotel to unwind in.



84 ST ENDREOL

FREJUS, FRANCE

Course **27.1** Accommodation **17.2**
Amenities **16.3** Setting **16.4** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Fly to Nice, Toulon or Marseille.

A superb option for couples (including those with a non-golfer) as the 50-room hotel offers great pampering options with treatments, aquatic cycle, saunas, Turkish bath, fitness room and whirlpool bath. Course is dominated by the Rock of Roquebrune, a mountain of red sandstone, and River Endre.



85 BARCELONA GOLF

BARCELONA, SPAIN

Course **27.6** Accommodation **17.2**
Amenities **17.1** Setting **15.1** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Barcelona is 20 minutes away.

Barcelona Golf sits in the shadow of the mountain of Montserrat and is encircled by vineyards. This modern 150-room hotel boasts a renowned restaurant, spa, gym and outdoor pool surrounded by gardens. The Masia course, by Jose Maria Olazabal, is backed up by a shorter nine.



86 BARBAROUX

BRIGNOLES, FRANCE

Course **28.5** Accommodation **16.3**
Amenities **15.8** Setting **16.4** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Fly to Toulon, Marseille or Nice.

Pete Dye and PB Dye have created a distinctive course in mature Provence woodland, characterised by holes among aromatic pine, oak, rosemary and lavender. In typical Dye style, one hole includes three large lakes and one green is 80 yards long. We like the 52-room Hôtel Mercure, too.



88 CHATEAU DU TAULANE

GRASSE, FRANCE

Course **27.8** Accommodation **17.5**
Amenities **14.9** Setting **16.8** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Nice is 40 minutes away.

There is a Gary Player-designed course here, mixing holes among mature woodland with others on open land. There is also a grand (it was a castle, after all) four-star hotel with just 20 rooms, but lots of facilities – from an indoor pool, sauna, steam bath and Jacuzzi to... billiards.

87 SALGADOS ALBUFEIRA, PORTUGAL

Course **27.5** Accommodation **16.6**
Amenities **15.9** Setting **17.0** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Faro is 20 minutes away.

A new entry for a relatively low-profile resort in the Algarve that deserves higher billing. We have long liked Salgados for its playable and scenic course, which makes you glad you are a golfer. There's nothing complicated about it, just a terrific location – next to Salgados Beach and Lagoon Nature Reserve – and simple holes on flat land that you relish tackling... with the chance of a nice

score. Off the course, Salgados arguably excels at least as much. It is part of the Nau Hotel group and the options are the Lagoas self-catering villas, five-star beach hotel Salgados Palace and Palm Village apartments and suites. These varied options come with plenty of amenities, not least being yards from the gorgeous white-sand beach. A superb option for a chilled-out golf and beach holiday.

A snapped Achilles, gatecrashing a honeymoon suite, running out of petrol and flooding the bedroom are just some of the...

CONFESSIONS OF A GOLF TRAVEL WRITER

Travel Editor Kevin Brown has chalked up a remarkable 25 years as *TG*'s globetrotting writer – but it hasn't all been walking golf's most famous fairways and sipping cold beers on paradise islands. In a cautionary tale, he recalls some of his mishaps of the past quarter of a century. But as he says himself "these are just the tip of the iceberg"....

My first Masters

Four years after joining *TG*, I received the golden ticket – my first Masters Tournament. I can still remember the excitement now, driving to Gatwick airport. I can remember even more the sick feeling when I realised I'd forgotten my passport while at the check-in desk. After waving off the rest of my group, I faced an agonising wait to see if my even-more-stressed wife could get it to me in time to get on another Atlanta-bound flight. My passport is always the first thing I pack now.

My first Masters (Part II)

I finally showed up at the hire car desk in Atlanta airport minus the second vital item I needed... a credit card. Hard cash was refused as an alternative and just I was just about to check up on Augusta bus and train times, a retired lawyer from Buffalo, patiently waiting in the growing queue, pointed out that he was going to Augusta and offered me a lift! It proved a diamond week after all, climaxed by caddy Brendan McCartain handing me a glove from champion Jose Maria Olazabal's bag...

