

# FRONT 9 TRAVEL

Bespoke Luxury Golf Experiences

ISSUE THREE SUMMER 2021

## Tenerife – the fairway ends at the Atlantic

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Inspiration from great golf destinations and travel writers

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## EDITORS LETTER SUMMER 2021

### ‘Keep the dream alive’

The hitherto unthinkable; flights grounded and travel banned has been a horrible reality for far too long, with travel temptingly now within grasp, the debate we are all having is WHEN is the right time to take the plunge and book that travel experience. So, consider this - that whilst we all know that a holiday is a positive boost to mental health it's been proven that planning an escape and the anticipation of a holiday is almost as good as being away. The process of finding the perfect destination, accommodation and activities can not only be a temporary distraction from the difficult times we're going through but that the anticipation and sense of hopefulness for better times can keep us motivated and excited for the delayed gratification of a getaway. This 'light at the end of the tunnel' often has a long-term mood-boosting effect and can help lift our spirits and foster mental well-being.

And then of course there are practical reasons to book today for travel in the future. Firstly, reduced airline capacity is quite likely to both limit seat availability and squeeze prices up. It is easy to forget that the UK is only a small part of the world travel market and airline capacity is going to be heavily in demand from the wider global market, with European and American tourists filling up flights and beds that are normally taken by British travellers. Secondly, with total flexibility of booking conditions being offered, so that your money will always be safe whatever the destination or dates, as we are a TTA (Travel Trust Association) member, which means your money, is protected by a trust account. Thirdly, the strong pound means now is a great time to book a foreign holiday enabling you to lock in to get the most 'bang for your buck'.

So, let this edition of our magazine tempt you; we have a fresh view of the varied golfing challenges and 5-star experiences that await you in Tenerife. Throw out any misconception about escorted tours when you read what our Southern Africa expert, Simon Lacey, has created for you, along with part 2 of his experience of travelling in Namibia. Portugal is still one of the greatest golf destinations in the world and the cities of Lisbon and Porto now also offer world-class gastronomy and wine experiences too. And, last but not least, read about one of our hidden golfing gems deep in the Sussex weald.

Above Image:  
Abama Golf Course, Tenerife

Front Cover image:  
Buenavista Golf, Tenerife

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# Tenerife Golf – the fairway ends at the Atlantic

Longing for a temperate climate in which to play golf all year round then Tenerife could be just the destination. The dominant island in the Canaries, step beyond the tourist hotspots and Tenerife is an island of extraordinary beauty and diversity, with remote mountain-ridge villages, cultured port settlements and charming ancient towns. A rich and varied range of landscapes and vegetation from imposing cliffs hundreds of meters high, to deserts, and the lush forest. A memorable landscape that enticed and challenged golfing greats, the likes of Seve Ballesteros and Dave Thomas, to create their vision of the perfect golf course.





Buena Vista Golf

## Why play golf here?

The climate for one, with warm winters, gentle bright summer days and an average annual temperate of 23c. Secondly, the quality and diversity of the golf courses is undeniable. One day you are playing a course 700m high and the next you are on the coast, at the foot of the cliffs or on sandy or rocky coves. The Atlantic Ocean is an ever-present vision on most of Tenerife's courses, providing a specular backdrop and amazing views, to infinity and beyond!

The long list of golfing greats who have imposed their will on the landscape to create world class golf courses ensures frequent demand nationally and internationally as a venue for prestigious golfing tournaments. Most recently Golf Costa Adeje hosted the Tenerife Open 2021 and the Canary Islands Championship 2021, which were won by South Africans, Dean Burmester and Garrick Higgo respectively.

## What can we offer?

Nine challenging golf courses with nine unique experiences.



Buenvista Golf Course

**Abama Golf** - A genuine work of art by Dave Thomas, this is a modern European course designed to use the terrain to challenge the player with dramatic use of elevation and water. Against the backdrop of the deep blue of the Atlantic Ocean and the island of Gomera beyond, 22 Lakes are strategically placed around the course, and with a reputed thousand palm trees, this course offer's some stunning signature holes. If this alone wasn't enough, the course is kept in immaculate condition with velvet greens and lush fairways. Located in the area of Guia de Isora, West Tenerife.





**Amarilla Golf** - Not quite as well known or prestigious as the Abama, the Amarilla offers no frills challenges that are not to be underestimated. Designed by Donald Steel, the 5th hole, one of the more spectacular you might find on any course, where the sea becomes your fairway as you drive over the waves onto the raised green. The course is attractively lined with lush vegetation, with the ever-present backdrop of the Atlantic Ocean, and inland imposing views of Mount Teide.



**Golf Los Palos** This 9-hole, par 27 golf course is set in luxuriant, colorful landscape. Virtually flat the main obstacles are the lakes and streams, it's perfect for beginners or for improving your short game. Designed by Integral Golf Design, José María Olazábal's company, it boasts a lovely terrace overlooking the entire golf course.





**Buenavista Golf** - Located in the north of Tenerife, a little out of the way but well worth the visit. Laid out along the stunning coastline in the shadow of striking cliffs and flanked by the impressive Teno Country Park, this Seve Ballesteros designed course is as he described quite 'unique'. Whilst the fairways are generally wide and the greens inviting, it is the proximity to the ocean that adds a rare dimension to this course, and on several of the holes it feels like you are playing the ocean as much as the course. Of particular note are the two par threes (15th and 17th holes) both teetering on the cliff edge. Post round the lovely Club House has superb panoramic views of the entire course where you can marvel at the vision Ballesteros had to place a course in such a dramatic location.

