

Today's **Golfer** TRAVEL AWARDS 2016

Your votes have been counted and now we reveal the winners in the annual Today's Golfer Travel Awards. Thousands voted across 21 categories to identify the best of Spain, Portugal, France and the home nations. These are the winners...



BEST-VALUE DESTINATION
Murcia

BEST RESORT
La Manga Club

Why they won: Boasting a wide array of courses including flagship resort La Manga Club, Murcia is Spain's up-and-coming sunshine golf destination. There are 22 courses within a 35km radius, offering some of the best-value green fees on the Med. You can enjoy more than 300 holes, including a selection of layouts created by some of golf's

biggest names such as Seve Ballesteros, José María Olazabal, and Jack Nicklaus (the region's Nicklaus Golf Trail features six varied 18-hole courses in Mar Menor, La Torre, El Valle, Alhama, Saurines and Riquelme).

Hacienda Del Alamo has become popular since opening 10 years ago, but Murcia's top dog is La Manga Club, with three 18-hole layouts (South, North & West) and a new Leadbetter Golf Academy – the only one in mainland Spain.

Set in 1,400 acres, the resort boasts a 28-court tennis centre, a 2,000m² spa and fitness centre plus the choice of a five-star hotel, four-star serviced apartments and townhouses and more than 20 bars and restaurants. It's won Spain's Best Hotel/Resort award five years running!

Do it yourself: Three nights and three rounds at Hotel Principe Felipe from €415pp (five nights, four green fees from €635pp, seven nights, five green fees from €850pp) based on two sharing a double/twin.

Exclusive offer for TG readers: Free upgrade when booked before Mar 1, subject to availability. Quote TGJAN16. Contact: 0034 968 175577, www.lamangaclub.com

BEST COURSE
PGA Catalunya

Why it won: It's home of the magnificent Stadium course, a regular European Tour

and Q School venue. It has replaced Valderrama as Spain's No.1 with former Ryder Cup captain Jose Maria Olazabal claiming: "It is one of the best courses in the world. It is very well composed and there is a lot of risk and reward." It's a great all-round test, with lakes in play on seven holes, and is always in immaculate condition – as is the neighbouring relatively easier Tour layout.

Do it yourself: Overnight B&B stay (based on two sharing a standard double room) and Tour Course green fee costs €165 per person from June 1-30 (Stadium Course supplement of €10). Plus, exclusively for TG readers, daily complimentary range balls (bucket of 50 balls) and daily manual trolley. To book call 0034 972 472577 or e-mail reserves@pgacatalunya.com



Top prize
PGA Catalunya was a strong Ryder Cup 2022 candidate.



Star quality
Arnold Palmer has advised on the South course at La Manga.



Better than ever
QuintadoLagoNorth
has benefited from a
stylish makeover.

BEST RESORT
**Quinta Do Lago, Penha Longa,
Marina Vilamoura & Vila Sol**

Why they won: This was the most keenly-contested category in TG awards history, with honours shared by four venues – three in the Algarve plus Penha Longa, near Lisbon. Last year's outright winner, Quinta do Lago, with three world-class courses (North, South and Laranjal) had to share top spot along with Pestana Vila Sol Resort, with its outstanding Donald Steel-designed layout just outside Vilamoura, Tivoli Marina – another five-star venue by the marina and beach – and former Portuguese Open venue Penha Longa.

Do it yourself: Five nights' B&B at the four-star Monte da Quinta Suites with three rounds (QDL South, North and Laranjal) and a 30-minute TaylorMade Fitting Experience, from €500pp (subject to availability). Email reservas@quintadolago.com or phone 00351 289 390 705/6, quoting reference 'TGA16.'

BEST COURSE
Vilamoura Old Course

Why it won: Several impressive new layouts have emerged in the Algarve in recent years, but Vilamoura's Old – the region's second oldest layout – remains king. It's the fifth

straight win for Frank Pennink's 1969 design, which weaves between avenues of umbrella pines. Its undoubted charm – plus the fact it's not ultra-long and demanding – puts it in a class of its own. Unbeatable holiday golf.

