

December 10, 2017

THE SUNDAY TIMES



**LOCATION  
LOCATION  
EDUCATION**

FIVE-PAGE GUIDE: WHERE TO  
BUY NEAR THE BEST PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND

P7

# Home

Travel  
INSIDE



## The whole enchilada

Thomasina Miers, Mexican food queen, sells her £1.6m London house 12



Move in by Christmas

Stamp Duty paid up to £200,000\*

ASHCHURCH VILLAS  
RAVENS COURT PARK, LONDON W12

4 & 5 bedroom family homes in Ravenscourt Park  
Ready to move in with prices from £2,150,000  
Up to 3,000 sq ft

ASHCHURCHVILLAS.COM  
020 3930 1322 | @ashchurchvillas

Developer  
FIRST BASE

Sales Agents

SAVILLS STRUTT & PARKER

\*Applicable to only home and amount is subject to change.  
Computer Generated Image (CGI) for indicative purposes only.

## Travel Europe

If there's one thing guaranteed to take the edge off a nice 18 holes, it's the thought of a golf widow (or, increasingly, widower) sitting at home, cursing you under their breath. So what better than a resort that combines drool-worthy courses, winter warmth and such an extensive range of non-golfing diversions that your partner will be rushing to book your tee time for you?

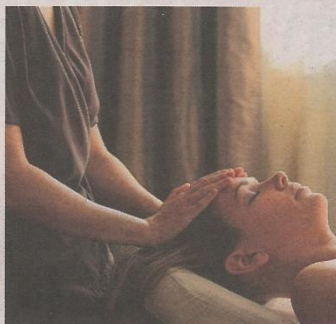
Here are five that hit par, or below.

### LA CALA, ANDALUSIA

Marbella and Malaga are a short drive away, but any lobster tans are a distant glow in the foothills of the Sierra de Mijas Natural Park. Try the tapas tasting menu in La Bodega restaurant. Work your way through the tepidarium, herbal steam baths and igloo in the spa. Join your partner for tennis or yogalates (a new yoga/Pilates hybrid – yes, it's a thing). Chill out on the terrace of your slickly modern room. And only then sneak off to play the three championship courses. From £229 ([lacala.com](http://lacala.com)). Ryanair flies to Malaga

### MONTE REI, ALCARVE

This golf and country club, an hour's drive east of Faro, offers back-to-nature golf in a region not exactly renowned for underdevelopment. Low-impact villas are dotted discreetly around 1,000 rural acres threaded with a Jack Nicklaus signature course. Enjoy views of the distant Serra do Caldeirao mountains and a sea of green stretching away to the Gulf of Cadiz. The high-ceilinged Vistas restaurant does



# WHOLE IN ONE

Duncan Craig picks golf resorts that please partners too

a superb sucking pig, and romance can be ignited with sunset boat rides in the Ria Formosa lagoon.

From £330 ([monte-rei.com](http://monte-rei.com)). EasyJet flies to Faro

### MAZAGAN, MOROCCO

You're just a disgustedly hurled three iron from the wild Atlantic coast at this

### STROKE PLAY Monte Rei, left, and Terre Blanche

Prices are for one night, B&B, with spa and a round of golf

upmarket golf and beach resort, an hour from Casablanca. The links course, designed by Gary Player, is the longest in Morocco, and there's an alluring 19th-hole citadel-style bar for well-lubricated match postmortems. Take your time. You won't be missed – not with the adults-only spa, which has a marble and mosaic hammam, riding along the resort's four-mile

white-sand beach and visits to the port of El Jadida, a Unesco World Heritage Site. From £180 ([mazaganbeachresort.com](http://mazaganbeachresort.com)). Royal Air Maroc flies to Casablanca

### IL PICCILO ETNA, SICILY

There are all manner of water hazards to get voluntarily trapped in at this rustic resort at the foot of Mount Etna. Its huge wellness centre has whirlpools, a Turkish bath and a hydrotherapy pool, while treatments include hot-stone and sports massages. You may well need the latter if you overdo it on the distinctive 18-hole course, which has the brutalist peak of Etna as its backdrop. Elegant Taormina, with its ancient Greek theatre, is 45 minutes east, and you can enjoy plenty of good walks (without the spoiling bit) in Mount Etna National Park. From £149 ([ilpiccioloetnagolfresort.com](http://ilpiccioloetnagolfresort.com)). EasyJet flies to Catania