**Golf Costa Adeje** - Pepe Gancedo, often called the 'Picasso' of golf, has shown his design flair by incorporating the landscape to interesting effect on this course. The old farm terraces that slope down to the ocean, with their original dry stonewalls cross the fairways at times to create natural hazards, which with several gorges and lakes create a satisfyingly challenging golf experience. With really beautiful views of the ocean, the island of La Gomera and the rugged Adeje Mountains, this unique golf course features 27 holes unusually configured with equal number of par 3, par 4 and par 5's.





**Golf del Sur** - Another of Gancedo's masterpieces, this course has been more recently updated by Manuel Piñero. The original layout worked with and enhanced all the natural protected areas that surround the 27 holes, ravine's and lava rock create danger and excitement, and black bunker sand contrast with the verdant greens, indigenous flowers; cacti, palm trees and other large colourful plants that line the fairways.



**Golf Las Américas** - Designed by John Jacobs this 18-hole course is situated in the centre of Playa de Las Américas, one of the most famous holiday areas in the south of the island. Located in a natural amphitheatre with superb views of the ocean and the island of La Gomera. The par 3 13th provides quite a memorable challenge with the green appearing as if an island surrounded by water.



**Real Club de Golf de Tenerife** - Founded in 1932, this is one of the oldest golf clubs in Spain and still preserves a typically British air of distinction. Situated at 600m above sea level, the 18-hole course has undulating fairways that ascend with a spectacular view of Teide. The dry streambeds play a part in several holes. The first five holes all play uphill away for the clubhouse, but what goes up must come down, the closing holes are worth the earlier climb. The 4th hole is one of the most difficult where precision play is important, especially on the shot to the green, as you have out of bounds on the left and right.

**Tecina Golf** - In La Gomera, just a 40-minute ferry ride from Tenerife, Donald Steel designed a striking 18-hole course perched on a cliff with impressive views overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and Mount Teide. The course is unique in its design, as the 1st hole is over 100m higher than the 18th hole and clubhouse, as you descend; the holes traverse across the downward slope. The native vegetation on the upper areas becomes more and more exuberant as the course slopes down to the sea until it reaches a beauty spot full of tropical fruit trees. From 2009 until 2019 the Fred Olsen Challenge de España and the Alps Tour, both tournaments that belong to the European satellite circuit, have been contested at Tecina Golf.



## Where to Stay - Like the sound of the golf courses but not sure that Tenerife is for you?

Whilst Tenerife is well known as a beach holiday destination island it has been quietly maturing into one of Europe's most exciting destinations with extraordinary experiences to offer from whale-watching, star-gazing in Teide National Park, sporting activities and some of the world's best hotels, restaurants, bars and spas.

Golf packages can be built around your choice of hotel, and top of our list for those looking for the ultimate 5-star experience are; Hotel Las Madrigueras, Hotel Suite Villa Maria, Melia Hacienda del Conde Golf & Spa, Las Terrazas de Abama, Royal Hideaway Corales or Ritz-Carlton Abama. If you want to be in the hub of the nightlife Hotel Jardin Tropical, Hotel Sheraton La Caleta or the Iberostar Anthelia Hotel are good options. Looking for a completely different experience, why not Hotel Jardin Tecina on the island La Gomera, where you can chill out and recharge your batteries on this small island off the coast of Tenerife.

For more information and prices please contact [info@front9travel.com](mailto:info@front9travel.com)



Star Gazing in Teide National Park



Hotel Jardín Tecina



Arco de Tajap



Dolphin & Whale Watching



Teide National Park



# South Africa 10 day Escorted Golf Tour

## Cape Town, the Winelands and the Garden Route

The world's a big place, and leisure time precious, so there are times when you might want to see and do a little more, to get every last ounce out of your experiences. An escorted tour allows you to really get under the skin of a destination without worrying about the detail. Surround yourself with people with similar passions and with the comfort that your itinerary is focused on exactly what you want to do or see and how you want to do it. Safari, golf, history and cultural, adventure, gastronomy and wine, an escorted tailored tour, with a knowledgeable professional, can deliver all of this and more.



Front 9 Travel's unique and bespoke 'Golf Safari Tour' in South Africa's south western region, led by our experienced tour guide Simon Lacey, whom with his 20 years specialist knowledge of South African culture and history, and of course the magnificent golf courses, will take you from historic Cape Town east to the vine-covered valleys of the winelands renowned for all thing's food and drink. Then back to the southeastern coast to meander along the verdant and ecologically diverse 190-mile stretch known as the Garden Route.

You'll be met on arrival into Cape Town and introduced to your fellow golfers at a Welcome Dinner in the famous V&A Waterfront. Your tour starts the following morning and will take you through some of the most stunning scenery in the Cape. You will play superb and challenging golf course, with a friendly level of competition to spice up your days, and enjoy some of the finest South African cuisine and wines from the regions you visit. And, if this isn't enough finish your tour with a safari at the luxury Gondwana Game Reserve.



Peal Valley Golf Course



### **Milnerton GC**

18-hole / 6113m / Par 72

This seaside course is situated in a leafy suburb just 10 minutes north of Cape Town. Nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and the RietVlei River, this lush links-type course is relatively flat with few trees. But with the sea and the lagoon bordering most holes, and the 7 beautiful water holes waiting to claim the wayward shot, it offers a truly unique golfing experience!



### **De Zalze Golf Estate**

18 Holes / 6369m / Par 72

Set in a winelands golf estate, the course is the perfect test for all golfers, with each tee positions offering its own challenges. The course is a mix of parkland holes, as well as the Oak tree lined Blaauwklippen river which winds its way though the golf estate and comes into play on various holes. After your round enjoy a glass or two of the many local wines available.