Water, water everywhere

I've been a regular visitor to the magical, riotous Phoenix Open down the years, but my first trip got off to a damp start. After the long flight to Arizona, I decided to chill out in my room's inviting bath. I turned the taps on and thought I'd relax on the bed as it filled up. Yep, you know what's coming next... I dozed off and was woken up with loud bangs on the door from an army of fraught cleaners armed with buckets and sponges. My room had been turned into a pond – and so was the room downstairs! I joined in the long clean-up operation – just as well I'd had that nap really...

Carousel chaos

It could happen to anybody! Couldn't it? It wasn't until we got back home and opened "my" suitcase to find some dainty items that were more at home in La Senza than La Manga that I realised I'd picked up the wrong case at Stansted. Yes, it turned out that I had picked up the bag belonging to a lady with one identical to mine. She no doubt had a similar shock when unzipping "her" bag full of sweaty polo shirts and dirty socks. Both of us were thankfully re-united with our bags a week later.

Case for the accused

It was supposed to be a nice weekend break with the wife at Sprowston Manor, but it didn't get off to the best start when we opened the



Unable to hire any car, our man sets off for Augusta by bike.

case in our room and realised I'd picked up the wrong one again. Instead of our gladrags, I'd picked up the one destined for the next weekend's car boot sale! The pots, pans and other assorted items weren't much use to us in Norfolk. My wife totally understood the easy mistake though. Honest. At least it brought a smile to the face of the receptionist, who pointed to the nearby supermarket where we could stock up on new clothing...

More wedded bliss

I love The Lodge at Prince's on the Kent coast... even that time I ended up in the Honeymoon Suite, all prepared for that day's newlyweds. I suppose the champers, chocolates and flowers were a bit of a giveaway, but I was only removed – in the nick of time – after my own better half recognised my happy whistling while making her way to our actual room.

'Fun' in Faro

When I miss flights ('only' two, you will be astonished to learn), I tend to do it in style. Once, I turned up Faro airport a full 12 hours after my flight had departed. I'd mis-read the 24-hour clock. It was a Bank Holiday, too, so no flights to jump on. We spent the whole day in the airport before we could get another one.

Recharging my batteries

I'm not much of a car man, relying on a clapped-out Mondeo to get me round the country. Except it's not that reliable. One of its difficult moments came at five-star Turnberry when it steadfastly refused to start. Cue a concierge and bell boy push-starting us down the elegant driveway of the Scottish resort.

Lost in France

A trip to Brittany a few years back ended with a bit of drama as I took a phone call that led to us missing a key turning and not only ending up heading in the wrong direction but also running out of fuel. Luckily, we freewheeled downhill into a garage, but by the time we

PAINTING BY NUMBERS

A nasty shock was in store on arriving home from one Algarve trip. As I turned into our street I was greeted by a group of neighbours demanding to know if I'd arranged to have my house painted. When I confirmed that I had indeed booked a painter to apply a fresh lick of paint, they responded "Well, they've done ours instead!" The hapless painters did a fine job... just on the wrong house. Rumours that I'd told him the wrong house number are without substance. Honest.

made it back to the terminal we were refused access to the last ferry... even though it was still in the dock. We had no choice but to about-turn and head to the Eurotunnel...

Balls nightmare

I was losing ball after ball playing with Lee Westwood against Darren Clarke and *Golf World*'s Jock Howard in an England vs. Rest of the World match at Vilamoura in the Algarve. My supply was getting so low, so I inadvertently picked up a range ball given to me (honest!) at the previous week's BMW Championship in Chicago. Clarke soon noticed, blurting out: "Lee, this is where all our practice balls go!"

Acting up

The Dominican Republic sounds dreamy, doesn't it. Well, I can always find a way to add drama to dreamy. While doing a photoshoot with actors Phil Glenister, Kevin Whately and Bob Pugh on Casa de Campo's famous Teeth of the Dog course, the latter decided to go skinny dipping in the Caribbean! I later left myself hopping for the rest of the trip after somehow injuring my Achilles while attempting to take off my golf shoe. The antics were topped off by leaving my phone in the return plane's seat pocket – despite my wife warning me not to. ▶



PEACE
& QUIET

91

KYTAJA HYVINKÄÄ, FINLAND

Courses **31.9** Accommodation **15.7**
Amenities **11.4** Setting **18.0** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Helsinki airport is 35 mins.