Do it yourself: Easter Special of €78 per round for tee times after midday (from Mar 20 to Apr 3) – it's €140 the week before! To book visit www.oceanicogolf.com/bookings/golf-specials/easter-special

BEST RESORT
Evian Resort

Why it won: It offers two hotels (five-star Hotel Royal and four-star Hotel Ermitage) and a scenic par-72 Championship course which stages an LPGA Major (won in 2015 by Lydia Ko). It's plotted within a 42-acre park at the foot of the Alps overlooking Lake Geneva, and so is reached by regular UK flights to Geneva airport, which is about 25 miles away.

Do it yourself: For offers visit www.evianresort.com/uk or e-mail golf@evianresort.com

BEST COURSE
Le Golf National

Why it won: The French Open and 2018 Ryder Cup venue near Versailles is back on top. Hubert Chesneau and Robert Von Hagge's



Water torture?
Lakes dominate the start and finish of Le Golf National.

Albatross design is characterised by water hazards and huge greens. A member of the European Tour Properties network since 2011, the course is receiving a €7million pre-Ryder Cup upgrade which started last summer.

Do it yourself: Four nights' B&B at the on-site four-star Novotel hotel Saint Quentin Golf National, two rounds on the Albatross and two on the Aigle course, one buggy for two rounds, 10% discount in the on-site pro shops, a bucket of balls for each round and access to the Albatross VIP lounge area, costs £392 per person/€539 (based on double room sharing). Valid Jul 6-Aug 8 (Thurs-Mon except during special events & subject to availability). To book e-mail concierge@golf-national.com, quoting TG Travel Awards or visit www.le-golf-national.com ➡



BEST RESORT (NORTH)

Slaley Hall

Why it won: It has two superb, contrasting courses (Hunting and Priestman) plus a luxury Edwardian mansion hotel, all plotted within 1,000 acres of moorland and forest. The accommodation and facilities are top drawer while both 18-hole courses have seen European Tour action over the years.

Do it yourself: Sunday driver package includes dinner, B&B accommodation and 36 holes of golf, from £89pp. To book call 0845 241 9785.



BEST COURSE (NORTH)

Royal Lytham & St Annes

Why it won: Fellow Open venue Royal Birkdale has previously dominated this category, but Royal Lytham has now turned the tables. It's not a beautiful links with awesome sea views, but it is one of the most challenging and demanding (as Adam Scott found to his cost in the 2012 Open). You have to plot your way past 200-plus bunkers of the most penal kind.

Do it yourself: One night's B&B stay in the dormy house at Royal Lytham, one round at Royal Lytham and one at St. Anne's Old Links costs from £242 per person (Mon-Fri). Valid until the end of Sept. To book call 01704 807800.



BEST RESORT (SOUTH)

The Grove

Why it won: Ten years after Tiger won a WGC event here, London's so-called country club

stages the British Masters in October. Conveniently close to the M25, the five-star luxury hotel is supported by a spa and fine dining. The Kyle Phillips-designed course is in great condition year-round with the greens arguably among the best around.

Do it yourself: TG readers can book 18 holes of golf at The Grove for £80 (weekdays and weekends) until the end of February 2016. Call 01923 294266 or email tee.time@thegrove.co.uk, ref TGRIVE.



BEST COURSE (SOUTH)

Sunningdale Old

Why it won: Along with the equally stunning New, the mystical Old guarantees a perfect day out. It's a classic heathland layout framed by Scots pines and swathes of heather and gorse. Inland courses don't come any more scenic than this magical beauty, which replaces its near neighbour Wentworth's West course as southern England's No.1.

Do it yourself: You can play for £125 until Mar 31 – nearly half the normal green fee rate! To book call 01344 621681.



BEST RESORT (WEST)

Bovey Castle

Why it won: It guarantees the ultimate great escape on the edge of Dartmoor National Park, with a gorgeous manor house hotel and a quirky course set out on hillsides and a valley bottom. Visitors can also stay in 22 three-storey country lodges within Bovey's exquisite grounds.

Do it yourself: Two nights' B&B (for two sharing a Classic room) and two rounds costs

from £598 for two people. To book call 01647 445007.



BEST COURSE (WEST)

St Mellion (Nicklaus)

Why it won: It's one of the most challenging and beautiful inland courses in the land. It was Jack Nicklaus' first UK course project and the 18-times Major champion is justifiably proud of his work. It has staged six Benson & Hedges International Opens and you can even tackle it for half-price thanks to 2-FORE!-1.