### **Outenque at Fancourt**

18 holes / 6312m / Par 72

Outeniqua is one of two majestic 18-hole Parkland layouts at Fancourt. Designed by legendary Grand Slam golfer Gary Player, it is similar in character to its sibling Montagu, and its challenging design and fine conditioning will ensure an excellent test for all levels of golfers. As with all courses at Fancourt, there are a variety of tees from which to choose to play, ensuring that golfers are unlikely to ever feel overpowered by the course.



### **Montuga at Fancourt**

18 holes / 6714m / Par 72

Montagu is a much celebrated parkland course and has been ranked as the number-one golf course in South Africa in the past. It has recently undergone major renovations with several holes being redesigned and has two completely new holes - the 1st and the 9th.



### **Erinvale GC**

18 holes / 6440m / Par 72

Opened in 1995 and designed by Gary Player, is without doubt one of the best golf courses in South Africa. Surrounded by the majestic Helderberg and Hottentots Holland Mountains, it offers two very distinctly different nines. The first nine winds its way through narrow fairways flanked by exquisite properties, blending in perfectly with the landscape and environment. The second nine flows beautifully into the foot of the Helderberg's and eventually offers amazing views over False Bay, surrounding vineyards, olive groves and Helderberg Nature Reserve.



### **Pinnacle Point GC**

18 holes / 6460m / Par 72

Overlooking the Indian Ocean near Mossel Bay, Pinnacle Point is one of the most unique and scenic golf courses in the world, with all 18 holes designed to fit the contours of the land. The course inspires the golfers to play this challenging layout with a level of respect due to its dramatic views and breathtaking terrain. The layout is characterised by seven majestic holes that line the Indian Ocean rock cliffs, four of which are played over ocean and cliff.



## Itinerary Summary

- Centrally located hotel in Cape Town's V&A Waterfront (Victoria & Alfred)
- Two superb golf resort hotels (Erinvale & Fancourt)
- Great range of golf courses (with options for more golf if required)
- Good balance between excursions (including lunch) and golf
- Options to play two additional top class courses (Pearl Valley & The Links)
- Welcome dinner and farewell dinner with golf prizes
- Optional safari extension at the end of the tour

## Detailed Itinerary

### **18-21 March 2022**

3 nights at Victoria & Alfred Hotel in a Piazza Facing room including breakfast

18 Mar – Meet & Greet on arrival at Cape Town Airport and transfer to hotel, includes welcome dinner at Ginja Restaurant

19 Mar – Full day guided Cape Peninsula Tour includes entrance fees to Cape Point, Boulders Beach & Chapmans Peak including lunch at Two Oceans Restaurant or optional golf



Victoria & Albert Hotel, Cape Town



Penguins at Boulders Beach

20 Mar – return transfer to/from Milnerton Golf Course – play 18 holes

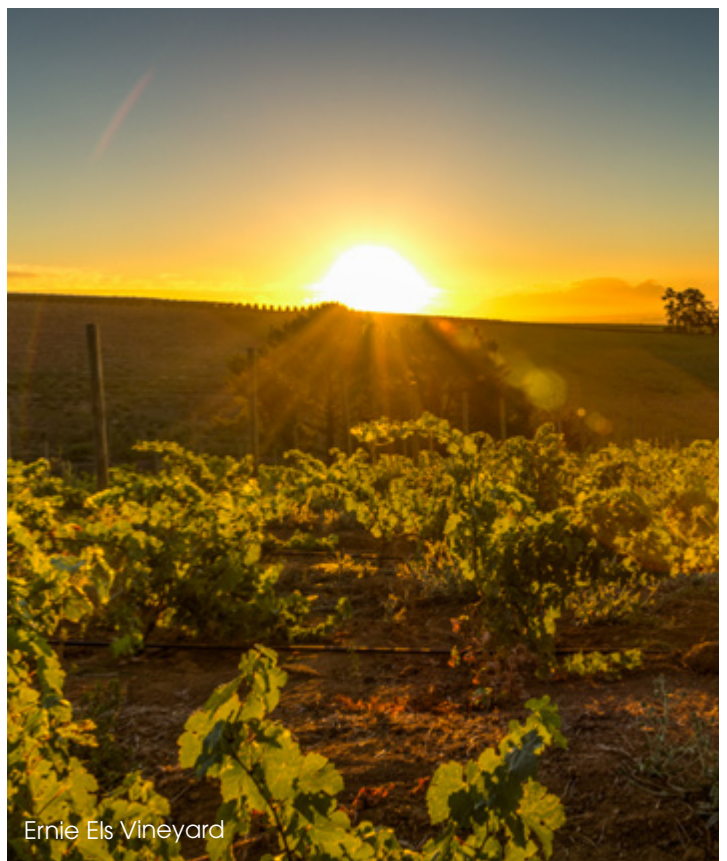
**21-24 March 2022**

3 nights at Erinvale Estate Hotel & Spa in a run of house room (Courtyard Luxury or Courtyard Terrace) including breakfast

21 Mar – return transfers to/from Erinvale GC – play 18 holes. Transfer to Erinvale Hotel after golf

22 Mar – return transfer to/from De Zalze Golf Estate – play 18 holes, then a visit to Ernie Els Winery after golf

23 Mar – full day guided winelands tour includes 2 x wine tastings and entrance fee and tour of Dylan Lewis Sculpture Garden or optional golf at Pearl Valley



Ernie Els Vineyard



## **24-28 March 2022**

4 nights at Fancourt Hotel in a Classic room including breakfast

24 Mar – Transfer to Fancourt Hotel, via Swellendam for a light lunch at La Belle Alliance Cafe

25 Mar – Play 18 holes at Montagu Golf Course at Fancourt

26 Mar – Return golf transfers to/from Pinnacle Point Golf Estate – play 18 holes, includes shared golf cart

27 Mar – Play 18 holes on Outeniqua Golf Course or optional round on Fancourt The Links. Farewell dinner at La Cantina/Monet's

28 Mar – Transfer to George Airport



**Price £2785 per person based on two sharing**

Single occupancy price on request

The above itinerary includes transfers with a driver, water on transfers, portorage at airport and hotel, and golf prizes. Includes meals as stated in detailed itinerary, excludes drinks. Itinerary subject to slight changes based on 10+ people travelling. Flights are not included; please request a price at time of enquiry.