Think of an idyllic Scandinavian setting for a golf resort and this would be it; a tranquil lake, thousands of pines and a tumbling landscape punctuated by rocks. It makes for one of the most serene and picturesque venues in Continental Europe. There are 36 holes of a high calibre, plus opulent houses of varying sizes overlooking the lake. Few amenities, but total tranquillity.



89 BLACK SEA RAMA CAPE KALIAKRA, BULGARIA

Course **29.2** Accommodation **16.0**
Amenities **14.3** Setting **17.5** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Fly to Varna, 30 minutes away.

The Gary Player-designed clifftop course is the undoubted star of BlackSeaRama – some view it as on at least a par with Cape Kaliakra neighbour Thracian Cliffs. A hotel is close to opening that will take it up many places in our next list; for now, one- and two-story apartments are the accommodation.



90 DOLCE FREGATE NICE, FRANCE

Course **28.0** Accommodation **17.5**
Amenities **15.5** Setting **16.0** **TOTAL 77.0**
Getting there Nice is 50 minutes away.

Mediterranean views are enjoyed from the Ron Fream-designed 18- and nine-hole courses (the latter for beginners really). Located in gorgeous Provence countryside close to Bandol and Cassis, the comfortable four-star accommodation is enhanced by the region's fantastic food and wine.



92 POGGIO DEI MEDICI FLORENCE, ITALY

Course **27.2** Accommodation **17.4**
Amenities **16.3** Setting **16.0** **TOTAL 76.9**
Getting there Bologna, Pisa both 50 mins away.

A 70-room UNA hotel within a restored farmhouse that has a fitness and wellness centre, outdoor swimming pool and Jacuzzi keeps this Tuscan resort comfortably inside the 100. Great for couples, the course has been sympathetically laid out in the picturesque, rolling Mugello valley.

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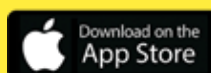
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THE TOP 10 RESORTS FOR... CITY BREAKS

1 Dreamland

Baku is *amazing*. This is the perfect base for it.

2 Le Golf National

Paris awaits after you've tackled LGN's Albatross.

3 Aroeira

Lisbon, just 20 minutes away, is one of the best.

4 Bogogno

Sits to the west of Milan – but hard to leave here!

5 Grado

Venice is the perfect day trip. That's what we did!

6 Barcelona Golf

Las Ramblas and Nou Camp plus golf... er, OK!

7 PGA National

Use the bridge and do Malmö *and* Copenhagen.

8 Royal Bled

Ljubljana is hipster cool – and 40 minutes away.

9 Sporting Berlin

Loads to do here, but Berlin city worth a trip.

10 Penati

Check out Bratislava as you fly in or out.



Penati is an hour from Slovakia's capital.

96

NEW
ENTRY

MODRY LAS CHOSZCZNO, POLAND

Course **29.7** Accommodation **15.5**
Amenities **14.3** Setting **17.0** **TOTAL 76.5**
Getting there Fly to Szczecin, Berlin or Poznan.

This Polish resort will really suit a certain type of travelling golfer: those who appreciate a high-calibre modern course in fabulous condition and elegant but unfussy course chalets which offer a view of the manicured fairways and greens as soon as you pull back the curtains in the morning. Don't go there and expect vast non-

golf amenities – it just doesn't have them. *Do* start searching for flights to Szczecin if you want something different, and at a very, very competitive price. This Gary Player design has flair and imagination, and it's in fabulous nick. We loved the chalets, nestled in the silence of the woodland that surrounds the course.



IMAGE BY MARK ALEXANDER

GOLF
WORLD
TOP
100



93 MORGADO PORTIMAO, PORTUGAL

Courses **27.7** Accommodation **16.7**
Amenities **15.3** Setting **17.0** **TOTAL 76.7**
Getting there Faro is 40 minutes away.

A new entry for an unassuming two-course resort in the Algarve. Morgado combines the eponymous course as well as Alamos – literally across the road – as well as really nice apartments overlooking the fairways. Part of the Nau group and set in hills above Portimão, it is a place to get away from it all.



94 TECINA LA GOMERA, SPAIN

Course **27.2** Accommodation **16.0**
Amenities **14.3** Setting **19.2** **TOTAL 76.7**
Getting there Ferry or fly to La Gomera.