Do it yourself: Exclusive TG stay & play offer: book a one or two-night golf break (package inclusive of dinner, B&B) and receive a complimentary lunch as part of your stay. To book call 01579 352001 and quote TG/STM2016.



BEST RESORT & COURSE EAST AND MIDLANDS

The Belfry

Why it won: Another double triumph for the venue, which has staged a record-breaking four Ryder Cups. And The Belfry is now even more appealing after its £26m off-course refurbishment. Golfers love the challenge of the Brabazon course, the scene of so much Ryder Cup drama. The ultimate test of parkland golf is always in immaculate condition and is ably supported by the neighbouring PGA National and Derby, plus superb practice and custom-fitting facilities.

Do it yourself: Two nights' B&B (in a Signature double or twin room) and a round on all three courses, costs from £229pp. To book call 0844 980 0600 or visit www.TheBelfry.com for more information. ☛



Royal approval
The iconic green-and-white hues of Lytham's clubhouse.



Ryder Cup drama
The 17th green on
the Twenty Ten
course, Celtic Manor.



BEST RESORT

Gleneagles

Why it won: The 'Palace in the Glens' dominated this section yet again, with the world-famous resort comfortably retaining its crown. Set in 850 acres of Perthshire countryside, it is home to three quality 18-hole courses, fabulous accommodation, a multi award-winning spa, fine dining and an array of exhilarating outdoor activities.

Do it yourself: Golf & More package includes overnight stay with full Scottish breakfast and use of leisure facilities, a round on the PGA Centenary, King's or Queen's. TG readers will receive a complimentary room upgrade when quoting "Today's Golfer". Prices from £340 per room per night. Call 0800 704705.



BEST COURSE

St Andrews Old

Why it won: Pushed by Gleneagles' King's, but nothing can compete with the thrill of teeing it up in front of the R&A clubhouse and following in the footsteps of golf's biggest names as you get to grips with the Road Hole, the Swilcan Burn, the Valley of Sin etc... It is the round of a lifetime, provided your name is pulled from the daily ballot – although at this time of year that is much more likely, and you can tee it up for a cut-price £85.

Do it yourself: A round costs £85 until Mar 31



Braid's best?

The green of the classic 15th on the King's, Gleneagles.

compared to £175 in high season (fairway mats may be in use). To book call 01334 466666.



BEST RESORT

Celtic Manor

Why it won: Looms above the M4, but once through its grand entrance you couldn't feel further away. It has three 18-hole courses (Twenty Ten, Roman Road & Montgomerie), two hotels (five-star main hotel and four-star Manor House) and, since 2014, luxury self-catering Hunter Lodges which can sleep up to eight people in four en-suite bedrooms.

Do it yourself: Exclusive for TG readers – a dozen free Srixon AD333 golf balls for anyone booking a fourball in 2016. Bookings must be made between Jan 20-Mar 17, but can be for any date in 2016. Quote "TGDOZEN" when booking. Call 01633 410263.



BEST COURSE

Royal Porthcawl

Why it won: The legendary links edged Celtic Manor's Twenty Ten course off top spot. Porthcawl has staged many prestigious amateur and professional events including six Amateur Championships, the Walker and Curtis Cups and, most recently the 2014 British Senior Open won by Bernhard Langer.

Do it yourself: Enjoy a midweek fourball until Feb 26 for £240, including coffee & bacon rolls on arrival. To book call 01656 782251.



BEST COURSE & RESORT

The K Club

Why it won: Another double success for Ireland's only Ryder Cup host. It continues to profit from its memorable Ryder Cup in 2006, which saw a famous and emotional European victory inspired by Darren Clarke. The K Club will play a key role in Captain Clarke's preparations for the 2016 Ryder Cup as it hosts the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open in May. The challenging Palmer course is backed up by the neighbouring Smurfit, a fine parkland, as well as a five-star hotel.

Do it yourself: Two nights' B&B, a four-course evening meal, one round of golf on either course plus full access to K Health & Fitness facilities, costs from €285. To book call 003531 6017200 or e-mail sales@kclub.ie