

**GOLF
WORLD**

COSTA NAVARINO, GREECE

TOP 100 RESORTS CONTINENTAL EUROPE

**THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE
RANKINGS IN THE GAME**

SPLASH ENTRY

Three new names –
and one is straight
into the top 20

EUROPE'S ELITE REVEALED

The most comprehensive guide to the best play-and-stay options in
Continental Europe – with all 100 entries reviewed, rated and ranked

WELCOME



I compiled the first list of the best 100 golf resorts in Continental Europe in 2016 and, looking down that ranking eight years on, the names I included largely stand up to scrutiny.

Three things have changed since then, however. Firstly, my knowledge of the resorts has increased as I've now been to 94 of this Top 100. The criteria I use to assess each one has also been refined. And most notably, so many of the resorts have improved to significant degrees over those last eight years.

I lost count of the times I wrote 'as a result of improvements to...' in the 100 entries in this supplement, and I was not referring to new ball washers on each tee or a refurbished pro shop. It was usually a new hotel – two resorts in this list have built two hotels since 2016! – or something similarly substantial.

Helped by one extremely high new entry and a notable rise for another resort, the top end of the list is incredibly high now. The top 25 is just high-class resort after high-class resort.

These elite entries are naturally well-rounded resorts, but even within the top 25 there are different emphases in terms of quality and quantity of course/s, opulent accommodation and non-golf amenities.

That sets the tone for a list that I can confidently say caters for absolutely every golfer in terms of taste, budget, geography and emphasis. I have made sure to indicate in

most entries who they suit best, but you can also find that out just by looking at the individual marks.

HOW THE LIST WAS COMPILED

I like to be totally transparent about who has had input on the Top 100s, and while I had insight on the list from some well-travelled golfers, this is probably the ranking I dominate the most. I have been to 94% of the courses ranked here, so if you disagree with any positions it is largely my fault. My panel was: David Jones, Dirk Schaeffer, Charles North, Kevin Brown, Sheila Diamond, Nigel and Suzanne Butler, and Borje and Gunnell Laurinsson.

THE CRITERIA

We assessed each resort using the same criteria as for the 2022 ranking.

Course/s (marked out of 40)

We followed our Top 100 Courses ranking as an initial guide, then assessed from there. Extra marks were awarded for resorts with more than one course, which means never having to leave the resort for variety.

Accommodation (20)

This needs little explanation, but... the range and quantity of accommodation on offer was looked on favourably, and usually scored better than a resort with just 10 incredible rooms.

Setting (20)

Simply, expect higher marks for a beachside, cliff edge or lakeside location. Peaceful countryside gets 15s and 16s, the 'wow' factor get 17s and above. Also, a mark/s taken off if a shuttle is required between courses/hotel.

Non-golf amenities (20)

The facilities that make a resort appealing to golfers who want to do more than play the game, as well as non-golfers who may be travelling with them.

FINALLY, WHAT IS A RESORT?

Boring but important. This explains why some destinations you may think of as a resort aren't in – likely because I don't consider them a resort. And also why some big names aren't as high as you might think – for example hotel-less Vale do Lobo and even top-10 Quinta do Lago, with just one small hotel that is part of the same group. The course/s and accommodation have to be part of the same company or group, and be on site or within a very short transfer. If the course/s and hotel are spread out a little, the resort receives slightly lower marks in the 'Setting' category.

And so to the ranking. I hope the supplement is an interesting read and, more than anything, inspires and informs your next golf holiday.

Chris Bertram, Top 100 Editor

1

COSTA NAVARINO

 MESSINIA, GREECE

Courses **38** Accommodation **20**
 Amenities **18** Setting **17** **TOTAL 93**
Getting there Athens is a two-hour+ drive away,
 Kalamata 30 minutes.

This is the second successive Continental resorts ranking in which Costa Navarino has been our No.1. The depth, range and quality of every aspect of this Greek destination mean it is a scenario that is unlikely to change any time soon.

Indeed, describing why it is No.1 becomes easier by the year, because there is always something new to report.

Four years ago, the prospect of two new courses was on the agenda. When they became reality in 2022, it rose to No.1. At that time, there were two new hotels in the pipeline, and both are now fully operational.

So, in the space of just a handful of years, Costa Navarino has doubled its number of courses and doubled its number of hotels. And one could feasibly argue that these new developments include the best course and the best hotel. Those additions have increased the destination's lead at the top of this highly-competitive ranking.

Certainly, the new courses are every bit as good as the existing ones, and as I have written before, ask 10 golfers for their one to four here and you will get all sorts of permutations. It's like that if you ask the golf staff, too.

The hotels are a little more distinct, but the common theme is luxury and style. The non-golf amenities are also up there with the best in this ranking and range from a water park and infinity pools to an epic spa and a first-class gym.

The setting? Well, one course sits on the edge of an idyllic bay, two are laid out high in the hills overlooking that bay and the fourth has an all-world infinity green as early as the 2nd. And the hotels all have access to a sandy beach.

You might think it should score higher than it does in Setting, but it loses a mark in this category for the journeys between hotels and golf courses.



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Those journeys are the inevitable consequence of the extraordinary number of courses and hotels being so sensitively set into the natural landscape.

The Dunes is a couple of minutes walk from The Westin and Romanos hotels while the W and Mandarin Oriental are perfectly located for the Bay.

But unless you move about in the hotels – and what an experience that would be! – or stick to one course for your stay, you will have a bit of shuttle action.

These obviously can't possibly run to everyone's specific tee time so you sometimes find yourself leaving for a tee time a fair bit in advance. I know it sounds boring and not very 'holiday vibes', but I think it's worth doing a bit of planning.

I accept 36 holes in a day on holiday is not for everyone, but the perfect itinerary for me – and for argument's sake let's base ourselves at The Westin or Romanos – is something like this...

Day one is for unwinding and exploring, with no golf. Day two begins with a 10am tee time on the Bay, followed by a late lunch on the majestic terrace of the clubhouse and a late supper back at Flame restaurant.

Day three is a pool or beach day to prepare for the exertions of an epic day four that sees me head off at 9am for a tee time on the Hills followed by lunch in the

eponymous clubhouse and a late afternoon game on the Olympic. You deserve the pizza and pasta overload you gorge on at Da Luigi in the cute piazza located between The Westin and Romanos.

Day five is a beach day with a long, lazy lunch at gorgeous Barbouni made even longer by a couple of Aperol Spritz. A quick change and straight to the outdoor 1827 bar for a sundowner followed by the high-calibre buffet at Morias.

Day six is a lie-in and a game on the Dunes, which will start 15 minutes after you've left your breakfast table. Then indulge in sensational gyros in cute Souvlakerie for lunch followed by the must-try ice cream in the cosy parlour next door before sushi to die for and a couple of G&Ts in uber chic Onuki in the evening.

Romanos is a sensational base for your trip and while The Westin is the lower-priced option it too is superb – and if you get a room with a pool with the sea beyond, I personally think it is hard to beat.

I haven't stayed at the W, but have spent a day there and for the younger crowd looking for beachside drinks and livelier atmosphere, it felt like this will be the pick. Its location is spellbinding and the hotel's design and decor takes full advantage. If someone writes to tell me it's the best hotel at Costa Navarino, I wouldn't be surprised.

The Mandarin Oriental, meanwhile, naturally has its own emphasises and its own particular level of luxury.

As for the courses, I favour the Dunes for the all-round package it offers, but I can absolutely see why others would insist the Bay is the top choice. It is the epitome of holiday golf because of its setting – but trust me, you have to hit it well here to score well.

I've played the new courses twice each, eight months apart. I enjoyed the stretch on the Hills from the 6th as much as any at Costa Navarino; solid hole after solid hole and a feeling of glorious isolation.

The International Olympic is relatively narrow in a bid to produce the most eco-friendly course possible, so when it's windy it can be a challenge. On a calm day, I wouldn't argue with anyone who said it was the No.1... the back nine is magnificent.

The two newer courses, by Jose Maria Olazabal, will keep being refined and nurtured, further stretching the resort's advantage in European terms and enhancing its position in the World Resorts list, where it was No.7 in 2023 behind only Bandon Dunes, Gleneagles, Turnberry, Pinehurst, Streamsong and Pebble Beach.

And by the time this ranking is refreshed in 2026, you can be sure Costa Navarino will have developed something new, something very impressive.



Infinity pools stretch out into the Bay.



A beach massage can iron out any kinks.



The resort's four courses take you through the hills...



... and down to the water of Navarino Bay.



Why I love Costa Navarino

By Sky Sports presenter David Jones

We're standing on the tee at the par-3 16th, high on a hill at the snappily named International Olympic Academy Course of Costa Navarino.

The Greek sun is grilling any skin left exposed but the breeze up here makes it bearable; more than that, it's delightful.

We're on the edge of the course – to our left is Greece, to our right only the sparkling blue sea of Navarino Bay below – but that's where the wind is moving from, and so to land the ball on the green you're going to have to start it out there, above the water.

It's moments like this that make golf at Costa Navarino so special. Pick any of the four excellent courses and during the round you will be stopped in your tracks by a hole or a view that just takes your breath away.

The IOAC is great fun but my personal favourite is the Bay course. It hugs the coastline below that stands beside the new, spectacular Mandarin Oriental hotel.

If it's X factor on a golf course you're looking for, this has it in buckets and spades. And that's before you reach the James Bond-style bunker clubhouse.

'IF IT'S X FACTOR YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, THIS HAS IT IN BUCKETS AND SPADES. AND THAT'S BEFORE YOU REACH THE JAMES BOND-STYLE BUNKER CLUBHOUSE'

In the summer, when the winds are calmer, all four courses are very playable. The Dunes next to the Westin hotel is probably the purists' pick of them. But when it does blow you'll be standing on those immaculate tees wishing the fairways were rather wider.

This was my third visit to the resort, all staying at the family-friendly Westin, which serves up one of those breakfast buffets you just have to set two hours aside for.

It's an upmarket resort where people dress for dinner and in high season you have to plan well ahead to enjoy the many high-end restaurants on offer.

Our favourites were the long lunches of seafood and rosé on the beach at Barbouni and the dinners at Da Luigi in the hotel's main square, finished off with a cocktail at the tiki bar – served by one of the brilliant staff who were here on our first visit some years before.

And that's part of the charm of this place.

The golf offering is growing – I haven't even mentioned the superb practice facilities – and so too is the resort's footprint. But it has somehow managed to retain its intimacy. Golfers will love this

place, but your families might love it even more with the water park, bowling alley, climbing wall, tennis academy, football camps and so much more.

Plus, you simply have to find time for an evening in the nearby village Gialova, dining at one of the many waterfront restaurants there – pretty doesn't begin to describe it.

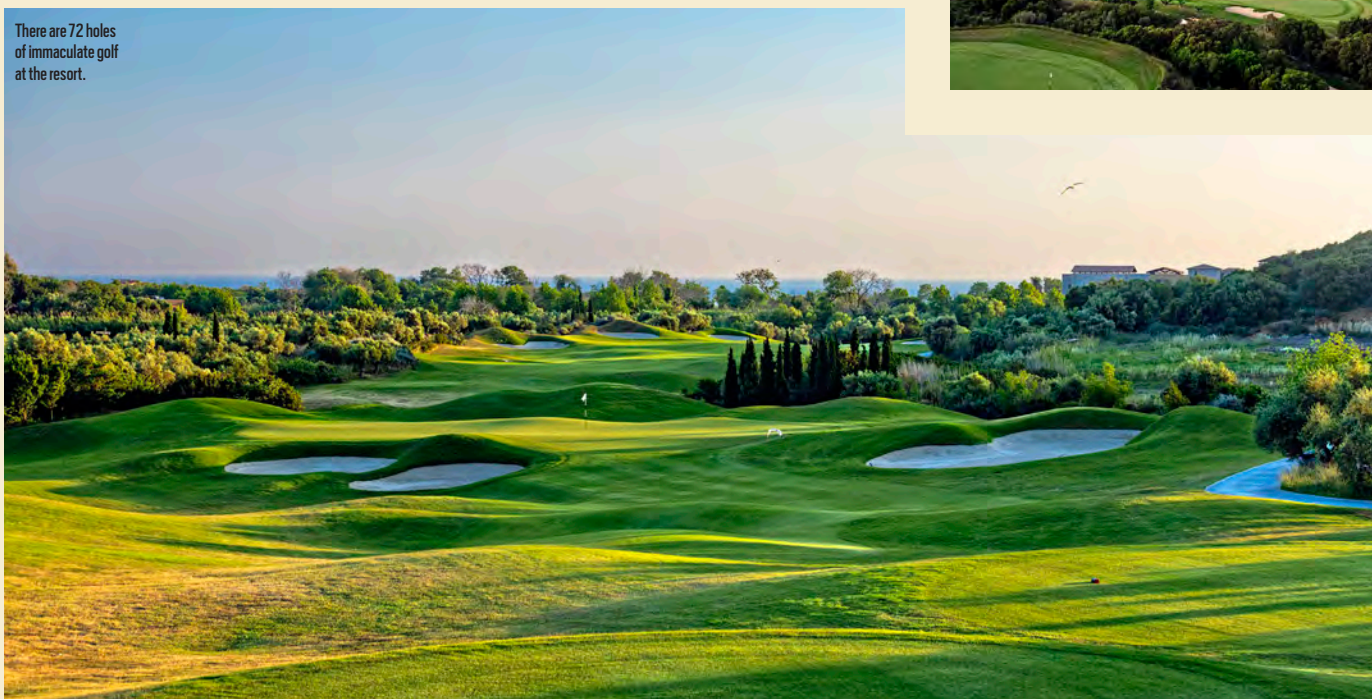
The secret has long been out there when it comes to Costa Navarino and it's not hard to see why. Oh, and for the record, I missed the green on 16...