Giraffe being viewed on a Game Drive at Gondwana

**Optional safari extension at Gondwana**

**Price £625 per person based on two sharing**

**28-30 March**

28 Mar – Transfer from Fancourt Hotel to Gondwana

2 nights at Gondwana Game Reserve in a Kwena Lodge Room, includes three meals and game activities, excludes drinks

30 Mar – Transfer to George Airport

For more information and to check availability please contact [info@front9travel.com](mailto:info@front9travel.com)

# Lisbon & Porto

Written by Rob Smith





Don't get me wrong, the Algarve is extremely popular and a brilliant area for golf and holiday making. I was actually due there the week I am writing this, but that's obviously on hold for now. However, as someone who is lucky enough to have travelled pretty well in the name of golf, I have an even greater love of Portugal's Wild West coast; up to Lisbon and all the way to Porto and beyond.



Chiado, Lisbon - Image courtesy of Turismo de Lisboa

## Lisbon

Lisbon is a wonderful place for a city break and so much more. It is the most westerly city in Europe and one of the smallest capitals. Devastated by a massive earthquake in 1755, it is on the north bank of the Tagus Estuary. With neighbouring towns, villages and ports such as Estoril, Sintra and Cascais, there is a terrific variety of accommodation, scenery and holiday activity.



Arco da Rua Augusta -  
Image courtesy of Turismo de Lisboa



Pasteis de Belem -  
Image courtesy of Turismo de Lisboa

To its west lies one of the finest courses in the country, the challenging and dramatic links at Oitavos Dunes. The course has hosted the Portuguese Open a number of times and runs through a combination of mature forest featuring beautiful umbrella pines, and inspiring and undulating dunesland offering panoramic views of the Atlantic as well as the nearby mountains. It was designed with ecology as a primary concern; the protection of endangered plant species as well as the maintenance of its wildlife habitat and their migration routes, nesting sites and food sources. As a result, it became the first course in Europe to be recognised as an Audubon Gold Signature Sanctuary course. The course has a remarkably natural and unspoiled feel and is a delight to play.



Oitavos Dunes, Lisbon - Image courtesy of Turismo de Lisboa



Penha Longa 6th Hole beside the ancient aqueduct

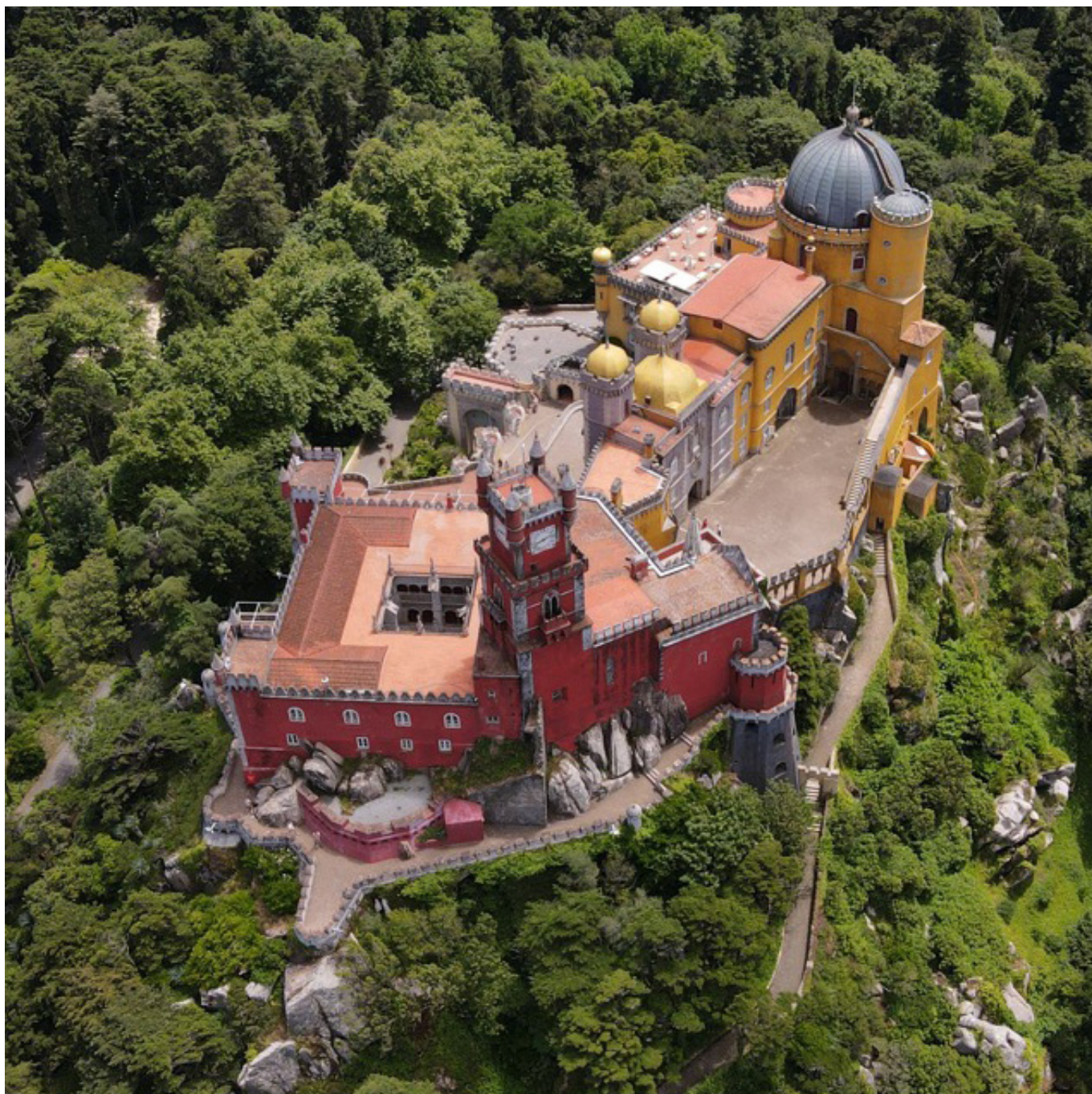
No more than a mile or two away, but providing a quite different test, is one of the more established courses in the area, Quinta da Marinha. Also great fun, this Robert Trent Jones Senior design is much more a resort course. There is a warm welcome back at the hotel, which has a variety of restaurants, swimming pools, a health club and tennis courts. A little way inland and to the north of Lisbon is another Robert Trent Jones course, this time the work of Junior! Penha Longa has also hosted the Portuguese Open and is carved through pine-clad hills opening up into undulating ground with far-reaching vistas and an extraordinary encounter with a beautiful old Roman aqueduct. The accompanying clubhouse and luxurious hotel with spa are both first-class in every way, and a visit to Penha Longa is a real treat.