### TERRE BLANCHE, PROVENCE

Set in 740 acres of sensational countryside, within easy reach of the Côte d'Azur, this is the resort that will make up for all those lonely Saturday afternoons you've inflicted on your partner. It has a Michelin-starred restaurant; a temple-like spa with four heated pools; suites or private villas for all; and soul-stirring views from the lavender- and rosemary-scented gardens. The perfume capital, Grasse, is nearby and buggy, ebike and even gliding excursions can be arranged. The two championship courses are top-class and there's a golf academy. From £485 ([en.terre-blanche.com](http://en.terre-blanche.com)). British Airways flies to Nice



## PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR · CORSE

[golfmag.paca.corse@movepublishing.com](mailto:golfmag.paca.corse@movepublishing.com)

*Par Philippe Bridoux Martinet*

### *agenda*

#### **CANNES MANDELIEU**

- Christmas Give & Take:  
17 décembre

#### **CLAUX-AMIC**

- Coupe de Noël: 10 décembre

#### **ESTÉREL**

- Coupe de Noël: 10 décembre

#### **GRAND AVIGNON**

- Coupe de l'AS: 10 décembre

#### **MANVILLE**

- Coupe de Noël: 16 décembre

#### **SAINTE-VICTOIRE**

- Gala des membres: 16 décembre

#### **TERRE BLANCHE**

- Albatros Invitational:  
10 décembre
- Coupe de Noël de l'AS:  
17 décembre

#### **VALESCURE**

- Seniors Day de Noël:  
12 décembre
- Coupe de Noël: 16 décembre



**WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO EXCLUSIVE!**  
HEAVYWEIGHT LEGEND ON BIG HITS, BAD SHOTS AND GOLF AFTER BOXING

# Today's Golfer

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING  
GOLF MAGAZINE

# SAVE SHOTS NOW...

OVER  
35 PAGES  
OF TIPS  
INSIDE

## ...WITHOUT GOING NEAR YOUR SWING

- ✓ 17 ways to buy a better game
- ✓ Caddie guide to smarter golf
- ✓ Tour pro practice secrets



**TYRRELL HATTON**  
Like you've never seen him before!

**ALL-NEW PLAY BETTER SECTION**  
+ Master 40-yard bunker blasts  
+ Add spin to your pitch shots  
+ What your tee is telling you



**SECRETS OF THE TOUR STAT LEADERS**  
Tips from 2017's best drivers, iron players, scramblers and putters



JANUARY 2018 ISSUE 368 NOV 23-DEC 26 £4.99

**MORE GEAR!**

**COBRA'S KING F8 DRIVER**  
And it's got a milled face!



**MORE TESTS!**

**GORE-TEX JACKETS**  
**BLADES v CAVITY IRONS**  
**ONE LENGTH HYBRIDS**



**MORE COURSES!**

**66 UK COURSES**  
**RATED PLUS:**  
**LUXURY GOLF GUIDE**

## THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

Just a short hop from the UK, this year-round destination boasts some of the finest golf resorts in the world, Top 100 courses and a setting fit for the world's rich and famous.



**Terre Blanche**

Two of Europe's finest courses and one of its best golf resorts.

**S**lowly but surely, golf in France is gaining a foothold and following the staging of next year's Ryder Cup in Paris, that grip is sure to tighten further.

Lots of Brits know the famous links courses of the northern coast, while Ryder Cup venue Le Golf National is the familiar home of the French Open. But that's often where our appreciation of French courses ends...

That's a shame, because if you venture to the deep south – the little known region of Var in particular –

you'll discover courses just as good... if not better.

Var is very much a hidden gem of a golfing destination, even though it's part of, and on the doorstep of, the millionaire's playground that is the Cote d'Azur, French Riviera and Provence. And therein lies part of the problem – there's so much razzmatazz going on elsewhere, the golf courses struggle to get a decent look in.

They tend to get overlooked, but they shouldn't; Var

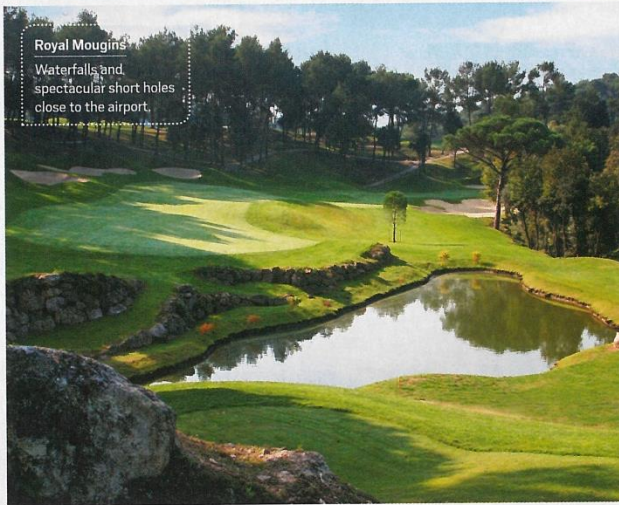
alone boasts a dozen 18-hole layouts, a magical mix of coastal and inland courses, and there's barely a weak track among them. We experienced three of them in the summer and were blown away by each of them.