David Jones has been Sky Sports' lead football presenter for more than a decade. He is a single-figure handicapper who is a member at Burhill but also loves to experience the game's best courses both at home and abroad.

Costa Navarino's Hills course.



There are 72 holes of immaculate golf at the resort.





VERDURA

↑1
SICILY, ITALY

Courses **34** Accommodation **19**
Amenities **18** Setting **19** **TOTAL 90**
Getting there Palermo is 50 minutes away.

Verdura moved four places up in the 2022 list because it had fully recovered from the freak storm that damaged its golf courses and made its 2020 slot of seventh something of a 'holding position'.

Kyle Phillips had reworked the East and West by the time of our last ranking, though, turning the East into the No.56 in our Continental European list with its sister in the Next 100.

They are complemented by a stylish 168-room Sir Rocco Forte hotel, sensational restaurants, activities such as yoga, aquatic bodywork, trekking, Pilates and a superb gym, plus an infinity pool and spa. The dreamy white-sand beach just yards from the heart of the resort elevates the experience still further.

WHY WE KEEP GOING BACK TO VERDURA

By panellist
Charles North

I am a member at two clubs both very highly rated on the *Golf World* list and my wife and I play most of our golf there and at two other top courses where friends are members. We know we are very lucky.

So when we go away for a week the golf has to be good – very good. We have a week's timeshare at a UK golf resort and have stopped going now – it is simply not good enough.

And we prefer to play two courses twice rather than the same course four or five times or four courses once each.

Verdura ticks all these boxes. Plus it has excellent practice facilities, which is important, especially to my wife who is devoted to the practice ground.

So of the other golf resorts in Europe we have been to, you can rule out those where the golf is nice but not nice enough and those where the golf is good if not overwhelmingly so and there is only one course to play.

We liked the golf at Costa Navarino although there were only two courses when we were there. As you can see from the

above, four courses is somewhat wasted on us and the golf is rather spread out compared with Verdura, where with a bike or a buggy you can be anywhere on the resort in five minutes.

But there is more than the golf. And for us that also has to be good. Either on business or on some holidays we have stayed at some of the very best hotels in the world... The Bristol in Paris, the Splendido in Portofino, Gleneagles and so on. Verdura can hold its head up in that company. It is a true 5-star experience.

I would go so far as to say the food is the best food I have had on holiday anywhere. It is one of only two hotels I have stayed in where the staff make an effort to remember your name and are both totally efficient and friendly without being obsequious – a very hard act to achieve in my experience.

Some resorts claim to be top class but they are really not in that league. OK, if it's a group of mates concentrating on the golf that's different, but that is not what we want.

For us, we are up at 7.30am, breakfast at 8, then golf (when we would expect to be

round in three hours or so), a beer on the terrace, lunch at the pool bar, a bit of practise in the afternoon, shower and change then a cocktail in the Granita Bar and dinner in a different restaurant every night, with a return visit to our favourite on the final night. It's tried, trusted and hard to beat.

I would like to try Terre Blanche and Castelfalfi has also been mentioned to me. But this autumn is our seventh trip to Verdura. Since we first discovered it, we haven't been anywhere else.



3

**TERRE
BLANCHE** ↓1
FAYENCE, FRANCE

Courses **34** Accommodation **19**

Amenities **19** Setting **18** **TOTAL 90**

Getting there Nice airport is 35 minutes away.

For Terre Blanche to lie only three marks behind Costa Navarino, which has double the number of courses and triple the number of hotels, shows just how good this French resort is.

Our long-time No.1 is in third here but would still be a worthy name at the very top of the list by virtue of its excellence in accommodation, tranquil Provence setting and high-calibre golf.

It has one Continental Top 100 course and a second that is in the Next 100, so enough firepower in that department to keep even the demanding golfer content.

The golf offering may even be surpassed, however, with a majestic hotel arranged in a series of cute detached rooms augmented by myriad amenities.

For families and especially couples, the end result is very tough to beat.



4

CAMIRAL

 GIRONA, SPAIN

Courses **35** Accommodation **19**
Amenities **17** Setting **18** **TOTAL 89**
Getting there Girona airport 10 is minutes away.

No change from the 2022 list for the resort that takes the No.4 spot in the ranking, but there is a change to its name. PGA Catalunya has become Camiral, and while I understand the benefit resorts and courses see in PGA branding, this feels a positive change to me.

'Camiral' suits this destination, which has grown from a resort that was principally two golf courses into one of the most well-rounded resorts in the world.

The addition of two hotels – Camiral and Lavidà – has naturally helped that, and do not underestimate the non-golf amenities as well as the world-class practice facilities that are now on offer here.

For example, in 5-star+ Camiral, the award-winning Wellness Centre is a spa that is so much more. It is an international-class wellbeing facility that leading professional sports teams would be wowed by, never mind you and I. So, state-of-the-art treatments such as cryotherapy, an oxygen chamber and photo-bio modulation are available, as well as your more standard spa experiences.

Opened in 2021, the Wellness Centre allows guests to undertake a Detox Program that purifies the body from the inside out. Or focus on beauty

and aesthetics with a trio of treatments including Bioline Jato – a full immersion of vitamins, mineral salts and oxygenating elements – or Biologique Recherche, whose science-backed formulations are based on raw active ingredients.

Even if I have made a really poor job of explaining the comprehensive nature of the Wellness Centre, you hopefully get the idea. If you go there with anyone who doesn't play golf but is happy in a spa, you can head off to play knowing they will be entirely content. There are also summer camps for kids, a cycling hub, yoga, and a beautiful pool area.

The hotel itself is one of the most stylish in this list. The tasteful elegance of the public areas contrasts with the modern shininess of the exterior, and that extends into the 138 superb bedrooms.



Girona is pretty much the gastronomic capital of the world, so Camiral simply had to be special in that regard. And it is. No matter where you eat, you will eat very well. The clubhouse menu, for example, combines standard favourites with local dishes so tempting they draw you away from a burger or club sandwich.

Camiral's latest restaurant is Origin, which combines traditional, locally-sourced Catalan flavours with innovative

vegetables prepared over the coals.

This is a good point at which to mention Lavidà, which is closer to 4-star than five but is still exceptionally chic. And it has Bella's, an al fresco Italian restaurant a short stroll from the Camiral hotel.

The golf? A course that is a fixture in the Continental European Top 100 – and has been close to hosting the Ryder Cup – and one that is in the Next 100. You may already have heard plenty about them.

techniques from its renowned chefs, led by David Vives, who previously spent 10 years at the three Michelin-star restaurant El Celler de Can Roca.

The 1477 restaurant is now called Camiral Bistro and offers rustic dishes of fresh fish, char grilled meats and Mediterranean

Suffice to say they can keep golfers happy for a week, but you may not know as much about the practice facilities at Camiral.

'Practice facilities' is probably not all that accurate a term, because as with the spa, this Golf Hub is more like a tour-level performance centre than just a range and putting green. TrackMan range software is the latest addition to the armoury of technology here to improve the games of guests – Camiral is only the second resort in Spain to feature its courses on the industry's leading virtual golf software.

The driving range has been upgraded with a new private tee for groups, target greens, bunkers and distance markers, plus four greens with different grasses – Bermuda, Bent, Paspalum and Poa. There is also a beginners' area with high-quality mats, a short-game practice area with large bunkers, a green with different flag positions, and a 2,000m² putting green and chipping area, with five bunkers.

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CARYA

 BELEK, TURKEY

Courses **35** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **19** Setting **16** **TOTAL 88**
Getting there Antalya is 30 minutes away.

The top resort in Belek rounds off a high-class top five, any of which could be No.1. It boasts two courses that have become fixtures in our Continental Top 100 in the shape of Carya - Belek's No.1, and just yards from the hotel - and The National, a short shuttle away. Plus, it has one of the best hotels in the list in terms of design, luxury and especially amenities - they include a mini water park and a bowling alley.



6

↑11

SOTOGRADE

🇪🇸 SOTOGRADE, SPAIN

Courses **33** Accommodation **20**
Amenities **19** Setting **16** **TOTAL 88**
Getting there Malaga airport is 70 minutes away.

A very significant rise for a resort that encompasses the Top 100-ranked golf course plus amenities and villa accommodation at La Reserva Club, in addition to Almenara's refurbished 27 holes and the elegant SO/ Sotogrande hotel.

It is the addition of the facilities at La Reserva Club – headlined by an inland beach club that is more alluring than most seaside ones – and the gorgeous SO/ Sotogrande hotel that see it move to the edge of the top five.

Nearby superstars Valderrama and Real Sotogrande are not part of the reckoning as they are not owned

by the resort; if they were, the Courses mark would be 40/40 and it doesn't take Carol Vorderman to work out where that would then place Sotogrande.

And what's more, it loses a mark in 'Setting' for the short journeys between La Reserva Club and Almenara/SO/ Sotogrande. They are nothing more than traffic-free 10-minute drives, so it is arguably harsh to knock a full mark off.

Despite that, this represents a strong rise for a destination that now puts a very large tick in every box for couples, families and groups of golfers.



REVOLUTION NOT EVOLUTION

Chris Bertram charts the startling redevelopment of this iconic Andalusian destination

I first visited the Sotogrande area a decade ago, lured by the presence of three Continental European Top 100 courses as well as the warm sunshine guaranteed as early as late April.

Valderrama wowed me. Real Sotogrande charmed me. La Reserva Club impressed me. It was a superb trip, rounded off by a game at nearby Finca Cortesin.

We stayed at Almenara and it was a perfectly good base for myself and my colleague, seeking just a hearty breakfast in the morning and a bar in the evening for a glass or three of Rioja.

But it did surprise me that there was not an obvious place to stay for the well-heeled golfer coming to this fabled part of Spain to lap up some of the continent's elite golf.

It was indubitably a brilliant trip, but it also felt a little disjointed and maybe lacking in a touch of atmosphere, in a way that you wouldn't get at, say, buzzy Quinta do Lago.

Fast forward to 2024 and the difference here is scarcely believable. This is now a world-class destination whether you love golf or have no interest in it whatsoever.

Whereas golf was by far the main reason to visit, now it competes with the accommodation and amenities to be the biggest attraction.

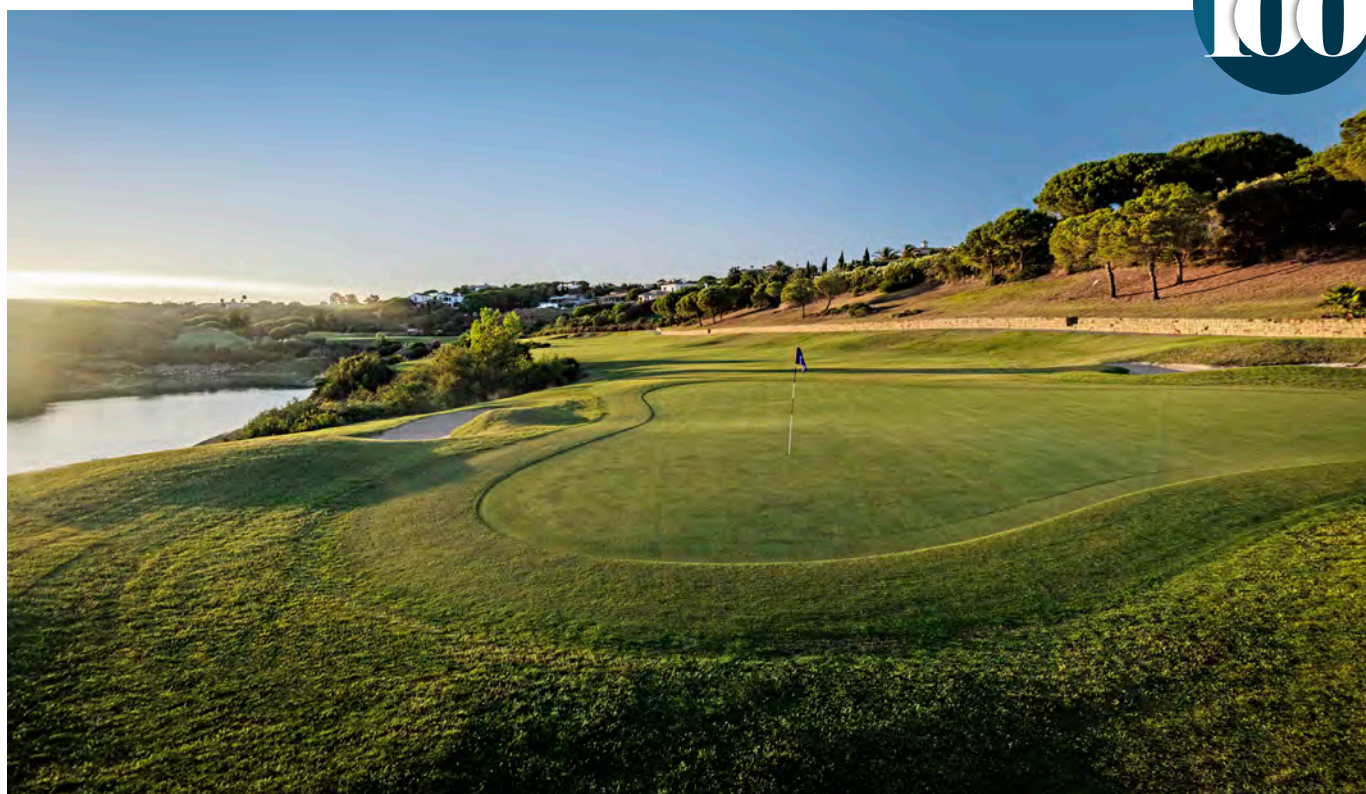
The SO/ Sotogrande hotel sits where Almenara did, but if like me you had been there, you simply won't recognise it now. You genuinely might not even believe it was once Almenara.