Tecina is all about the setting. The course offers spellbinding views of the Atlantic Ocean and while it is very often quirky as a result of the steep fairways, we are betting you'll be very much taken by the scenery. There is a nice on-site hotel, Le Jardin, that naturally also enjoys the ocean splendour.



95 GRADO FRIULI, ITALY

Course **25.9** Accommodation **16.0**
Amenities **17.0** Setting **17.6** **TOTAL 76.5**
Getting there Venice is 80 minutes, Trieste 40.

Take a holiday resort packed with family-friendly amenities and add in a course set on the edge of a lagoon and you have this uber-fun Italian venue. The course has an Everglades-style setting, so water is so often a threat. Choose to stay in log cabins or marina suites – and which sports to play. **2**



97 HIMMERLAND

 AALBORG, DENMARK

Courses **28.2** Accommodation **17.9**
Amenities **13.8** Setting **16.6** **TOTAL 76.5**
Getting there Aalborg is 45 minutes away.

Plenty of golf here, with a Tour-calibre course – the Backtee, host of the European Tour – plus the 18-hole Garia. The courses are set down among lakes, streams and woodland. The spacious hotel has a large spa and wellness centre. With additional amenities it would be much higher.



98 KAYA EAGLES

 BELEK, TURKEY

Course **26.2** Accommodation **17.6**
Amenities **16.5** Setting **16.2** **TOTAL 76.5**
Getting there Antalya airport is 40 minutes away.

Belek's final entry and it probably suffers from being compared to others in the 'Turkish Riviera'. But in its own right it is superb. The course was laid out by the godfather of Belek golf, David Jones, in typical pine forest. The hotel is as luxurious and well-equipped as you'd expect.



100 KEMPFERHOF

 ALSACE, FRANCE

Course **30.3** Accommodation **17.6**
Amenities **12.8** Setting **15.7** **TOTAL 76.4**
Getting there Strasbourg airport 20 mins away.

The undoubted star of this eastern French resort is the Robert von Hagge course from 1990 that is in our Continental Next 100 and has a strong case to be in the coveted main list. It winds through ancient oaks, beeches, poplars and 13 water hazards. There are 16 elegant suites in the heart of the castle.



99

ZALA SPRINGS

 KESZTHELY, HUNGARY

Course **27.0** Accommodation **17.3**
Amenities **16.1** Setting **16.0** **TOTAL 76.4**
Getting there Budapest is two hours away.

Hungary's first entry to either our Resorts or Courses Top 100 lists.

It is located in the picturesque Zala Valley close to Hungary's most famous spa town Hévíz, with the world's biggest active natural thermal lake, and 20 minutes from Lake Balaton. The resort offers a distinctive modern clubhouse, a 32-room 'design suites' hotel and real estate villas and apartments. A boutique bathhouse for spa & wellness will open soon.

The 18-hole Robert Trent Jones Jr championship course offers four

different tee boxes to choose from. Depending on your strategy and club selection you often have multiple options to reach the green but you are never without challenge. It is relatively flat course but punctuated by bunkers and water hazards. But the test is not over when you reach the green; the slopes are often pronounced. The well-maintained, walkable course is very playable.

In short, Zala Springs should be on your list for a weekend trip with your partner for golf and relaxation. We don't think you will regret it.

THE TOP 10 RESORTS FOR... MALE GROUPS

1 Dom Pedro

Five courses and three hotels in Vilamoura...

2 Gloria (+Belek)

Three courses. All-inclusive. Zero hassle. Ditto *a//* Belek resorts.

3 Golf du Medoc

Two Top 100-class courses. Peerless wine.

4 Budersand

Epic links, epic location. Sense of adventure.

5 Quinta do Lago

Three courses. Neat hotel. Top restaurants.

6 La Cala

Three fine courses. Great bars. Great food.

7 El Prat

Forty-five holes on site. Dig in and get playing.

8 PGA National Sweden

Two excellent courses.

9 La Manga

Three courses and loads of restaurants/bars.

10 Arabella

Three courses and Palma on doorstep.



La Manga has appeal by day and night.