West Cliffs - A fabulous view down over the closing hole

There is a good mixture of golf on offer elsewhere in the Lisbon region; both established courses and newer designs. Belas is in the mountains to the north of the city while close to the centre is Estoril which dates back ninety years and had to be redesigned to accommodate the A5 highway which now runs through the middle. To avoid being run over, golfers cross using a tunnel! A little further up the coast, about an hour from Lisbon, are three of my very favourite courses; Praia d'El Rey, Royal Obidos, and the astounding new West Cliffs.

Away from the golf, the area contains a wealth of historic buildings, museums and art galleries, particularly at Sintra with its castle and churches. Not far from here is the Palacio da Pena, an extravagantly over-the-top monument built by King Ferdinand. The historic quarter of Lisbon can best be viewed by tram and the area's bars and restaurants offer an array of local delicacies including salt cod, grilled sardines, Pastéis de Belem (small, custard tarts with cinnamon), and queijada de Sintra (bite-size cheesecakes made from cottage cheese). On the drinks front, Portugal produces some excellent wines and, as you might expect, Ports. The national music is Fado, as opposed to Faldo, passionate songs accompanied by 12-string or classical guitar. For a golfing holiday that is not far away but which offers far more than just the game, Lisbon fits the bill.



## Porto



Just a couple of hours by air from London, Porto is an enchanting and romantic city that sprawls along the slopes that line the Douro river as it emerges into the Atlantic. It is the nation's second-largest city and makes for the perfect base at the start or end of any trip to this comparatively less well-known region. Dating back to the Roman Empire, it is packed with remarkable buildings, superb restaurants such as DOP in the Palácio das Artes, and enough attractions to warrant a proper visit in its own right.

On the southern outskirts of the city and close to Espinho is Oporto, the oldest club on the Iberian Peninsula. It is a traditional links along flat ground with a clubhouse that conjures up history and bygone times. On display is the Skeffington Cup and a letter from The R & A acknowledging it as the oldest trophy in the world to have been contested without interruption.



Estela - The 8th hole at the demanding links

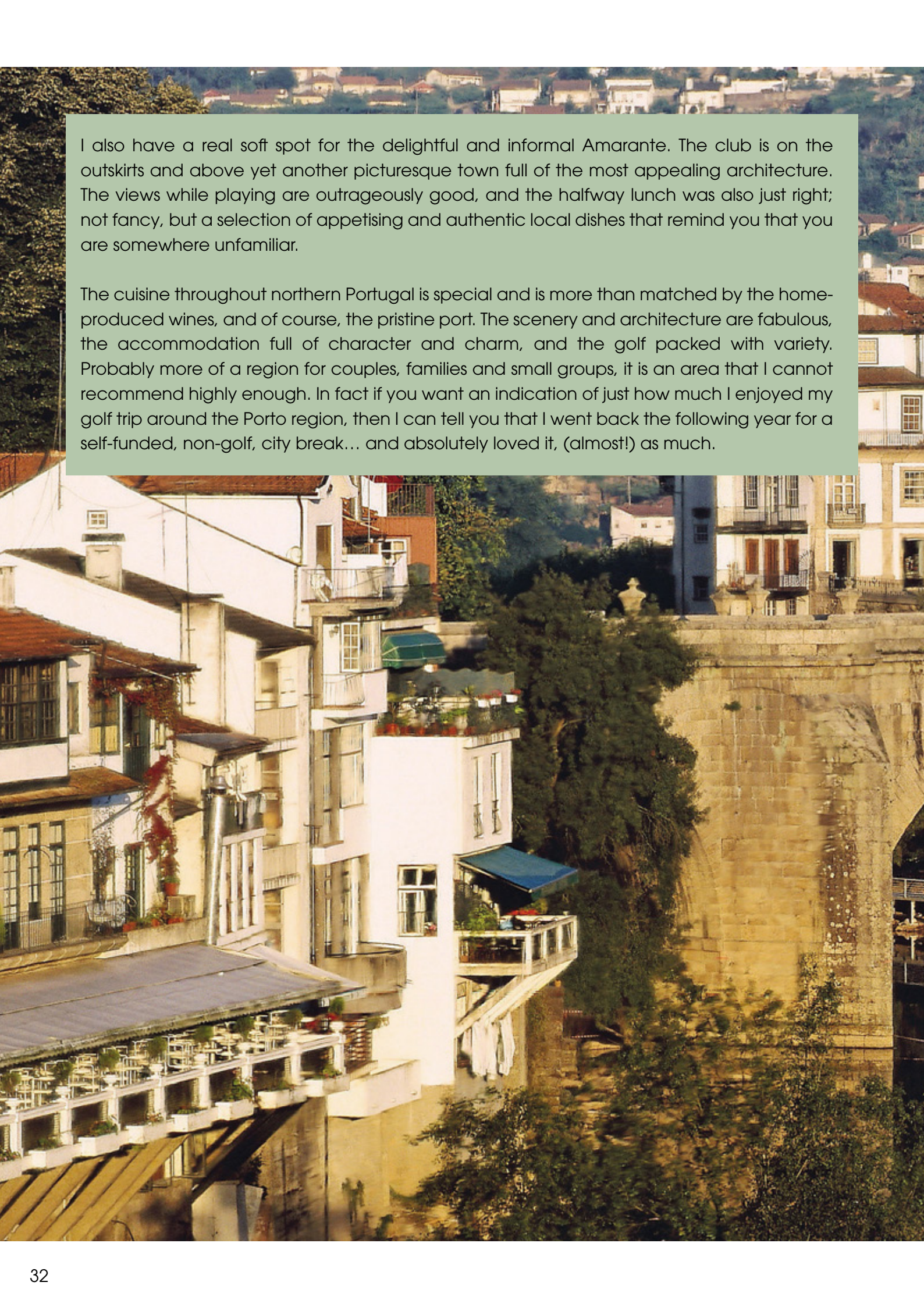
A little way north of Porto is the most challenging layout in the region. In any kind of a wind, the excellent links at Estela is a severe examination. I particularly like the par-3 fourth played from an elevated tee down to a green by the beach, and the super-tough tenth with a long approach up to a very small target. The two sinewy, snaking par 5s at thirteen and fifteen run in opposite directions and are also very entertaining.