This is a hotel right up there with the best in this list, alongside the likes of Finca Cortesin, Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco, Costa Navarino's Romanos and W, San Domenico and Villa Padierna. It stands tall among the best of the best.

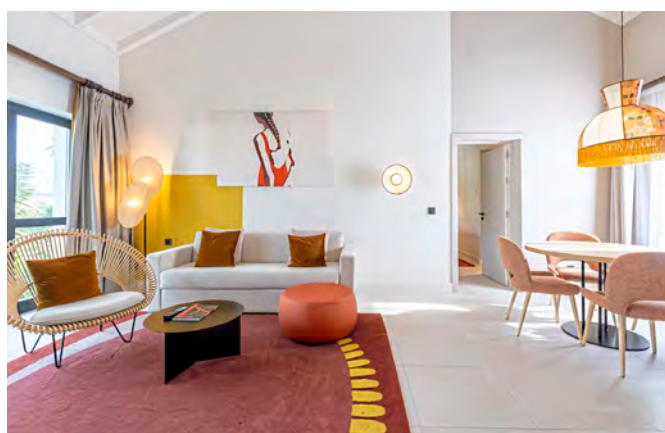
It is set down around two inviting pools in a lush garden setting as a series of whitewashed, low-rise buildings and oozes informal luxury with boutique Andalusian detail. Modern bohemian rooms, stylish studios, spacious two-bedroom suites and penthouse apartments fight for your attention; all are exquisite yet comfortable.

SO/ Sotogrande's amenities include a world-class spa while the restaurant scene is as competitive as the bedroom battle; choose from the vibrant-yet-traditional Cortijo Santa Maria 1962, poolside





The Almenara course



Interiors are stylish but comfortable.



You may not walk on water but you can lie on it.

restaurant Marxa (tough to beat, in my opinion) and IXO Tapas & Bar.

If you prefer your own self-contained accommodation, the premium villas and 'Cortijos' at La Reserva Club are at least as appealing as SO/ Sotogrande's hotel. Located within walking distance of the beach club and golf clubhouse, these are seriously high-end properties with amenities to match. You see the phrase 'a home away from home' being used to describe holiday accommodation, but it doesn't really apply here – because so few people are able to live in such beautiful residences!

The Cortijos – Andalusian-style houses located within a quiet, secluded, gated community – boast handsome architecture and classic ochre, burnt orange and yellow exteriors. Inside, they ooze class yet deliver comfort in their interior design, soft furnishings and amenities.

Rent them for a week and live the idyllic Mediterranean lifestyle of lazy breakfasts

on the verandah that merge into cold cut lunches, sundowners and snacks, then finishing off with a BBQ in the spacious and obviously stylish garden.

We actually had a day very similar in structure to that and it was an absolute joy, finishing with badminton over a makeshift net of two chairs and a dressing gown belt, illuminated by the glow from the verandah lights.

The en-suite rooms are beautifully appointed while the living area is the perfect space to relax in after dark. I think my family enjoyed the villa more than any hotel we've ever stayed in.

We lapped up our villa day but make no mistake, we also feasted on the food in the clubhouse and especially at The Beach. Its restaurant on decking on the edge of the 17,000m² sports lagoon is a picture-perfect spot for lunch after a day of watersports, the highlight of which is the ingenious creation of a child-friendly jet ski via the use of SUP boards and electric surfboards.

Or you might choose to simply laze around the sandy-bottomed lagoon that it is surrounded by elegant loungers and *chambao* (beach tents) on 2,800m² of white-sand beach. There is also a shallower children's pool.

The Beach has its own spa zone, the ultimate in tranquillity as your tension is eased away by the team from SO/ Sotogrande's cutting-edge spa.

Want something more active? How about the numerous padel and tennis courts – The Racquet Centre has an excellent coaching programme – or the football pitch that doubles as a basketball court? In the clubhouse there is a gym and of course there are golf practice facilities, in the form of the superb Manuel Pinero Academy.

THE SUPERSTAR GOLF

While there are now other reasons for visiting Sotogrande, the courses are still likely to be a key attraction for anyone reading this, because with three layouts



The resort is in pristine condition.

ranked in our Continental Europe Top 100, only Paris and Amsterdam come close to matching the area for such a high-calibre concentration of courses.

What's more, those cities' courses are much more spread out geographically, rather than being just 10 minutes at most apart, as is the case here.

As mentioned earlier, Valderrama and Real Sotogrande are not part of the reckoning as they are not owned by the resort, but no matter which accommodation option you stay in, they're a perfect base for experiencing both of these superstars.

Visitor tee times are available at all of the courses in Sotogrande when booked in advance and La Reserva Club can offer assistance because of the close relationship between the clubs.

La Reserva Club and 27-hole Almenara are the two courses included in our ranking and, like the non-golf amenities and accommodation in Sotogrande, they have also been enhanced in recent years.

Top 100-ranked La Reserva Club was designed by Cabell Robinson and he made optimum use of the undulating land to create an always-interesting challenge that is now superbly conditioned month in, month out.

I've played it three times and enjoyed it more each round. The variety of holes is the key, meaning you are always engaged in a way that many resort courses – even high-end ones – are unable to achieve.

On the front nine the 6th is the highlight: a brilliant downhill par 5 that gives you a chance of getting on in two – although the lake that guards all of the right-hand flank is a constant threat. Movement in the green means birdies are not guaranteed even if you find it in two.

The 9th brings you back to the handsome clubhouse, where an espresso or cool drink on the terrace is a nice way to reflect on the front half. I played there last summer with the resort's Director of Golf and we did exactly that. We were pleasantly surprised when a Ryder Cup player approached our table and took a coffee with us...

I knew Manuel Pinero was attached to the club and I'd seen his 1985 Ryder Cup bag in the clubhouse, but I wasn't expecting to have a coffee with him.

It was therefore an even bigger surprise, and delight, when Manuel indicated he would join us for the back nine.

He was an absolute joy to play with and somehow by the 11th I'd forgotten my golf was being watched by someone who used to have Seve as his playing partner. He still got disappointed with himself when he hit a poor shot and savoured the especially good ones, of which there were many.

La Reserva Club has two holes in our Continental Top 100 Holes list – the aforementioned 6th and on the back nine, the 15th. This muscular par 3 plays to 222 yards off the backs and its enormous tiered green has water wrapped around it on two sides as well as three bunkers. Manuel expertly nudged a 3-wood to within six feet.

Before we leave La Reserva, I have no problem with retelling the tale of my exploits on the 18th. There, I was faced with an exacting downhill chip from the side of the green that I managed to kill in the first cut of rough on the bank to the back and get to within five feet. "Great hands," nodded Manuel, with what sounded like sincerity! And my year was made!

Now of course I'm not saying Manuel will play nine holes with you when you

visit, but there is every chance you will see him about the clubhouse as he is there most days.

He has overhauled Almenara in the past couple of years and unlike when I visited a decade ago, when there was notable difference in conditioning between it and the elite courses of Sotogrande, that is not the case now.

I'm not going to pretend it is on the same level as La Reserva but you might be surprised how good it is. It is far from an add-on. And as some will relax more when playing a lower-calibre course, it might even be the more enjoyable experience.

It has hosted both the men's and women's European Tour, so can challenge the very best, but it has been cleverly designed to be playable by all standards.

It is in fantastic shape and a round here is one – as at La Reserva – played in total tranquillity. Both have reached remarkable new heights of presentation.

Their development is part of the superb enhancement of Sotogrande as a destination, which celebrated its 60th anniversary last year and has never been a more appealing option to the discerning golf traveller.

If you enjoy the experience as much as we expect, you can actually look into buying a property here, with some of the finest private communities in Europe set on the hillside at La Reserva Club. The 15 is a collection of 5,000m² plots on the slopes of a park designed by landscape architect Jean Mus, The Seven is a collection of unique villas within 10,000m² plots, each designed by a different architect, while Village Verde's options range from two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments to sky villas. sotogrande.com

8

FINCA CORTESIN

CASARES, SPAIN

Course **29** Accommodation **20**
Amenities **18** Setting **18** **TOTAL 85**
Getting there Fly into Gibraltar or Malaga.

A Cabell Robinson-designed course that is in our Continental Top 100 and is presented beautifully. Yet it is overshadowed by the hotel, which one could argue is matched in the rest of this list but never surpassed. It is demure, luxurious and, frankly, a work of art. Amenities include a predictably high-calibre spa, swimming pools, racquet sports, a super gym and a gorgeous Beach Club 10 minutes away. Service plays no part in our ranking but it is worth pointing out it is exceptional here.



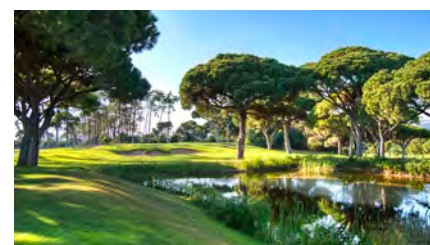
7 QUINTA DO LAGO ▼
ALGARVE, PORTUGAL
Courses **36** Accommodation **16**
Amenities **17** Setting **18** **TOTAL 87**
Getting there Faro airport is 20 minutes away.
Three courses – the South, North and Laranjal – within the top 120 in Continental Europe are a powerful offering but it has only the relatively small (but cute) Magnolia Hotel as accommodation. That affects the amenities a bit but fantastic restaurants and a superb sports hub boost that mark.



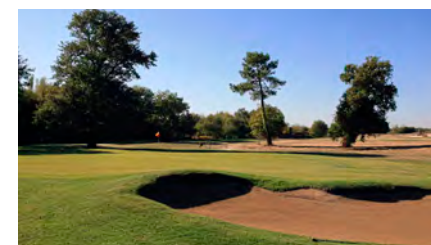
9 PRAIA D'EL REY ▼
OBIDOS, PORTUGAL
Courses **37** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **15** Setting **18** **TOTAL 85**
Getting there Lisbon airport is an hour away.
So good that it could be No.1. The golf is magnificent, encompassing Continental top-20 entry West Cliffs and top-30 entry Praia D'El Rey; the highest quality golf in this list. An awesome Atlantic location but loses a mark in 'Setting' for West Cliffs being 10 minutes away. Plus a nice hotel.



10 GLORIA ▼
BELEK, TURKEY
Courses **33** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **19** Setting **15** **TOTAL 85**
Getting there Antalya airport is 30 mins away.
Another potential No.1. Gloria has three super courses and three world-class hotels. The courses are evenly balanced and the hotels have different emphases; the Serenity and Verde for couples and the Golf hotel vies with Pine Cliffs as the list's best family base – it even has its own water park!



11 DOM PEDRO ▼
VILAMOURA, PORTUGAL
Courses **37** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **15** Setting **16** **TOTAL 83**
Getting there Faro is 30 minutes away.
A holding position here, as it's undergoing a multi-million euro renovation under new owners that will elevate its golf – headlined by the Old plus Victoria (to re-open in 2025), Laguna, Millennium and Pinhal – and three hotels next to Vilamoura marina. So much potential that it could be No.1 in 2026.



12 CABOT BORDEAUX ▼
BORDEAUX, FRANCE
Courses **35** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **14** Setting **17** **TOTAL 83**
Getting there Bordeaux airport is 25 mins away.
A new name (formerly Golf du Medoc) and ownership for this entry, and with Cabot's marketing and exposure, expect it to receive wider acclaim going forward. We've known for 15 years how good this heathland-woodland resort is. A charming hotel with a fine spa further elevate the experience.



13 ANTALYA GC ▼
BELEK, TURKEY
Courses **33** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **17** Setting **16** **TOTAL 83**
Getting there Antalya airport is 30 mins away.
Two courses – one in the Continental Top 100 and one just outside it – and two hotels, the Sirene and the Kempinski. The luxurious latter has just had an impressive upgrade that includes new Lagoon and Golf Suites, plus a new (Seljuk) and refurbished (Lale) restaurant.

14 ↓1

LACALA

 **MARBELLA, SPAIN**

Courses **32** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **17** Setting **17** **TOTAL 83**
Getting there Malaga is 30 minutes away.

The position of La Cala in that first 2016 ranking I referred to in my introduction is one that stands out as cringeworthy. It was way down the list and, while it has certainly undergone significant improvements in the last five years, it should always have been in the top 25 of a resorts ranking. Three courses – America, Europa, and Asia – that have been renovated in the last five years make that the case. While it will appeal to groups of golfers, don't overlook the fact it also has an epic spa plus tennis, football and a large swimming pool. And La Bodega's tapas restaurant on a sunny evening is tough to beat.



15 ↓1

PENHA LONGA

 **SINTRA, PORTUGAL**

Courses **27** Accommodation **19**
Amenities **19** Setting **18** **TOTAL 83**
Getting there Lisbon airport is 40 minutes away.

A big climber last time and Penha Longa consolidates its rightful place among the elite of continental Europe. The Robert Trent Jones Jnr Atlantic course is backed up by nine extra holes, while the hotel is just a masterpiece of architecture, interior design and luxury – with fabulous staff. LAB by Sergi Arola is a Michelin-starred restaurant and there is a gym, tennis, football and volleyball, an adventure playground and indoor kids' club with soft play area. It is family and couple heaven.