As you'd expect in this corner of the world, you'll be parting company with extra euros for both staying and playing. An additional burden of course, but to be fair that's just about the only minus point from the moment you land at Nice airport – just a two-hour £60 (return) →

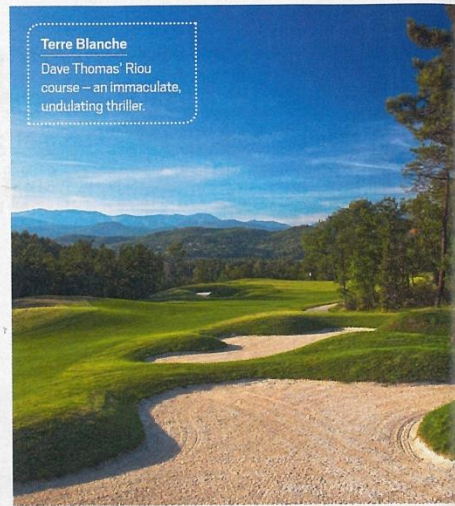


**'VAR BOASTS A DOZEN  
18-HOLE COURSES AND  
THERE'S BARELY A WEAK  
TRACK AMONG THEM'**

## THE PLAYLIST INSIDER'S GUIDE TO...



**Royal Mougins**  
Waterfalls and spectacular short holes close to the airport.



**Terre Blanche**  
Dave Thomas' Riou course – an immaculate, undulating thriller.

flight away. And the outlay is balanced out when you take into account the quality of golf available and the fact there's every chance you'll be taking to the course with very few fellow golfers around. Another major plus is the weather – considerably better in the south compared to the north, it's a year-round destination where sun is virtually guaranteed.

For golfers, the astounding quality – and quantity – of golf resorts and courses on offer would be top of the list with world-class Terre Blanche, not surprisingly, leading the way. Then again, the three other venues we visited – Royal Mougins, St Endreol and Dolce Fregate Provence – are all outstanding resorts in their own right. The former is actually the odd one out as it is outside Var, though it is the closest to Nice airport (20 minutes) and provided the perfect starting point.

### THE COURSES...

First port of call, mainly because it's on the French Riviera close to Cannes and the closest to Nice airport, was Royal Mougins, home of a fast maturing layout which opened in 1993 and is the handiwork of American architect Robert Von Hagge.

It is a fascinating course, opening with a par 4 on the side of a mountain and followed by the most spectacular of short holes – from the most elevated of tees you need to take careful aim to find the green, well guarded by cascading waterfalls, way below.

There's plenty of water to negotiate – not unlike the designer's more famous project, Paris National. There's plenty of match-play action going on here, too, with the 4th green beyond a lake, while a brook threatens shots failing to find the huge two-tier green at the 6th.

The back nine has its moments, too, and again you need to take great care to avoid the water short and right of the par-4 16th green. The 18th is a classic par 5 – take your pick from two fairways... the left route is shorter but it brings water into play.

If you can then take advantage of the fine practice facilities here and it's worth checking out head pro Stephane Damiano, who set Victor Dubuisson on the road to European Tour and Ryder Cup star status.

There's thrills and spills galore at St Endreol, too, with the dramatic par-72 layout carved out of a thick pine forest in an unbelievably peaceful setting alongside the River Endre. Once again the star of the show is a par 3 played from the highest of tees and demanding the most precise of shots to a virtual-island green. It will take your breath your away.

Next up was Dolce Fregate Provence which can be found in Bandol between Marseille and Toulon and was created by Ronald Fream in 1992. It overlooks the



**Dolce Fregate**  
Overlooking the Med, this tranquil resort has perfect holiday golf.

Mediterranean and presents superb holiday golf. Once again it is full of outstanding holes, the downhill par-4 10th being our pick. Most of the thrills occur on the back nine and the 15th is a superb short par 4 – its downhill all the way – while the par-4 penultimate hole is a pulsating, twisting downhill leading to a green way below the fairway. You'll need to take care on the big rolling greens and you'll love the peace and quiet – the only things you're likely to hear is the wind and noisy crickets – and the excellent practice facilities include a nine-hole par-29 layout.