Vidago Palace Hotel

A short way inland is something totally different - the hilly and heavily wooded Axis Ponte de Lima. Packed with interesting and at times eccentric golf, the highlight for me is the absolutely cracking par 3 at eight, which needs no defence other than nature itself. From here, it is worth stopping off at the lovely old town at Guimarães, a UNESCO world heritage site, en route to the fascinating course at Vidago Palace. The holes closest to the sumptuous hotel run through mature woodland while others are on more open, elevated land. An ancient well is still visible by the sixth green, and various other architectural features including the unusual stone-walled teeing complexes all add to the originality on this thoughtfully-designed and thoroughly enjoyable parkland test. I was equally impressed with the truly grand hotel that was the brainchild of King Carlos the First more than a century ago, who wanted somewhere for family, dignitaries and even tourists. The monarchy fell before it was finished, but it is still fit for royalty with a truly magnificent galleried dining room and originality and charisma in evidence at every turn. With food and service to match, Vidago Palace is a quite exceptional golfing venue.





I also have a real soft spot for the delightful and informal Amarante. The club is on the outskirts and above yet another picturesque town full of the most appealing architecture. The views while playing are outrageously good, and the halfway lunch was also just right; not fancy, but a selection of appetising and authentic local dishes that remind you that you are somewhere unfamiliar.

The cuisine throughout northern Portugal is special and is more than matched by the home-produced wines, and of course, the pristine port. The scenery and architecture are fabulous, the accommodation full of character and charm, and the golf packed with variety. Probably more of a region for couples, families and small groups, it is an area that I cannot recommend highly enough. In fact if you want an indication of just how much I enjoyed my golf trip around the Porto region, then I can tell you that I went back the following year for a self-funded, non-golf, city break... and absolutely loved it, (almost!) as much.





For more information and prices please contact [info@front9travel.com](mailto:info@front9travel.com)

# The Wilderness of the Weald

Written by Carolyn Scott



What a beautiful setting Dale Hill Hotel & Golf Club enjoys, the two golf courses crafted here are a feast for the eye. Ancient woodlands and gently sloping farmland, with the occasional farm cottage or oast house in the distance, give a lush and verdant view from every point on both courses. The clubhouse restaurant, bar and hotel rooms enjoy the same impressive views from the terraces and individual balconies.

Golf is right on your door step; with pro shop, changing rooms, driving range, putting greens and the first tees of both courses within close proximity to the hotel, ensuring smooth stress less pre-game preparations and easy post game relaxation. Tucked away in the East Sussex weald, both courses offer very different experiences ideal to test one's golfing skills. The longer of the two golf courses on offer is the 'Ian Woosnam' course, which wends its way through some interesting terrain, more open than the Old Course. Whilst the 'Old Course' flatters to deceive, shorter, softer but brutal in its demand for exactness on the narrow fairways, with long rough and dense wooded areas.



## Ian Woosnam Course

The clay soil of the 'Weald' farmland is not generally the first choice for the siting of a new golf course, but Woosnam has in his design created an interesting, challenging but not totally demoralising experience. It is not a long course at 6032 yards off the yellow tees, and 5200 yards from red tees, crossing as it does an interesting undulating terrain, giving players mostly generous fairways and true and consistent greens. However, don't be fooled into thinking this course is easy, after a fairly gentle start with the long but straightforward par 5 at the 1st and a smattering of par 4's, the first par 3 at the 5th required a little more focus. A small plateau of a green, with bunkers on the back and front right where the ground drops away sharply, this proved a hole for me that was better played long and left into the raised ground at the back of the green and dribbling the ball onto the green – any attempt to land on the green resulted in a quick exit by the ball off to the right into the bunkers! One could be fooled into thinking that golf had become easy for the next few holes with no major incidents to report at the 6th, 7th and 8th, however, painful reality hit at the 9th an inviting par 4. With a downward swooping fairway and an almost right-angle dogleg to the right, which entices the ball to roll into the killer rough, if you don't aim down the left side of the fairway with your tee shot. Once around the corner you are faced with a shot down over a watery valley into a well-protected green, sloping quite aggressively to the right and if you miss to the right, then it's either all over for the ball or a difficult chip and a subsequent cricket score.