16

NEW ENTRY

CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO

🇮🇹 SIENA, ITALY

Course **28** Accommodation **20**
Amenities **17** Setting **18** **TOTAL 83**
Getting there Siena is an hour away, Florence two.



Evening falls on one of the world's finest destinations.

Castiglion del Bosco's golf course has existed since 2012 and the Rosewood hotel opened two years before, so does this splash new entry mean I have only just realised they exist? No. I had hoped to include CdB for years, but until now it did not fulfil the criteria of the course and hotel being owned by the same group and offering golf breaks.

Happily now, that is the case after the historic estate, which had been lovingly developed by the Ferragamo family, came under new ownership and with breaks

including a stay in the hotel and golf on the course now able to be arranged.

It was only ever going to be destined for the top 25, given the course is comfortably in the Top 200 in Europe and one of the Italy's elite, while the Rosewood hotel is one of the finest in Europe, golf or otherwise.

I didn't take any chances though and gritted my teeth and bravely visited it just before finalising the ranking. (Does sarcasm work in a Top 100 ranking?) I had to make sure the hotel lived up to reputation.

It most certainly did, and Castiglion del Bosco offers a sumptuous golf break the like of which few in the world can offer. This placement – second only to Finca Cortesin among single-course resorts – feels likely to be just an initial landing position from which it nudges up.

The 20/20 for Accommodation was one of the easiest marks to decide of the 400 awarded in this ranking and I can see the golf course gaining a point or two in the coming years that would take it into top-10 consideration overall.

It has one of the great inland settings in the list and might well warrant a 19 in this category, but half a mark is lost for the five-minute journey between the hotel and golf club.

That short shuttle quite rightly won't stop anyone going there for a golf break, of course. And once there, I can confidently state that every guest will return enthusing about one of the world's most special golf destinations.



TALES FROM TUSCANY

Chris Bertram explains why this elegant, romantic Italian resort has made such a headline entry

I almost started this essay on Castiglion del Bosco by writing something fairly abstract about the evocative smells, the food and wine or the authenticity of a stay on this dreamy Tuscan estate. And I will mention those aspects in due course.

There is something more pertinent to get out there at this early stage though; I think this is the finest hotel in the entire ranking.

I've been ludicrously fortunate to have been to 94 of the 100 resorts in this ranking, so that is not a statement I make lightly or without having a good grasp of what the competition for that title is like.

If someone contended that one of Costa Navarino's hotels, SO/ Sotogrande, Camiral, Evian's Hotel Royal or especially Finca Cortesin were better or as good, I wouldn't argue. They each have slightly different emphases that will naturally appeal more to different tastes.

I find it hard to believe anyone could go to CdB and not be completely beguiled by it, though. Of course it is luxurious, of course it feels exclusive, of course it has the benefits and comfort of being a relatively modern hotel, and of course the staff are attentive.

It's more than that though, and it's because this resort was 900 years in the making.

CdB sits within a 5,000-acre, 900-year-old Italian estate in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Val d'Orcia.

The castle in this *borgo* – 'village' in Italian, although I would say 'hamlet' describes it better – that sits among the rolling, forested hills of Tuscany was built in 1100AD. It will therefore be easy to appreciate that gives CdB an authenticity, a charm, an intimacy and also somehow a tranquillity that make it so special.

The fact there are just 42 room keys at CdB naturally promotes those feelings too. A stay here feels as if you are an invited friend of the lord of manor, not a hotel guest. I've never stayed in a hotel and felt less like I was staying in a hotel.

Even the new hamlet, opened just four years ago, oozes those qualities, because everything from the beautiful stonework to the interior design, fixtures and fittings – expect exposed wood beams, artisanal accessories and rich textiles – have been painstakingly built and selected to seamlessly fit in with the original. If guests staying in the new hamlet aren't told that this is a new development, I doubt they would actually notice.



CdB's piazzetta – where time stands still.

You don't so much have a bedroom at CdB, as a house. They vary in size from one-bedroom affairs spread over two airy levels to six-bedroom villas that are simply breathtaking in their space (infinity pool, BBQ, pizza oven... you get the idea) and attention to detail in every possible facet.

These houses are arranged, well, like houses are arranged in a hamlet – because as we know, this was a hamlet before it was a hotel. There is a five-minute stroll through the fragrant gardens between the new hamlet and old, which is also where the spa, restaurants and bars lie – as well as the ancient church and little castle. Each hamlet has its own pool (one is designated as a 'quiet pool'), and there is a gym in between them.

There are hiking trails to explore, bicycles to hire and *boccia* (like bowls or petanque) to play as well as myriad experiences available off-site, plus a predictably impressive, elegant and refined spa.

This is, though, not an activity-packed resort in the style of those in Belek, for example. CdB welcomes children and has a kids' club, but I would say it is especially suited to a couples' break. Along with Finca Cortesin, it would be my top choice in the 100 for couples.

If your idea of a heavenly evening is sitting in a softly-lit, cobbled *piazzetta* (a little courtyard) bursting with character and atmosphere to savour an Aperol Spritz with some salted almonds and the juiciest olives you've ever tasted, CdB is for you. Overlooked by the ancient church and castle, we drank in the ambience and the aperitivo so much that we took an hour to order our food.

This is Osteria La Canonica, which serves lunch and dinner in the pretty courtyard, where you'll find waiters such as the urbane Fabio as quick with their service as they are with their exceptionally good recommendations.

I actually preferred the slightly more relaxed vibe of La Canonica to the Michelin-starred Campo del Drago, whose produce remarkably comes exclusively from CdB's vegetable and herb garden next to the church. Breakfast is also savoured here, with far-reaching views over the expansive valley.

And it goes without saying that, as home to one of the world's leading wineries, your

food will be accompanied by the perfect choice, with a glass of CdB's iconic Brunello di Montalcino absolutely essential.

This third leg of the business is also a significant attraction, given you can take part in various wine-tasting seminars – including an incredible gastronomic 'pairing' lunch where you savour three CdB wines with three sumptuous classic Tuscan dishes – as well as have a tour of the winery. The tour was absolutely fascinating and for anyone with a hint of interest in wine, it is a real treat because the staff here absolutely live and breathe their work.

That is also true on the golf side. The course is a Tom Weiskopf design and is one of Italy's finest courses as well as being in our continental Top 200. It is presented better than ever – even at the end of a ferocious summer the greens were immaculate – and that journey is only going to continue under the watch of English General Manager David Waters and with additional investment.

I can easily imagine it developing into a contender for the Top 100. Its variety of holes is excellent, with sporty two-shotters mixing with some muscular par 3s and gettable par 5s. Weiskopf made a good job of harnessing the undulating landscape to create interesting holes while avoiding the sort of uphill or downhill holes that connoisseurs are sniffy about.

Only the 10th, played down what would be a stiff blue run if covered in snow, is notably steep – and if you've broken for lunch in between your nines, you might quite relish seeing your ball trundle ever closer to the green from that tee.

The 10th takes you down to the valley floor where for my money the best run of holes lie. They would sit very comfortably among some of the great courses of continental Europe. Throughout, the green complexes are imaginative and thought-provoking. I've only played two Weiskopf courses before – here and Loch Lomond – but I can't help but feel the former Open champion is severely underrated as a designer.

His stellar course is part of a resort of spellbinding quality and standards. While breaking into the top 10 with only one course is a stiff ask, it is one entirely within the scope of the remarkable CdB.



The pool at the old hamlet enjoys awe-inspiring views.



A tour of CdB's winery is essential.



The avenue links the old hamlet to the new.



17 OITAVOS DUNES ↓2

CASCAIS, PORTUGAL

Courses **30** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **16** Setting **18** **TOTAL 82**

Getting there Lisbon airport is 40 minutes away. It's really easy to sum up Oitavos. You have a Continental top-30 course with views of the Atlantic and a fast-running links-like experience, plus a minimalist hotel that aches with chic vibes, a heated outdoor pool and a terrific breakfast. Combined, it makes a wonderful base for a break in Cascais and Lisbon generally.



18 LE TOUQUET ↓1

LE TOUQUET, FRANCE

Courses **34** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **13** Setting **18** **TOTAL 82**

Getting there An hour's drive south of Calais.

Pedigree golf, a refurbished hotel... and you can be here within an hour of rolling off the Eurotunnel. For single-sex groups and couples it has so much appeal. With Frank Pont's continuing restoration of Harry Colt's seaside classic La Mer, a second 18-holer and the charming Le Manoir hotel, it's very easy to see why.



19 LA MANGA ↓1

MURCIA, SPAIN

Courses **32** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **19** Setting **16** **TOTAL 82**

Getting there Murcia airport is 35 minutes away.

It may not spark enthusiasm as it used to do back in the day, but this famous/infamous destination does what it says on the tin. Three golf courses – for my money the West is the best, then the South and finally the North – plus extensive amenities and accommodation that includes a hotel and super townhouses.



20

MONTE REI ↑4

TAVIRA, PORTUGAL

Course **31** Accommodation **19**
Amenities **14** Setting **18** **TOTAL 82**
Getting there Faro airport is 50 minutes away.

Monte Rei oozes class right from the moment you make your way down a driveway lined by beautiful stone walls and myriad plants. As first impressions go, it bows to no resort in this ranking.

An impressive driveway alone does not get you a top-20 slot in this ranking, though. And a top-20 ranking for a resort with relatively limited amenities is a serious

feat, achieved by an elite course with accommodation that is now right out of the very top drawer.

Most people reading this will have heard of Monte Rei the course and its quality. It is unquestionably one of the most special experiences on the continent, the Jack Nicklaus Signature North Course holding its own among the greats of European golf.

It is a bucket list course in every sense, combining the wow factor of delivering exciting shot after exciting shot along with some muscular tests that will challenge even the strongest player.

The big recent development at Monte Rei, which accounts for its rise in this list, is the accommodation on offer now. For a long time there were handsome villas to rent, but they have now been joined by spectacular apartments that increase the quality of

accommodation to a point that rivals any golf resort in Europe.

It does not have the depth of others, and we do mark on breadth of options. But these two- and three-bedroom apartments are absolutely sensational. Chic, spacious, luxurious, comfortable and incredibly well equipped, they are fit for a millionaire.

Each block has a pool and there are now two gyms, while the famously high level of dining remains.

I would never have previously said Monte Rei was a wise option for anyone other than groups of connoisseur golfers. Now, it is a wonderful option for couples and especially families.

Perhaps this sums up Monte Rei's new all-round appeal: if I had the money to buy a property on any resort in this list, Monte Rei would be my choice.





21 EL SALER

VALENCIA, SPAIN
Course 31 Accommodation 17
Amenities 16 Setting 18 **TOTAL 82**
Getting there Valencia airport is 20 mins away.

An easy to love resort because of Javier Arana's celebrated course, officially the best-value in continental Europe – calculated by plotting green fee against Top 100 position. It's complemented by the impressive Parador hotel that overlooks the end to both nines... and the Mediterranean.



22 CORNELIA

BELEK, TURKEY
Courses 28 Accommodation 19
Amenities 18 Setting 17 **TOTAL 82**
Getting there Antalya is 30 mins away.

The Belek entries keep coming... and with good reason. The Turkish hotspot just does golf resorts extremely well! Cornelia has three Nick Faldo-designed loops of nine of Continental Top 100 quality as well as comprehensive, luxurious on-site accommodation and many amenities.



24 MONTGOMERIE MAXX

BELEK, TURKEY
Course 27 Accommodation 19
Amenities 18 Setting 17 **TOTAL 81**
Getting there Antalya airport is 30 mins away.

And here is another. 'Just' 18 holes here but for it to be so high highlights how good they are. Possibly the glitziest hotel in the whole list and it boasts, as ever in Belek, numerous amenities. We always rank the Colin Montgomerie-designed course just outside the Continental Top 100.

23

EVIAN

GENEVA, FRANCE

Course 25 Accommodation 20
Amenities 18 Setting 19 **TOTAL 82**
Getting there Geneva airport is 70 mins away.

Evian was a real surprise. I knew going here that the accommodation would be of a high standard and naturally expected a beguiling lakeside setting, but both of them blew me away.

I actually got the course spot on with my pre-trip expectations: a quirky, scenic experience that is enhanced by the knowledge you are playing a venue used annually for a women's Major.

All this adds up to a resort that categorically deserves its rise to the cusp of the top 20 of this ranking and will be a very strong contender to come into the World Top 100 Resorts list next year.

The Evian Resort is made up of several ingredients, dotted about the lakeside town but all walkable (or a very short shuttle in a cute VW Beetle van): the 5-star Hotel Royal and the 4-star Hotel Ermitage and La Verniaz, the golf club and a casino which is home to two superb restaurants.

Hotel Royal is palatial in its interior design yet remains comfortable and not even remotely stuffy. I arrived off my flight late and my fears about being under-dressed for lunch in dreamy La Veranda were dismissed. In other similar hotels, I don't think my concerns would have been allayed.

Anyway, it has been renovated in the past few years and they have done a superb job of modernising and adding a touch of opulence while maintaining the sheen of pedigree and grandeur. The handsome exterior helps, of course.

You simply cannot eat poorly here and it was only because I knew everything else would be amazing that I managed to refrain

from repeat ordering the croque monsieur and local Le Savoie red wine from that first lunch. I'm daydreaming about it now, again.

The rooms are exceptional and half of them enjoy an awesome view of the lake. There are plenty of activities, from a superb racquet centre to an incredible spa to a kids' club, as well as a department devoted to adventure sports such as hiking, kayaking and so on.

The golf course is intersected by roads here and there so lacks a little flow, but it has been upgraded by Dave Sampson of Marco Simone fame and is consistently entertaining. I'd categorise it as excellent resort golf that is part of not just a superb resort, but a truly majestic destination.