FIVE THINGS WE LEARNED

A few themes that might help you identify your perfect golf break

1 SUPERB GOLF BREAKS ALL YEAR ROUND

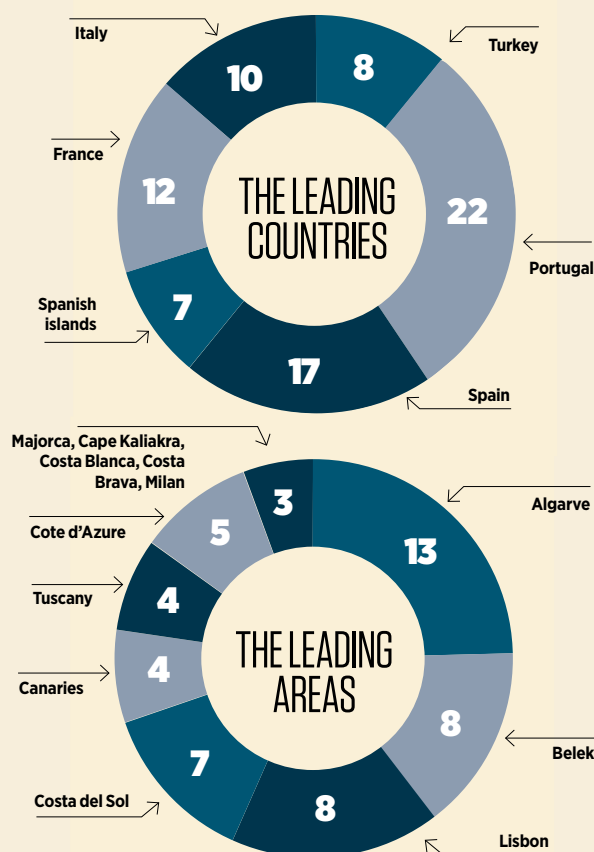
Start planning your break by deciding when it suits you to go – because even if you really want sun on your back, there are plenty of resorts that offer that in December. In fact, don't accept any compromises in any respect; there are golf resorts that suit exactly what you want.

2 NO-ONE'S LEFT OUT

We've noticed this more than ever, especially since we compiled our 'mini rankings' highlighting the best resorts for couples, families, groups etc. No matter who you are travelling with, this Top 100 has a choice of resorts that will absolutely appeal to all the party. Trust us, the depth and variety is such that our mini rankings were debated as long and hard as the main list! We hope they are useful to you.

3 TAKE ALL THE HASSLE OUT OF YOUR BREAK...

There are more than 40 multi-course venues in this list, so it is very easy to choose a break without an ounce of hassle... yet still have variety of courses. It also takes away much of the need for a hire car if you're based only at one resort yet able to play more than one course. This lack of hassle and emphasis on total relaxation will appeal to many.



4 ... OR MAKE IT AN ADVENTURE

In contrast to point No.3, something we often thought about when compiling the list was the prospect of playing and staying at more than one resort on the same trip. It's very easy to do, whether in obvious areas such as Andalucia, Belek and the Algarve, but also northern Italy, southern France and Bulgaria. We now really like this idea! And it means you can mix and match your stays; head to Monte Rei for two nights and lap up its luxury, secluded villas and world-class course, then head from the hills down to Quinta da Ria for a night or two enjoying life in a hotel as well as its scenic, super-playable Ria course. Or El Saler's feted seaside course and hotel then uber-chic villas and a playable championship course at Las Colinas (above). Sounds good, doesn't it?

5 ITALY TO THE FORE

Italy has always had a notable presence in the list – led by Verdura of course – but this year its representation is significantly stronger. In the middle of the ranking, La Bagnaia, San Domenico, Castelfalfi and Argentario all either enter the ranking in eye-catching positions or rise in it. They all offer authentic and characterful resorts of a rare class, and especially suit a couples' break. ■

THE CONTINENT'S ELITE... IN NUMBERS

20

The number of countries represented in the 100.

115

The number of miles to Le Touquet, the closest resort to Britain.

37

The number of Continental European Top 100 Courses that feature in this list.

2,537

The number of miles to Aphrodite Hills, the furthest resort from Britain.

41

Number of multi-course resorts in this Top 100.

59

The number of single-course venues in the top 10.

2,171

The number of golf holes in the whole of this Resort Top 100.

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