In contrast to the open feel and distant views of the front 9, the back 9 has a more enclosed feel with holes dropped low in wooded areas, and slopes and turns blocking a clear view to the greens. The 10th par 3 is one of the prettiest, (but nasty) holes on the course, a small narrow green nestled high amongst oak and chestnut trees, a small gully separates the tee from the green, with a massive bunker to the front with a nasty lip up to the green, trees to the left and a kick off to the right. Needless to say, lost balls all round! Balls reloaded the next few holes are played in beautiful wooded scenery, the 17th, in particular, has an avenue of dense trees, water meandering on your right and a gentle but late turn to the right to reach the green over a water filled ditch. Get too close with your tee shot, as I did, and landing on the green and staying put, is not going to happen – the ditch is designed to receive those balls rolling off. Finally, to restore one's faith in golf, Woosnam designed the 18th to be a rewarding end to the round, a wide-open fairway, straight lines, with the clubhouse and a well-earned drink in your sights. I played this on a very hot sunny day and just be warned that the 9th hole is about as far from the clubhouse as you can be, so without a halfway house or buggy bar be sure to stock up on lots of water to get you through the round.



Ian Woosnam Course

## **Old Course**

The Old course, in contrast I played following a night of torrential rain and with light drizzle falling. A different feel to the Ian Woosnam course, no longer the wide-open fairways, and standing on the first tee surrounded by ancient oak trees it's quite hard to see where to hit the ball. Perhaps more like a parkland course on the front 9, this course is designed to test the skills of precision and course management. The back 9 moves you into densely wooded sections with greater propensity for lost balls. My favourite hole of the front 9, is the par 4 3rd hole, an inviting open fairway that leads to a two-tiered green, that punishes you if your approach doesn't get to the top tier, a bit hero or zero! The pretty par 3 at the 7th can look daunting, below your feet the green slopes off to the right and you can be in trouble if not on the left. The 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th all considered the more challenging section of the course with greater length, dog legs and narrow fairways. All in all a very enjoyable game, the course despite, the weather whilst wet underfoot in some areas, played well and the club have done well with the drainage to keep the green usable in heavy weather.



Hotel Lobby

## The Hotel

We had a very comfortable night in the new annexe of the hotel with its generous sized and very functional room, plenty of space for golf clubs and all the paraphernalia that goes with playing golf. A large bed, good shower and calm clean décor. The rooms face south with the gorgeous views that the golf courses enjoy and within chipping distance from the first tee of the Old Course. The newly opened orangery above the clubhouse was a lovely place to have both a pre-round sandwich (where they kindly provide a doggy bag to take the food onto the course when we ran out of time) or a post round drink. Supper can be had in The Wealden Restaurant where they have a small but well-rounded menu of old favourites and some more adventurous dishes. In summary, Dale Hill Hotel & Golf Club offers a lovely short break with two excellent golf courses and wonderful views high on the Sussex Weald.

For more information and prices please contact [info@front9travel.com](mailto:info@front9travel.com)



Double Room

# Namibia, a harsh but beautiful wilderness - Part 2

Written by Simon Lacey

Welcome back to my grand Namibian adventure, where Roxane and I, having left Solitaire are about to drive the 230km across the Namib Desert and on to the coastal town of Swakopmund.

## Swakopmund

The journey was in itself, I'm pleased to say, uneventful but as usual the Namibian scenery did not disappoint - I just wished that I'd paid more attention in my geology classes, as some of the rock formations we passed were just incredible.

The drive took just under four hours during which time we probably only saw half a dozen other vehicles, except for the last few miles as we approached, with great excitement 'the SatNav roundabout' on the edge of the Atlantic port town of Walvis Bay. More on Walvis Bay later but the final run in to Swakopmund, and our accommodation for the next two nights, was serenely well tarmacked running the coastal dune belt.

Swakopmund is in many ways an odd town with strong Germanic influences mixed with British, South African and local tribal cultures. Although it is foremost a great little coastal town and the adventure playground of Namibia. Whether you want a spot of sea fishing, ATV (all-terrain vehicle) riding in the dunes, sand boarding or parachuting, Swakopmund offers them all and far more besides. And of course ..... golf. More later.

We'd opted for a small modern 4 star hotel right on the seafront and were not disappointed as we pulled up outside The Strand Hotel.

Image courtesy of Wilderness Safaris





The Strand Hotel

We checked in and wandered down to the terrace to grab a beer, an ice cold Windhoek Light, brewed locally to an age-old German tradition, and just the right beverage to have in hand watching the world go by.

That night we'd booked a table a short walk down the beach at The Tug, which serves excellent freshly landed seafood in what has surely to be a unique venue; a beached converted tug boat (who'd have guessed from the name!). We ate in what was the wheelhouse and the cuisine was delicious and the Cape Chardonnay balanced the meal beautifully; the service though was a little too effusive. We slept well that night.

We had decided in advance to have every other day as a 'no car' day and had arranged to be collected by a private guide and taken down to Walvis Bay, Namibia's main port, for a lagoon cruise on a large catamaran. The guide turned out to be an inspired call as after a welcoming coffee, the Windhoek Lights were broken out. The cruise (from what I can remember!) took us out into the heart of the lagoon, almost to where it meets the Atlantic, to where the famous rope grown oysters are cultivated, with interjections in the form of 'stare out' contests with a pelican that landed on the boat (it lost) and a huge cape fur seal who jumped on board (it won). It was a great way to spend a morning with some Namibian marine life and capped off by raw and cooked oysters - and South African fizz - on the way back to the dock.