GOLF
WORLD
TOP
100





25 VILLA PADIERNA



🇪🇸 MARBELLA, SPAIN

Courses **28** Accommodation **19**
Amenities **18** Setting **16** **TOTAL 81**

Getting there Malaga is an hour away.

There are three courses here – Flamingos and Alferini plus the shorter Tramores – but it's not being too harsh to say it is a step below the likes of Le Touquet and El Saler in terms of quality. Solid but not outstanding. The hotel, though, is truly magnificent, simply one of the best in this ranking.



26 AMENDOEIRA



🇵🇹 ALCANTARILHA, PORTUGAL

Courses **32** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **15** Setting **17** **TOTAL 81**

Getting there Faro is 30 mins away.

Amendoeira doesn't have loads of amenities, other than a gym, pools and restaurants, but its townhouse accommodation is really, really special. I thought it was outstanding. There are also apartments and two courses of Continental Top 100 standard. It really would not be out of place in the top 20.



27 SALOBRE



🇪🇸 GRAN CANARIA, SPAIN

Courses **28** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **17** Setting **18** **TOTAL 81**

Getting there Gran Canaria airport 25 mins away.

A very likeable Gran Canaria resort that boasts two courses in a desert-style setting and which incorporate both spectacular and quirky holes. The hotel is set into the hillside and offers good all-round amenities. I really liked it and it is a splendid winter sun option.



28

BUDERSAND

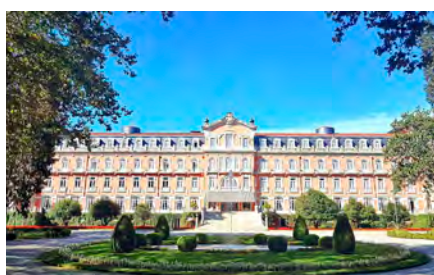


🇩🇪 SYLT, GERMANY

Course **31** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **15** Setting **17** **TOTAL 81**

Getting there Fly to Sylt airport from Germany, or get to the island via ferry/Sylt Shuttle.

Budersand takes a bit of getting to so it's worth staying for at least a night. The vibe on the holiday island of Sylt is very enjoyable and the hotel is really stylish and slick, even if there aren't many non-golf facilities. The course is a proper links in the top 30 of our continental list. A pedigree entry all round.



29 VIDAGO PALACE



🇵🇹 PORTO, PORTUGAL

Course **26** Accommodation **19**
Amenities **18** Setting **18** **TOTAL 81**

Getting there Porto airport is 80 minutes away.

The course is not a let-down by any means, with the older holes full of charm and the more modern ones being good, solid tests. But where Vidago Palace really excels is in its hotel; it reminded me of Gleneagles in its class and character. One of the best couples trips on offer in Europe.



30 SUENO



🇹🇷 BELEK, TURKEY

Courses **29** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **17** Setting **17** **TOTAL 81**

Getting there Antalya is 30 minutes away.

Back in Belek again, to a resort with two courses of a very similar standard – the Pines and the Dunes, the latter of which I marginally prefer. It boasts the standard 'Turkish Riviera' hotel that oozes luxury, amenities and comfort. It's just another impressive all-round option!



31 ROYAL OBIDOS



🇵🇹 OBIDOS, PORTUGAL

Course **29** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **17** Setting **17** **TOTAL 81**

Getting there Lisbon airport is an hour away.

Obidos falls one place but this slot is no mean achievement for a single-course resort. This one has a Seve Ballesteros design as its key attraction; a Continental Top 100 entry that overlooks the Silver Coast next to Praia D'el Rey. The modern-looking hotel makes for a fine base.



32 ARABELLA

MAJORCA, SPAIN

Courses 30 Accommodation 18

Amenities 17 Setting 16 TOTAL 81

Getting there Palma airport is 20 minutes away.

If you want a lot of golf on site but don't need any of it to be continental Top-100 quality, this is a very good option. All the courses are solid even if they won't dazzle you. The dazzle is more likely to happen in two hotels with good amenities. For groups – and couples with one golfer just happy to be out there – it's great.



35 QUINTA DA RIA

TAVIRA, PORTUGAL

Courses 30 Accommodation 17

Amenities 16 Setting 18 TOTAL 81

Getting there Faro is 25 minutes away.

A resort that I had too low in my original 2016 list, a ranking which was reliant on the views of local golfers. That was soon corrected once I had visited. Whether in its contrasting courses – the tougher woodland Cima and the gorgeous, Mediterranean-facing Ria – or in its very neat and cosy hotel, it's a really, *really* good resort.



38 PALMARES

PORTIMAO, PORTUGAL

Course 30 Accommodation 17

Amenities 15 Setting 18 TOTAL 80

Getting there Faro is 30 minutes away.

Three loops of nine redesigned by Robert Trent Jones Jnr and currently being revitalised after a tough year because of Portuguese water restrictions; we expect it to thrive going forward. The smallish hotel has relatively few amenities but boasts a wonderful setting. It's the perfect place for the golfing connoisseur.



33 EMPORDA

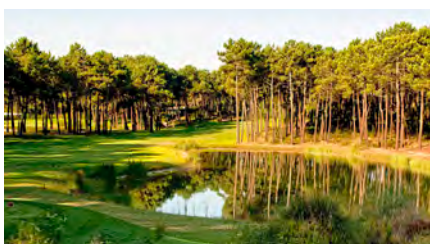
GIRONA, SPAIN

Courses 31 Accommodation 17

Amenities 16 Setting 17 TOTAL 81

Getting there Fly to Girona or Barcelona.

This resort near Girona made a big leap up the ranking after a multi-million euro overhaul at the turn of the Millennium. It has two courses – the nicely contrasting Links and Forest – plus a refurbished hotel. Everything about it is top-30 calibre and it could arguably grace the top 25. The competition is just fierce...



36 AROEIRA

LISBON, PORTUGAL

Courses 31 Accommodation 18

Amenities 15 Setting 17 TOTAL 81

Getting there Lisbon airport is 50 minutes away.

Remember when Aroeira was 'just' two pine-lined courses, one in the continental Top 100 and the other just outside? Well, since 2019 it has also had a hotel. I was one of the first to stay in it and it impressed me a lot. Super stylish with perfect bedrooms for a long weekend. It doesn't have loads of amenities, but it ticks all other boxes.



39 QUINTA DA MARINHA

CASCAIS, PORTUGAL

Course 26 Accommodation 18

Amenities 18 Setting 18 TOTAL 80

Getting there Lisbon is 45 minutes away.

A fall for this resort just to the west of Lisbon because they now 'only' have the large family-friendly hotel as an accommodation option, whereas previously they also had a boutique hotel. Even so, it remains a very fine option with lots of amenities and a water-dominated course with some thrilling holes.



34 PENINA

PORTIMAO, PORTUGAL

Courses 28 Accommodation 19

Amenities 17 Setting 17 TOTAL 81

Getting there Faro is 45 minutes away.

If Penina had just a little more golf it would be at least 10 places higher in this list. Number 34 feels a bit low for a resort with a fine woodland course – the original on the Algarve – that sits under the nose of a majestic hotel that will keep non-golfers of every age and taste entertained. Again, the competition is incredibly fierce.



37 BOGOGNO

MILAN, ITALY

Courses 31 Accommodation 16

Amenities 17 Setting 17 TOTAL 81

Getting there Milan Malpensa is 15 mins away.

A sign of the extraordinary quality in this list... Number 37 for a resort with two courses – by celebrated architect Robert von Hagge – so evenly balanced that we struggle to split them in our Italy list, plus a really enjoyable hotel with surprisingly good non-golf amenities. Malpensa's proximity makes it a long weekend option.



40 APHRODITE HILLS

PAPHOS, CYPRUS

Course 26 Accommodation 18

Amenities 18 Setting 18 TOTAL 80

Getting there Paphos is 20 minutes away.

One of the great winter sun options. The course is famously exhilarating, with terrific views and dramatic holes, and there is also a family-friendly hotel. I wrote in 2022 that its well-balanced marks across the categories illustrate its appeal, and that remains true again. Aphrodite won't let anyone down.



41 CASTELFALFI

🇮🇹 FLORENCE, ITALY

Courses 25 Accommodation 18
Amenities 18 Setting 19 **TOTAL 80**

Getting there Fly to either Florence or Pisa.

A scenic and never boring course with an extra nine holes, accompanied by two superb hotels. Castelfalfi offers one of the top accommodation options outside of our top 20. It's ideal for couples and their are lots of other amenities in a resort that is essentially a traditional Tuscan village.



42 LA BAGNAIA

🇮🇹 SIENA, ITALY

Course 26 Accommodation 19
Amenities 16 Setting 18 **TOTAL 79**

Getting there Pisa is 50 minutes away, Rome 90.

Located close to the beautiful town of Siena, this tranquil resort has a Robert Trent Jones Jnr course draped over undulating land and arguably the most characterful accommodation in the list. Its bedrooms are converted from centuries-old buildings. *La bella vita* in spades.



43 CHATEAUVIGIERS

🇫🇷 BORDEAUX, FRANCE

Courses 27 Accommodation 18
Amenities 17 Setting 17 **TOTAL 79**

Getting there Bordeaux 50 mins, Bergerac 15.

There's lots to like about this French resort, not least the convenience if you can fly in to Bergerac airport, which is just 15 minutes away. If that's not possible, Bordeaux is only 50 minutes. You play three contrasting loops of nine, stay in a converted castle and eat and drink like royalty.



44 ABAMA

🇪🇸 TENERIFE, SPAIN

Course 26 Accommodation 18
Amenities 17 Setting 18 **TOTAL 79**

Getting there Tenerife South is 40 minutes away.

This position feels a little low for Obama because it does everything well as per its well-balanced marks – but note that it is 'just' 18 holes, among many 27- and 36-hole resorts. But it has a lovely Atlantic setting for the punchy Dave Thomas course and the luxury hotel.



45 SAN DOMENICO

🇮🇹 PUGLIA, ITALY

Course 25 Accommodation 19
Amenities 17 Setting 18 **TOTAL 79**

Getting there Fly to Bari or Brindisi.

One of the best couples trips in this ranking as a result of the idyllic, luxury accommodation – Masseria San Domenico, Masseria Cimino and Borgo Egnazia – which are dreamy whitewashed buildings. A course on the edge of the Adriatic by European Golf Design also helps.



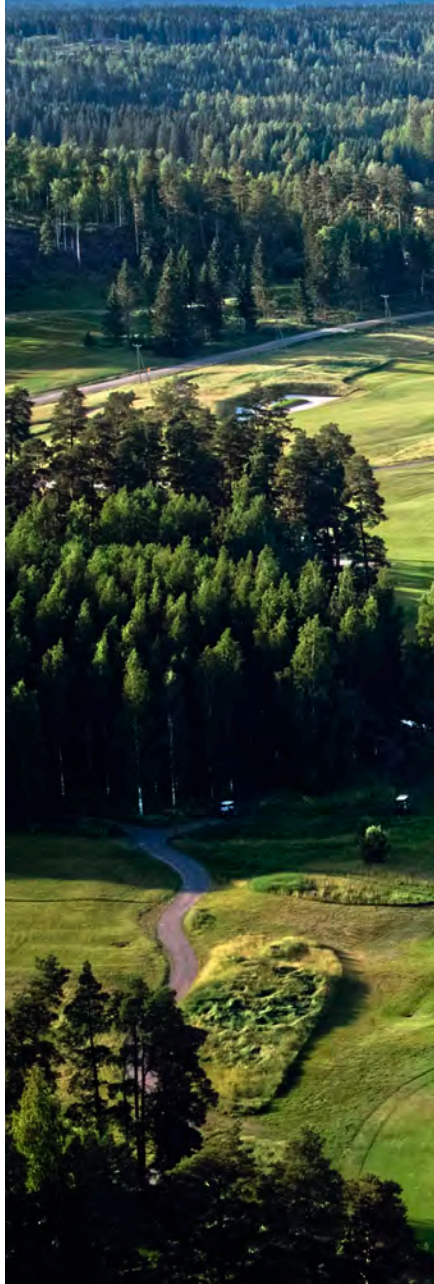
46 LAS COLINAS

🇪🇸 ALICANTE, SPAIN

Course 28 Accommodation 18
Amenities 16 Setting 17 **TOTAL 79**

Getting there Alicante is 30 minutes away.

The marks tell the story here. An easy-to-love course that is comfortably in our Continental Top 100, high-end apartment accommodation – many with their own pool – and super restaurants. It does lose points in there not being lots of non-golf amenities, however.



48 KYTAJA

🇫🇮 HYVINKAA, FINLAND

Courses 32 Accommodation 18
Amenities 10 Setting 19 **TOTAL 79**

Getting there Helsinki airport is 35 mins away.

A huge and very justified jump for this 36-hole Finnish resort as a result of a much-expanded accommodation offering.

Kytaja previously qualified for the resorts ranking by virtue of gorgeous villa accommodation overlooking the lake. It was an imbalanced entry though, with the quantity, pedigree and setting of the golf responsible for 70% of its mark.

Things are very different now, with the opening of the Torola hotel as well as beautiful 'Uni' villas that lie alongside the 18th. The Torola is a robust building 50 yards from the clubhouse that was once the living quarters of the staff who worked on this famous county estate. Sensitive and stylishly converted, it makes for a wonderful base for a long weekend here.

The villas might be even more special. They are arranged in collections of three and all have views of the 18th and the lake that makes this such a picturesque place for golf. They consist of a bedroom-living room, a bathroom and golf club store, plus the real deal-breaker... a balcony overlooking the lake. They are absolutely gorgeous, from the soothing smell of wood and the full-length windows that offer sparkling lake views, to the supremely comfortable furnishings.

There are minimal amenities outside the excellent food in the clubhouse, but with the South East – a Continental Europe Top 100 fixture – and the North West – a contender for that list – you are not short of ways to spend your time at this easy-to-love resort.



47 ROYAL BLEĐ

🇸🇮 BLEĐ, SLOVENIA

Course 31 Accommodation 17
Amenities 12 Setting 19 **TOTAL 79**

Getting there Fly to Ljubljana or Trieste.

A simply gorgeous Slovenian bolt-hole, situated on the edge of the utopian lake town of Bled. A course that is in the top 50 of our continental list, with delightful bedrooms in its clubhouse plus a good spa and pool. It's one of my favourite weekend breaks.



49 MONTECASTILLO

🇪🇸 JEREZ, SPAIN

Course 26 Accommodation 18
Amenities 18 Setting 17 **TOTAL 79**

Getting there Fly to Jerez or Seville (one hour).

This Jerez-based former European Tour destination has a 5-star Barcelo hotel and a Jack Nicklaus-designed course – both are of a standard fit for the top 50. And while it's not a factor in our ranking, you can add in pretty much year-round sun for a fine 12-month option.



50 KORINEUM

🇨🇾 KYRENIA, NORTHERN CYPRUS

Course 24 Accommodation 17
Amenities 18 Setting 19 **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Fly to Paphos or, preferably, Ercan.

I don't factor cost in to the ranking (I tinker enough with the list as it is!) but I can't talk about Korineum without saying that it is almost certainly the best-value resort in the entire 100. Expect an adventurous course, a solid all-inclusive hotel and a picturesque beach club, all at a very appealing price.



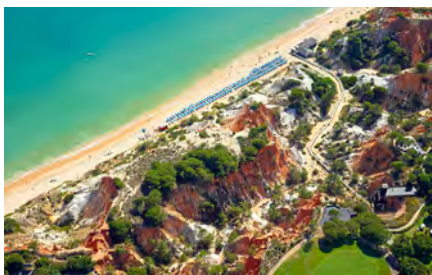
51 PGA NATIONAL

🇸🇪 MALMO, SWEDEN

Courses 32 Accommodation 17
Amenities 12 Setting 17 **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Malmo airport is 30 minutes away.

This is easy to sum up, as the marks suggest, and easy to define who it suits: golfers who want to play a lot of golf. Two continental Top 100-calibre courses by Kyle Phillips and lovely clubhouse rooms. It's a great base to play here and at Falsterbo and Ljunghusens.



52 PINE CLIFFS

🇵🇹 VILAMOURA, PORTUGAL

Course 21 Accommodation 19

Amenities 20 Setting 18 **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Faro airport is 40 minutes away. A small fall but only because of a high riser and a high new entry. Make no mistake, Pine Cliffs is superb as an all-round venue because of the non-golf amenities and range of accommodation. It only has nine holes, but for families it is very, very hard to top.



53 ARGENTARIO

🇮🇹 ORBETELLO, ITALY

Course 24 Accommodation 19

Amenities 17 Setting 18 **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Rome Fiumicino is an hour away. A splendid option for couples, especially those drawn to an uber stylish hotel that has a spa, indoor and outdoor pools, gym and tennis courts. The course is notably environmentally friendly, so offers a rustic charm as well as several 'wow' moments as you gaze over the Tuscan countryside.



54 LOFOTEN LINKS

🇳🇴 LOFOTEN ISLANDS, NORWAY

Course 32 Accommodation 16

Amenities 10 Setting 20 **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Fly to Oslo, Bodo and Svalvaer. Not too many will need to be told much about this spellbinding course in the Arctic Circle. It knocks every other setting I've experienced into a cocked hat and thus has several all-world holes. Limited but lovely chalet accommodation, plus horse riding and boating.



GOLF
WORLD
TOP
100

55 HOTEL DU GOLF BARRIERE

🇫🇷 DEAUVILLE, FRANCE

Courses 28 Accommodation 17

Amenities 17 Setting 16 **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Ferry to Le Havre/tunnel to Calais.

Deauville is steeped in French sophistication, as befits the stand-out hotel in the charming, iconic town from which it takes its name. Its art decor exterior hints at an episode of *Poirot* but this is not a resort resting on its 1920s laurels. The interior has been renovated to an exceptional level, offering a fresh but classy feel as well as boasting the expected trappings of modern luxury. The courses have a tough job to not let the accommodation down, but the Tom Simpson and Henry Cotton-designed Diane Barriere and Lucien Barriere layouts indubitably enhance the offering. There is a spa including a sauna, Turkish bath and gym, plus a delightful outdoor heated pool. When you also factor in the joys of the town, you have a

highly alluring destination. And given its location in Northern France, it's very easy to book your car onto a Brittany Ferries overnight service from Portsmouth or Poole and have a very appealing long weekend away.





56 TITANIC

🇹🇷 BELEK, TURKEY

Course **25** Accommodation **18**

Amenities **18** Setting **17** **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Antalya is 30 minutes away.

A course that has been redesigned by Gary Johnstone of European Golf Design and is now known as Cullinan Links. It offers some good sea views and this being Belek, the hotel is luxurious and amenity-packed. It would very comfortably fit inside the top 40 of this ranking.



57 LIGHTHOUSE

🇬🇧 CAPE KALIAKRA, BULGARIA

Course **25** Accommodation **18**

Amenities **17** Setting **18** **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Varna airport is an hour away.

Cape Kaliakra has three courses – Thracian Cliffs, BlackSeaRama, and Lighthouse. The latter is the No.3 of the trio but has a large and impressive hotel attached. The rooms, restaurant and pool area are all so spacious and there are plenty of decent amenities for the non-golfer.



58 LA FINCA

🇪🇸 VALENCIA, SPAIN

Courses **26** Accommodation **18**

Amenities **18** Setting **16** **TOTAL 78**

Getting there Alicante airport is 45 minutes away.

Despite it having three 18-hole courses, including one in our Spain Top 70, as well as a 5-star hotel, La Finca is somehow not a particularly high-profile Spanish resort. Take advantage of that fact, but note that as there's a bit of shuttling around to get to the golf, it loses a mark in setting.



64

LUBKER

🇩🇰 AARHUS, DENMARK

Courses **31** Accommodation **15**

Amenities **14** Setting **16** **TOTAL 76**

Getting there Aarhus is 20 minutes away.

This notable rise for Lubker is recognition of its all-round quality as well as a nod to extra amenities we experienced on a visit last year.

So, you have 27 holes – all of a continental European Top 100 level – plus spacious

apartment accommodation adjoining the clubhouse, plus a spa and leisure centre on the other side of the courses that are reachable by a 10-minute walk through the forest.

It's one of the most relaxed golf breaks I've experienced. Of course everything being so close together helps, but there was more to it than that. The staff are exceptionally good, the accommodation unfussy yet perfect, the golf not overcrowded yet high-calibre, and the woodland setting tranquillity itself.

Expect a cerebral examination from the Robert Trent Jones Jnr-designed loops of

nine, and expect them in superb condition thanks to the efforts of English greenkeeper Spencer Lloyd-Pye.

Expect a superb Danish breakfast, a tremendous Danish beer on the patio with your tasty lunch, and, if you take my recommendation, order a cold cuts platter to enjoy on your balcony with a glass of red wine on at least one evening.

Flying in and out of Copenhagen and staying here and at Great Northern (overleaf) for a couple of nights each is a trip I can heartily recommend. I'd love to hear of groups of golfers doing that.



59 LINNA

🇫🇮 VANAJALINNANTIE, FINLAND

Course **29** Accommodation **17**

Amenities **14** Setting **17** **TOTAL 77**

Getting there Helsinki airport is an hour away.

During his time working for European Golf Design, Tim Lobb laid out this course in a classic Finnish landscape of tumbling terrain and statuesque pines. It's good enough to be a continental Top 100 fixture, and very ably backed up by a fine hotel next door.



60 PULA

🇪🇸 MAJORCA, SPAIN

Course **25** Accommodation **18**

Amenities **17** Setting **17** **TOTAL 77**

Getting there Palma airport is 45 minutes away.

A course redesigned by Jose Maria Olazabal which has hosted several European Tour events. Its golf offering is backed up by a hotel set within an ancient castle that has a heated pool, Jacuzzi and spa. It feels like it should be higher than No.60, but that's the standard in this ranking...



61 LA QUINTA

🇪🇸 MARBELLA, SPAIN

Courses **28** Accommodation **17**

Amenities **16** Setting **16** **TOTAL 77**

Getting there Malaga airport is 40 minutes away.

If you find it tricky to tell the courses and resorts in the Costa del Sol apart, be assured that La Quinta is one of the area's quality venues. There are three never-boring loops of nine to choose from, plus a large hotel with plenty of amenities to entertain you off the course.



62 CASTELCONTURBIA

🇮🇹 MILAN, ITALY

Courses **29** Accommodation **16**

Amenities **15** Setting **17** **TOTAL 77**

Getting there Milan Malpensa is 30 mins away.

Three loops of nine set down in mature woodland by Robert Trent Jones Snr and which are good enough to have been in our continental Top 100 courses list. Add in neat on-site accommodation and you have a first-class resort. Like Bogogno, it lies close to Malpensa airport.



63 PALAZZO ARZAGA

🇮🇹 GARDA, ITALY

Courses **26** Accommodation **18**

Amenities **16** Setting **16** **TOTAL 76**

Getting there Milan-Bergamo is an hour away.

A resort with 27 holes – by Nicklaus Design and Gary Player – set around the 'palace' that has been converted into a hotel. Like Pula, it feels like it ought to be higher. Delightful accommodation that oozes old-world charm – you breakfast in a little al fresco piazza – and a peaceful setting.



71 NEW ENTRY

GREAT NORTHERN

KERTEMINDE, DENMARK

Course **30** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **14** Setting **15** **TOTAL 76**
Getting there Copenhagen and Billund are 90 mins away.

A new entry for this rising star of Danish golf, where everything is done to an incredibly high standard. The rooms are what you would expect of a 5-star+ hotel, dripping in quality furnishings, architecture and interior design. The spa is similar, an idyllic place to be pampered in 4,500m² of treatment rooms, pools and aqua spa.

The clubhouse restaurant and its large, enticing patio area in particular is the sort of place you slink onto at 4pm after your round and leave after sundown feeling very satisfied with your lot following several refreshments and some excellent food.

The golf course – a Jack Nicklaus design – is climbing our continental European ranking, currently at No.57 and poised to rise further next year. It's in terrific condition and packed with thrilling holes.



65 VILA SOL

VILAMOURA, PORTUGAL
Courses **26** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **16** Setting **17** **TOTAL 76**
Getting there Faro airport is 40 minutes away.

The presentation of Vila Sol's three loops of nine – Prime and Challenge, plus the Prestige – don't help this Algarve resort's position, which is a shame as there is lingering affection for this old favourite. The hotel is good and as a family option it ticks most boxes.



66 SAN ROQUE

SOTOGRANDE, SPAIN
Courses **32** Accommodation **16**
Amenities **12** Setting **16** **TOTAL 76**
Getting there Malaga airport is 30 minutes away.

San Roque's courses have had a successful renovation and are now knocking on the door of the continental courses Top 100 again. The accommodation is limited, hence this drop, and while there is a new hotel nearby, it is not linked to the hotel and so is not counted in this ranking.



67 KUSADASI

AYDIN, TURKEY
Course **25** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **17** Setting **16** **TOTAL 76**
Getting there Izmir is less than an hour away.

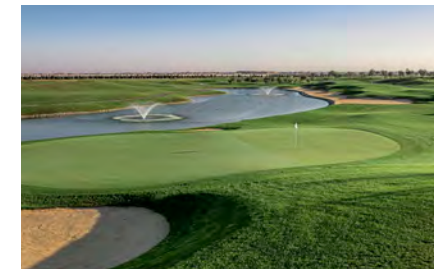
The views of the Aegean Sea from Kusadasi's split-level course help secure this non-Belek Turkish entry another top-70 position. The golf sits among two lakes, olive and carob trees. Off the course, there's a 400-room hotel with lots of amenities, including six pools and an aqua park.



68 THRACIAN CLIFFS

CAPE KALIAKRA, BULGARIA
Course **30** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **12** Setting **19** **TOTAL 76**
Getting there Varna airport 60 minutes away.

As the marks here suggest, this is really all about the course and its setting, a location so spectacular that we named it No.3 in our continental X Factor Top 100. If a hotel was added to the villa accommodation and limited amenities, Thracian Cliffs would threaten the top 20 here.



69 DREAMLAND

BAKU, AZERBAIJAN
Course **27** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **15** Setting **16** **TOTAL 76**
Getting there Baku airport is 20 minutes away.

It doesn't have any impact on our ranking but Baku is a really intriguing city to visit, so for the golfer travelling with non-golfer/s, this is a really good 'different' option. The course was laid out by Cynthia Dye and is a thoughtful design in good condition. It also has an excellent on-site hotel.



70 ROBINSON NOBILIS

BELEK, TURKEY
Course **25** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **17** Setting **16** **TOTAL 76**
Getting there Antalya airport is 30 mins away.

I really do like the Robinson brand – it is pleasantly unfussy and you get a lot for your money and they do things very well. Nobilis is their Belek offering, with a pleasant golf course allied to a quality hotel with enough amenities to keep everyone happy.