That afternoon whilst Roxane rested, I hopped into a cab to visit Rossmund Golf Resort & Lodge, just a 15-minute drive from our hotel. The Par 72, 6,000-yard course is one of only five all-grass (tee to green) desert courses in the world and although I did not play the course, it certainly looked like it had some challenging holes. To play an 18 hole round here including club hire, warm up balls and a buggy costs just £65 - less if you stay at their on-site lodge - an absolute bargain.





Rossmund Golf Resort & Lodge



Damaraland Camp –  
Image courtesy of Wilderness Safaris

## Swakopmund to Damaraland

The next morning we headed north towards the Skeleton Coast, named after the bones of whales and ship wrecks that litter the shoreline, and within a few miles the reason for the shipwrecks became clear, or rather opaque as we hit one of the famed Namibian coastal fogs caused when the cold Benguella Current hits the hot desert. Since the road that heads north is made of salt and demanding to drive on when damp, we headed inland towards the remote town of Uis and within a few miles the fog cleared totally and the heat haze of the desert returned.

Then a moment of pure wildlife magic; something you usually see in an Attenborough documentary. Out of the haze we caught sight of movement, at first in-distinctive, but then we could make out four heads and then necks and then, as if on a mission, four jogging ostriches appeared. They crossed diagonally

just in front of our car before heading back into the haze, quickly vanishing as totally as they had appeared. Surreal.

In the distance the Brandberg Mountain, the second largest monolith in the world after Uluru (Ayer's Rock), came into view and was our point of reference for the next two hours, with its sheer size (30 kms long and rising 2,000 metres) becoming ever most impressive. We rounded the eastern side of the mountain heading into the heart of Damaraland to our next lodge, Damaraland Camp.

Leaving the road and parking up at the RV point was a relief from the shale roads but the track down to the camp is best done in a proper 4x4, so the locals called the lodge and after an impromptu kick-about with the local children, our Land Rover appeared.



I'd been to Damaraland Camp before a decade or so before, but I'd forgotten its incredible distant views over the valley of the Huab River. Our accommodation, vastly updated since my last visit, was spacious, wooden framed, en-suite and covered in sand coloured canvas to blend into its surroundings. The communal pool was pleasantly cool, the Windhoek Light crisp and welcomed. One thing that had not changed were the friendliness of the staff as Wilderness Safaris, who manage the camp, partner with local Torra communities, drawing and training their staff from the locals – and they are superb.

The main reason for visiting Damaraland was for its special wildlife, all of whom have adapted over the millennia to survive the harsh drought conditions in this part of Namibia until the rains, such as they are, return. We took a game drive into the then dry Huab River valley and spent a morning up close and personal with desert-adapted elephants, kudu, giraffes and Hartmann's mountain zebra.

Our two days at Damaraland were relaxing and filled with laughter - we were sad to leave.

## Serra Cafema

Our next destination was a little gem called Serra Cafema, the remotest camp in Namibia on the border with Angola; just a crisply struck 8 iron away.

We drove the short distance to a lodge called Doro Nawas, where we left the car and checked-in for the 1¼ hour light aircraft flight north. The lodge's airstrip acts as the northern hub for Wilderness Air and serves their lodges in northern Namibia including those on the edge of the Etosha National Park; the premier game reserve in the country.

I'll take up the story next time as we arrive into the Hartmann Valley.



Images courtesy of Wilderness Safaris



Serra Cafema Camp - image courtesy of Wilderness Safaris



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# Contributors

Front 9 Travel would like to thank the following contributors to the Spring issue.



Carolyn Scott

Carolyn is an avid golfer and has spent many years visiting an array of luxury and unusual destinations around the world, and has consequently developed a discerning eye for what our clients at Front 9 Travel expect from our partner hotels and resorts.

She applies the same rigour of assessment and expectation of a quality client at the courses that she plays, appreciating that our clients expect the highest quality of accommodation and facilities, and to play excellent golf courses. At Front 9 Travel we are continually searching for new and exciting destinations to offer our clients and Carolyn is at the forefront of this, researching and writing our articles to give our clients a flavour of what is on offer.



Simon Lacey

Simon provides expertise for golfers travelling to Africa but not just limited to golf, as his 20 years of experience includes in depth knowledge on safaris throughout Southern Africa and more general local travel. His passion for Africa dates back to 1997 when he first visited South Africa touring in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Africa got so deep under his skin in that one trip, that in June 2000 he bought the company that organised the holiday. Since then he has visited every country in Southern Africa (and a few in East Africa) – some like Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia on several occasions. In 2013 a golf tour operator bought out his company and he then added golf to his African repertoire. Since then he has played almost thirty of the top golf courses in South Africa from the Cape Provinces to KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga and has even popped over the border to Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) to play Royal Swazi.



Rob Smith

Rob is a Contributing Editor for Golf Monthly, who specialises in courses and golf travel. Within this issue of the magazine he describes one of his all-time favourite destinations, Costa Navarino in Greece.

Rob moved into the golf industry 20 years ago from a career in IT, in order to pursue his joint passions of golf and travel. He is a member at Tandridge in Surrey, and has now played more than 1,100 courses in nearly 50 countries.

In 2019, prior to Covid-19, he played more than 80 courses in England, Ireland and Wales, as well as in Spain, Germany, Bulgaria, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam... and the Isle of Wight! Although he helps to oversee the biennial Top 100 Course rankings for Golf Monthly magazine, his personal preference is for scenic beauty and setting, rather than the strategic design of a course. He would far rather play an average course in a stunning location, than a technically great course in an uninspiring setting.

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