72 ANFI TAURO

GRAN CANARIA, SPAIN
Course **27** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **14** Setting **18** **TOTAL 76**
Getting there Gran Canaria airport is 30 mins.

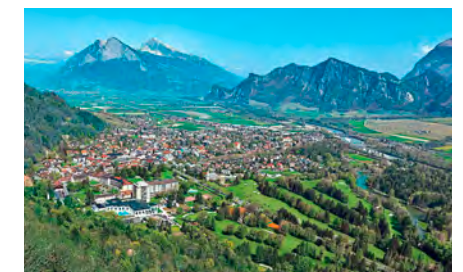
Anfi's course is a combination of spellbinding views and testing holes that are at times a brutal challenge. It therefore does well in our continental X Factor Top 100 and scores well in Setting in this list. The resort accommodation is in the form of high-class apartments and villas.



73 PALHEIRO

MADEIRA, PORTUGAL
Course **25** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **14** Setting **18** **TOTAL 75**
Getting there Madeira airport 30 mins.

One of the classiest resorts in the list. This elegant Madeira play-and-stay comprises an interesting course with trees, bushes and plants that burst with colour as a result of its temperate climate. It has a gorgeous but unfussy hotel and expansive Atlantic views from its hilltop position.



74 BAD RAGAZ

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND
Course **22** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **18** Setting **17** **TOTAL 75**
Getting there Zurich airport is an hour away.

A significant rise for this Swiss resort. Full disclosure that I've not been to Bad Ragaz so am relying on the verdicts of others – and reports are generally very good. The Donald Harradine parkland course is backed up by a hotel and amenities that include renowned wellness facilities and even a casino.

77 8

ST ENDREOL

 FREJUS, FRANCE

Course **24** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **16** Setting **17** **TOTAL 74**
Getting there Fly to Nice, Toulon or Marseille.

I'm saying this light-heartedly, but by the time I'd got through half of the local brew and bowl of salty nuts we were enjoying at St Endreol, it was destined to move at least one place up in this ranking. Sat on the clubhouse patio overlooking the 18th green on a beautiful May evening, we'd only arrived 30 minutes earlier, but all was right with the world. We looked out across the



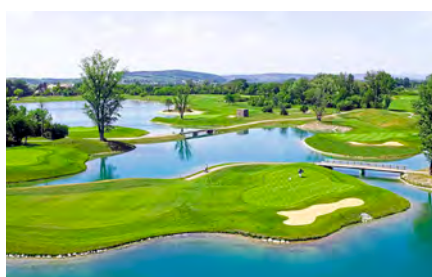
course and forward to a couple of days here, and our drinks and snacks tasted sublime.

A further place higher was secured with dinner, a typically excellent French offering on an atmospheric patio. You also enjoy breakfast there and, if you're anything like

us, a post-round lunchtime beer. It's the sort of low-hassle, high-reward destination that makes large resorts seem so unwieldy and soulless to some. The bedrooms in the 50-room hotel here are really nice, usually with a delightful view over the pretty courtyard, while the spa makes it a terrific option for couples, with a range of treatments, aquatic cycle, saunas, Turkish and whirlpool baths, plus a fitness room.

The course is funky and fun, somewhere to think your way round and perhaps leave driver in the bag for more holes than usual. It was nicely presented and a very vibrant place to play.

All those positives added seven extra places to the one it had secured as refreshment was taken on arrival...

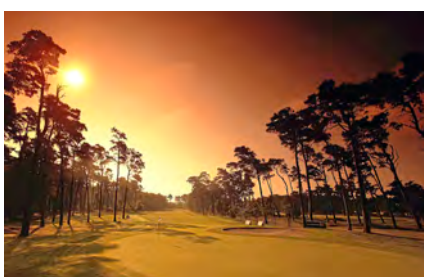


75 DIAMOND


 ATZENBRUGG, AUSTRIA

Course **26** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **14** Setting **18** **TOTAL 75**
Getting there Vienna airport is an hour away.

This European Tour Destination venue is a continental X Factor Top 100 course and is allied to high-end clubhouse and apartment accommodation. The setting is predictably pleasant and all reports I get about this resort are good. I haven't yet been, but it's on my wishlist for 2025.

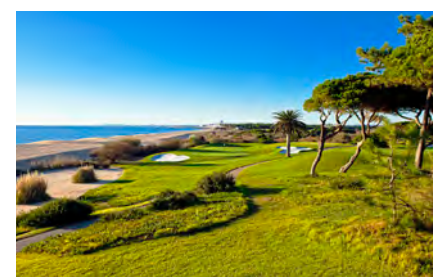


76 BARSEBACK

 MALMO, SWEDEN

Courses **31** Accommodation **16**
Amenities **10** Setting **18** **TOTAL 75**
Getting there Fly to Malmo and drive up the coast. Fly to Copenhagen and drive to Sweden.

This Solheim Cup and European Tour host has two 18-holers, the No.1 being a course of two halves that is a continental Top 100 fixture. There are 36 rooms in the hotel and while it lacks somewhat for amenities, many will certainly enjoy it.



78 VALE DO LOBO

 VILAMOURA, PORTUGAL

Courses **27** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **12** Setting **18** **TOTAL 74**
Getting there Faro airport is 40 minutes away.

I'm often asked why Vale do Lobo is so low in this list, because it has two continental Top 200 entries – the Ocean and Royal, both with their own 'wow' holes. The reason is simply that the golf club 'only' has apartment accommodation. With a hotel, it'd be top 30.





80 PIRIN

🇷🇺 RAZLOG, BULGARIA

Courses 25 Accommodation 17

Amenities 15 Setting 17 **TOTAL 74**

Getting there Under two hours from Sofia.

This Bulgarian resort has plenty of good accommodation because it doubles as a ski resort during the winter. It's also really good value, with one of the courses by Ian Woosnam and a pretty second option.



81 PERALADA

🇪🇸 GIRONA, SPAIN

Course 24 Accommodation 17

Amenities 16 Setting 17 **TOTAL 74**

Getting there Girona 30 minutes away.

As you'll see in a few pages' time, when this Girona resort makes it into my Editor's Choice, there is a lot to like about Peralada, not least a Wine Spa, a chic hotel and first-class food. A compelling package.



82 PENATI

🇸🇰 BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA

Courses 30 Accommodation 15

Amenities 11 Setting 18 **TOTAL 74**

Getting there Bratislava 1 hour.

Penati goes a little against what I want from a resort in that it has minimal amenities, but with two contrasting courses – including the Heritage that features in our continental Top 100 – it absolutely has to be in.



83 DESERT SPRINGS

🇪🇸 ALMERIA, SPAIN

Course 25 Accommodation 17

Amenities 15 Setting 17 **TOTAL 74**

Getting there Murcia airport is 80 minutes away.

A brilliant winter sun option because the climate here is pretty much the best in mainland Europe. There are apartments and townhouses in the 'town', plus a desert-style course in the Indiana.



79

CHATEAU AUGERVILLE

🇫🇷 NEMOURS, FRANCE

Course 24 Accommodation 18

Amenities 16 Setting 16 **TOTAL 74**

Getting there Paris Charles de Gaulle is 80 mins.

Paris is arguably the greatest golf city in continental Europe – in terms of a city break, only Amsterdam comes close. But this is the only Parisian resort in this list – and it is especially well placed for a game at Europe's No.3, Fontainebleau.

At Chateau Augerville there is a woodland course by French architect Olivier Dongradi, who has a good reputation in his homeland and who has made a fine job of integrating l'Essonne river into this course, with the finishing hole in front of a chateau hotel a classic.

So the golf is good – but it might actually be overshadowed by the 5-star hotel, which boasts 40 truly beautiful rooms.

A member of Chateaux & Hotels Collection, this is accommodation of rare pedigree, with the grandeur of the castle brought out magnificently by its conversion to a hotel. Bursting with charm, character

and a tangible feeling of being somewhere special, there are also the luxurious touches the discerning modern traveller demands. Foodies will relish the alluring restaurants Jacques Coeur and L'Atelier, where local cuisine is promoted, and if you need pampering on your visit, the 620m² spa will oblige. Thus, this is a wonderful couples option and also for those seeking the finer things in life. A real find in the leafy suburbs of Paris.



GOLF
WORLD
TOP
100

Ones to watch for 2026?

Next time we refresh this Top 100, will some of these names make it in?

LA HACIENDA LINKS

The two courses here have been long established (formerly known as Alcaidesa) but were upgraded recently and a new hotel is poised to open any day now. Too late for us to assess for this list, but it feels like a certain entry in 2026 – not least because of the spectacular clifftop setting it all enjoys. We look forward to going for a look.

OMBRIA

This new course in the Algarve has already made it into our Top 100s and a Viceroy hotel is poised to open imminently. Together, it feels as if they are going to be a compelling offering and become a new star in the Algarve, but offering a different kind of experience given Ombria is set up in the hills. It would further enhance this list's quality.

ANTOGNOLLA

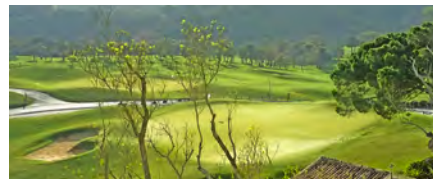
We trailed this in our last continental resorts ranking but the intricate nature of converting the historic hilltop castle into 5-star+ accommodation means it is taking time to be ready. Hopefully by 2026 it will be open and we will have been for a look. The golf is good and the accommodation promises much – a splash top-30 entry is not impossible.

LUSTICA BAY

This is Montenegro's exciting new coastal destination and construction on the country's first golf course has begun. It's going to be a Gary Player design and will boast sea views from every hole. It is part of a huge development with several hotels. The course is due for completion in 2028, with the first nine playable by 2026.

LA MAVIGLIA

This new luxury golf and residential resort in Puglia might just miss out for 2026 unless we get a sneak preview. It is going to have an 18-hole course, a 20-room boutique hotel within a renovated 16th century farmhouse, 35 private villas (up to six beds), 70 suites, four restaurants and a huge spa.



84 CAMPO REAL

🇵🇹 LISBON, PORTUGAL

Course 24 Accommodation 17

Amenities 16 Setting 17 **TOTAL 74**

Getting there Lisbon airport is 30 minutes away.

More of a family option than anything else, with an especially good hotel boasting indoor and outdoor pools, a large spa, equestrian centre, kids' club and tennis courts. The course is by Donald Steel.



85 SON ANTEM

🇪🇸 MAJORCA, SPAIN

Courses 25 Accommodation 17

Amenities 16 Setting 15 **TOTAL 73**

Getting there Palma airport is 30 minutes away.

That there is great quality right the way down this list is illustrated here. Son Antem has two courses and tonnes of accommodation via a hotel and villas, plus loads of amenities. A great family option.



86 VILLAITANA

🇪🇸 ALICANTE, SPAIN

Courses 25 Accommodation 17

Amenities 16 Setting 15 **TOTAL 73**

Getting there Alicante airport is 35 minutes.

Villaitana entered the list for the first time in 2022 and only drops here because of two high new entries. This Alicante resort has two courses by Nicklaus Design and 4- and 5-star hotel options.



87 BARCELONA GOLF

🇪🇸 BARCELONA, SPAIN

Courses 24 Accommodation 17

Amenities 16 Setting 16 **TOTAL 73**

Getting there Barcelona is 20 minutes away.

A nice all-rounder set among vineyards, with the Masia course by Jose Maria Olazabal complemented by a shorter nine-holer. The hotel is renowned for its cuisine and has a good spa, gym and pool.



93

NEW
ENTRY

ISLA CANELA

ISLA CANELA, SPAIN

Courses **23** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **16** Setting **15** **TOTAL 72**
Getting there Fly to Seville or Faro.



I must admit I had not even heard of Isla Canela when they got in touch to ask why they weren't in this ranking. When I explained my ignorance, they were confident enough to suggest a visit in the hope they might be included next time. Well, I'm glad they got in touch because it is a worthy and distinctive addition to this list.

Isla Canela is a lovely little island – although you don't really feel like you are on an island – that is right on the border with Portugal.

It is a popular yet neat, well-kept and inviting tourist area mainly populated by Spanish holidaymakers in high season, with a long, wide sandy

beach and several restaurants along the seaside road of the eponymous town.

The golf resort fits perfectly into this vibe and is headlined by an stylish boutique hotel. The Old course winds round the hotel and is a nice resort experience with a handful of standout holes, playable throughout. It's a really good option for couples in particular.

But Isla Canela has more. The whole island is owned by the same company and that brings in four family-friendly hotels such as the Barcelo and Melia, as well as a second course, the excellent Links – which hosts DP World Tour qualifying.

So while the boutique hotel and the Old could not be closer, there are 10-minute drives between these extra hotels and courses, which costs it in terms of a Setting mark as far as our ranking is concerned. In reality, this is a large resort with an extensive choice of hotels and two nicely contrasting courses.



88 BARBAROUX ↓1
FRANCE
Course **24** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **16** Setting **16** **TOTAL 73**
Getting there Fly to Toulon, Marseille or Nice.

The course by Pete Dye and P.B. Dye runs among pine trees, oak trees, rosemary and lavender and is an all-out assault on the senses... in a good way. The small Mercure hotel is a lower-key complement.



89 SALGADOS ↓1
PORTUGAL
Course **23** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **14** Setting **19** **TOTAL 73**
Getting there Faro is 20 minutes away.

Holds its place in the 80s thanks to a fabulous setting next to Salgados Beach and a nature reserve. A very playable course is complemented by the villas, a 5-star beach hotel Salgados Palace and nice apartments.



90 CHATEAU DE TAULANE ↓1
FRANCE
Course **24** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **15** Setting **16** **TOTAL 73**
Getting there Nice is 40 minutes away.

Another entry for the south-east of France, this time a 4-star hotel set within an ancient castle, with a limited number (20) of rooms, but each of them very high class. A Gary Player woodland-parkland course.



91 DOLCE FREGATE ↓1
FRANCE
Course **23** Accommodation **18**
Amenities **16** Setting **16** **TOTAL 73**
Getting there Nice is 50 minutes away.

Staying in south-east France, Ron Fream cut the main 18 holes out of classic Mediterranean and Provencal countryside, then added another nine to give guests in the 4-star hotel plenty of golf.



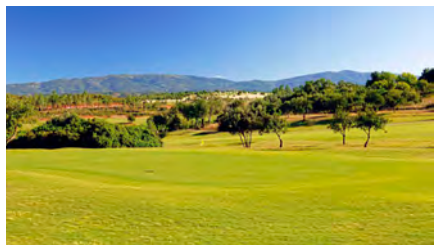
92 ZALA SPRINGS ↔
HUNGARY
Course **24** Accommodation **16**
Amenities **15** Setting **17** **TOTAL 72**
Getting there Budapest is two hours away.

The pride of Hungary. The Robert Trent Jones Jnr course is backed up by 32 modern 'design suites' in the hotel and a spa and wellness centre that one of by panellists won't stop raving about.



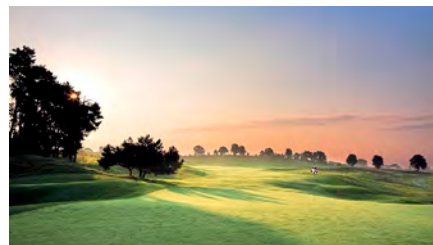
94 POGGIO DEI MEDICI ↓2
ITALY
Course **24** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **15** Setting **16** **TOTAL 72**
Getting there Bologna and Pisa 50 mins away.

A low-ish profile Italian resort that backs up the view that Tuscany is Italy's golf tourism Mecca. The course sits in the Mugello valley and the 70-room UNA hotel is in a restored farmhouse. Good facilities.



95 MORGADO ↓2
PORTUGAL
Courses **26** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **13** Setting **17** **TOTAL 71**
Getting there Faro is 40 minutes away.

Number 95 has two courses, would you believe. This Algarve resort in the hills above Portimao has the Morgado and the Alamos, and it would be higher if there was more than 'just' nice apartments.



96 MODRY LAS ↓2
POLAND
Course **27** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **12** Setting **17** **TOTAL 71**
Getting there Fly to Szczecin, Poznan or Berlin.

Don't go here if you want numerous amenities. Do go here – and I really recommend it – if you want the best piece of design work by Gary Player that I've seen, plus lovely cottage accommodation within the woods.



97 GRADO ↔
ITALY
Course **23** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **15** Setting **18** **TOTAL 71**
Getting there Venice is 80 minutes, Trieste 40.

A great spot for families because there are loads of amenities – it's basically a classy, continental take on a holiday park, with cute woodland cabins. The course feels like it's in the Everglades. I loved it here.



98 KAYA EAGLES ↓1
TURKEY
Course **22** Accommodation **17**
Amenities **16** Setting **16** **TOTAL 71**
Getting there Antalya airport is 40 minutes away.

There's still space for one more Belek entry, this time with a course by former European Tour player David Jones and another predictably swish hotel with plenty of activities other than golf.



99 TECINA ↓1
SPAIN
Course **24** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **12** Setting **19** **TOTAL 70**
Getting there Ferry or fly to La Gomera.

Le Jardin hotel is perfectly pleasant but the real star of this entry is the location, given Tecina is set down on the edge of the Atlantic. The course is funky because of the volcanic terrain and, of course, aesthetic.



100 HIMMERLAND ↓1
DENMARK
Courses **27** Accommodation **15**
Amenities **12** Setting **16** **TOTAL 70**
Getting there Aalborg is 45 minutes away.

A regular European Tour venue, this Danish resort boasts the woodland-parkland Backtee course as well as the Garia, plus a nice hotel whose spa and wellness centre excels.

Where to find the 100 resorts

Liked the sound of one or more of the resorts in the list? Use our map to start planning your next golf break



- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Costa Navarino, Greece | 51 PGA National, Sweden |
| 2 Verdura, Italy | 52 Pine Cliffs, Portugal |
| 3 Terre Blanche, France | 53 Argentario, Italy |
| 4 Camiral, Spain | 54 Lofoten Links, Norway |
| 5 Carya, Turkey | 55 Hotel Golf du Barriere, France |
| 6 Sotogrande, Spain | 56 Titanic, Turkey |
| 7 Quinta do Lago, Portugal | 57 Lighthouse, Bulgaria |
| 8 Finca Cortesin, Spain | 58 La Finca, Spain |
| 9 Praia D'El Rey, Portugal | 59 Linna, Finland |
| 10 Gloria, Turkey | 60 Pula, Mallorca |
| 11 Dom Pedro, Portugal | 61 La Quinta, Spain |
| 12 Cabot Bordeaux, France | 62 Castelconturbia, Italy |
| 13 Antalya GC, Turkey | 63 Palazzo Arzaga, Italy |
| 14 La Cala, Spain | 64 Lubker, Denmark |
| 15 Penha Longa, Portugal | 65 Vila Sol, Portugal |
| 16 Castiglion del Bosco, Italy | 66 San Roque, Spain |
| 17 Oitavos Dunes, Portugal | 67 Kusadasi, Turkey |
| 18 Le Touquet, France | 68 Thracian Cliffs, Bulgaria |
| 19 La Manga, Spain | 69 Dreamland, Azerbaijan |
| 20 Monte Rei, Portugal | 70 Robinson Nobilis, Turkey |
| 21 Evian, France | 71 Great Northern, Denmark |
| 22 El Saler, Spain | 72 Anfi Tauro, Gran Canaria |
| 23 Cornelia, Turkey | 73 Palheiro, Madeira |
| 24 Montgomerie Maxx, Turkey | 74 Bad Ragaz, Switzerland |
| 25 Villa Padierna, Spain | 75 Diamond CC, Austria |
| 26 Amendoeira, Portugal | 76 Barseback, Sweden |
| 27 Salobre, Gran Canaria | 77 St Andreol, France |
| 28 Budersand, Germany | 78 Vale do Lobo, Portugal |
| 29 Vidago Palace, Portugal | 79 Chateau Augerville, France |
| 30 Sueno, Turkey | 80 Pirin, Bulgaria |
| 31 Royal Obidos, Portugal | 81 Peralada, Spain |
| 32 Arabella, Majorca | 82 Penati, Slovakia |
| 33 Emporda, Spain | 83 Desert Springs, Spain |
| 34 Penina, Portugal | 84 Campo Real, Portugal |
| 35 Quinta da Ria, Portugal | 85 Son Antem, Majorca |
| 36 Aroeira, Portugal | 86 Villaitana, Spain |
| 37 Bogogno, Italy | 87 Barcelona Golf, Spain |
| 38 Palmares, Portugal | 88 Barbaroux, France |
| 39 Quinta da Marinha, Portugal | 89 Salgados, Portugal |
| 40 Aphrodite Hills, Cyprus | 90 Chateau de Taulane, France |
| 41 Castelfalfi, Italy | 91 Dolce Fregate, France |
| 42 La Bagnaia, Italy | 92 Zala Springs, Hungary |
| 43 Chateau des Vigiers, France | 93 Isla Canela, Spain |
| 44 Abama, Tenerife | 94 Poggio Dei Medici, Italy |
| 45 San Domenico, Italy | 95 Morgado, Portugal |
| 46 Las Colinas, Spain | 96 Modry Las, Poland |
| 47 Royal Bled, Slovenia | 97 Grado, Italy |
| 48 Kytaja, Finland | 98 Kaya Eagles, Turkey |
| 49 Montecastillo, Spain | 99 La Gomera, Tenerife |
| 50 Korineum, Cyprus | 100 Himmerland, Denmark |



Lofoten Links, Norway

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Chris Bertram has been to 94 of the 100 resorts in this list – so which ones would he especially recommend for particular golfers?

If accommodation is king...

Costa Navarino's four hotels are unbeatable in terms of breadth, although Gloria has three and Evian one 5-star and two 4-. We await the renovation of Dom Pedro's trio with interest – I suspect they'll go from 4-star to 5+.

Individually, I'd have authentic yet lavish Castiglion del Bosco, intimate Finca

Cortecin and the palatial Hotel Royal at Evian just ahead of three very different options: opulent Villa Padierna, the whitewashed beauty of San Domenico and characterful Vidago Palace. Stylish Camiral, sophisticated SO/ Sotogrande and the comforts of Penha Longa complete my very stylish top 10.

If you're all about the setting...

I'm almost just listing the marks from each entry here... but my personal running order for jaw-dropping scenes would be Lofoten, Verdura, Thracian Cliffs, Praia D'El Rey, Evian, Royal Bled, Budersand, Kytaja and Quinta da Ria.

For lots of Top 100-grade golf...

I've chosen five options for those who want more than just one course without leaving the resort, but which has to be of a certain (high) standard. There is a clear winner: Praia d'El Rey, which has the eponymous course right next to the Marriott hotel and West Cliffs a short shuttle away. Both are top-30 continental courses and combine to create a very compelling package.

Quinta do Lago can only offer one current Top 100 course, the South, but the North has been one and Laranjal easily could be. It's a very balanced offering.

Golf du Medoc's Chateau is a continental top 20 fixture, with the Vignes in the late 70s. Verdura's East is now the clear No.1 there but the West is a fine complement and the same is true of Kytaja's South East and North West.



One stellar course for connoisseurs...

This ended up a shortlist of... seven! Lofoten's location and dramatic holes make it the clear winner, but there are six others I'd group pretty close together if just one outstanding course is enough on your holiday: Monte Rei, El Saler, Oitavos Dunes, Le Touquet (also has a second 18), Royal Bled and Budersand. A stellar and varied list!

Resorts for couples...

An exceptionally competitive category. My thinking here was to focus on exquisite accommodation that oozes romance, plus excellence in dining and pool areas. And not penalise resorts for 'just' having 18 holes, as it's possible only one round would be played on a couples' trip.

It's hard to see past Finca Cortesin, with its intimate and elegant hotel, but I'd also put Evian's Hotel Royal in this category too. It has pedigree and opulence in abundance. The majestic Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco makes up my top three. Cosy, scenic Royal Bled, characterful Vidago Palace and the chic, beachside W at Costa Navarino are my three other idyllic couple retreats.

Top choices for families...

Whatever the step up from a 'competitive' category is, this is it. I've got a winner, though, in Pine Cliffs, which has something to do for all the family. All the Belek resorts are brilliant for families but my clear winner there is Gloria, helped by the on-site water park that can entertain for days. Penha Longa think of everything; it's got an adventure playground and so many sports... but the clincher is a bouncy castle next to the breakfast area, so you enjoy your

croissants in peace. The superb Beach Club at La Reserva gets Sotogrande an Editor's Choice, not least because of the myriad sports on dry land and water, while Penina deserve a mention – a huge kids' club heads its wide-ranging appeal.

Best for: Groups I...

For this type of group I'm homing in on lots of solid golf, minimal hassle and good post-round areas for a refreshment. Top for me is La Cala, with three strong courses all grouped closely together, so you won't need a car once you arrive, plus a fabulous pool bar and tapas restaurant.

Dom Pedro has FIVE courses, and although you need a shuttle to get to them all, the hotels are conveniently all within a Bryson tee shot of Vilamoura marina.

I really like Gloria in Belek – the Old and New are really nice and the nine-holer Verde pleasant – while La Manga has three courses, with the West comfortably the best for my money. I'll also throw Lubker in if 27 holes are required. I had a great time there, doing LOTS of laps of the nines.

Best for: Groups II...

For this different sort of group, I'm thinking of nice golf, neat hotels, terrific food, and an excellent spa.

Top-10 entries Verdura and Terre Blanche are easy to suggest for groups seeking the above – as is Camiral, whose spa is epic. I think Evian would also be a smash hit with the golf-food-spa seekers.

Some less obvious options? Denmark's Great Northern has gorgeous individual rooms and an elegant spa. Also consider Hotel du Golf Barriere in the enchanting

town of Deauville, and the never-want-to-leave Tuscan bolt-hole of Castelfalfi.

Finally... La Cala... again. It easily caters for both Group I and Group II, with a magnificent spa complementing the golf, a comfortable hotel and long evenings feasting on La Bodega's fabulous tapas.

For golfing foodies...

A self-explanatory category, with my emphasis being on outstanding single restaurants rather than lots of different options, as you have in the Belek resorts. With that remit, I can't split Camiral and Penha Longa. The Origins, led by David Vives, formerly of three Michelin-star restaurant El Celler de Can Roca, and the rebranded Camiral Bistro (formerly 1477) are magnificent. While LAB by Sergi Arola at Penha Longa is an extraordinary gastronomic journey – and its other restaurants are also superb. Verdura is not far behind and I LOVE the piazza of restaurants between the Westin and Romanos at Costa Navarino.

For phenomenal value...

This is not a scientific selection as I admit I haven't checked play-and-stay deals for all 100 resorts listed here, but if you find a better quality-to-cost ratio than that on offer at Korineum I'd be amazed. The course won't dazzle you like some here but the accommodation is nice, the all-inclusive food great and the beach club fabulous. The chalet accommodation and Gary Player-designed course at Modry Las is a close second. Pirin, Grado, Aroeira and Lighthouse also show that 'Top 100' doesn't necessarily mean expensive.



Finca Cortesin, Spain