We saved the best to last – the legendary Terre Blanche, which has developed into one of Europe's best golf resorts with two Dave Thomas courses (Chateau and Riou) always – and quite rightly so – prominently placed in nearly all Continental Europe Top 100 courses rankings.

The classy courses are a joy to play. Always immaculate, you'll do well to find courses in better

shape in Europe, if not the world. The Riou in particular was pristine tee to green – so much so it seemed a shame to hit off the silky smooth turf! That owes something to the fact it's a members/guests and hotel residents course...a huge bonus if you're staying on site!

To be honest, Terre Blanche doesn't do weak holes – all 36 are pretty special – but the beauty of the venue is that they're two completely different layouts: the Riou is very undulating and signs off with a trio of thrilling downhillers, while the flatter, longer Chateau features more water and there's a bit more room off the tee. Tee it up morning and afternoon and you've got yourself the perfect 36-hole day out. Oh, and then there's the amazing Albatross two-tier driving range with David Leadbetter Academy...

But there's much more and other Var beltiers include the likes of Pete Dye's Barbaroux, 94-years-old GC de Beauvallon and the internationally-acclaimed L'Estérel near St Raphael.



**St Andreol**  
Drama among the peace as you weave through a pine forest.



## OFF-COURSE GUIDE

### FOOD AND DRINK

All four resorts have excellent restaurants and views. None more so than the La Terrasse du 18 at Royal Mougins, which in the summer introduced 'Food & Fire' outdoor cooking and on the terrace at rustic St Andreol where you're afforded gorgeous panoramic vistas. You can take your pick from four eateries at Terre Blanche, while Dolce Fregate de Provence boasts a splendid gourmet restaurant along with more relaxed dining in the clubhouse's La Restanque.

### OTHER ATTRACTIONS

There's something for everybody, young and old, from the glitz and glamour – and high prices – of Cannes and St Tropez to the small town of Grasse, which claims to be the birthplace and the capital of the perfume world. You can follow all the stages of perfume creation in a working factory dating from the 19th century. But the pièce de résistance and must visit is the Verdon gorge – France's very own Grand Canyon is a gigantic chasm seemingly carved by the gods.

### GETTING THERE

We flew with easyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) from Luton and the flight time is about two hours with a return fare of just over £60 – about the same price as the airport parking meet & greet service. Golf clubs carriage is extra (£37) per flight if booked online (£47 otherwise).

### SAMPLE DEALS

**Dolce Fregate Provence** From €221 per night for two people including B&B, one round of golf each and free access to the outdoor pools, indoor pool, sauna, fitness area and tennis courts. Valid until March 31.  
☎0033 494293830 🌐[www.dolcefregate.com](http://www.dolcefregate.com)

**Saint Andreol** One night's accommodation in a prestige room, one round and spa access costs from €129pp (double occupancy) and from €258pp for two nights (double occupancy).  
☎0033 494 518980 🌐[www.st-andreol.com](http://www.st-andreol.com)

**Royal Mougins** Two nights/two adults in a suite with breakfast and one green fee each, access to Royal Spa for three hours and fitness centre costs from £451.  
☎0033 492 924969 🌐[www.royalmougins.fr](http://www.royalmougins.fr)

**Terre Blanche** A typical stay and play package costs from €540 for two per night, inc breakfast and a round each with GPS buggy, entry to the driving range with balls and access to swimming pools and fitness centre.  
☎0033 494 393600 🌐[www.terre-blanche.com](http://www.terre-blanche.com)

**Your Golf Travel 2018 specials:** Dolce Fregate; Two nights' B&B and two rounds costs from £179pp and five nights with unlimited golf costs from £449pp; Royal Mougins; Two nights B&B and two rounds with buggy and spa access costs from £315pp.  
☎0800 043 6644 🌐[www.yourgolftravel.com](http://www.yourgolftravel.com)

## WHAT TG READERS SAY

**MARTIN McGRATH, BRIGHTON**  
It's the stylish home to some of the best golf courses and resorts in France and Europe. Terre Blanche has won many awards and the resort is always ranked amongst the top 10 best in Europe. Set away from the coast and in rural Provence,

Terre Blanche ticks all the boxes when it comes to a perfect golf holiday: great hotel, amazing rooms and suites, superb views from both courses and Michelin star food served in an award-winning restaurant. For those who want to be closer to the coast, try Royal Mougins. Another great golf resort with a five-star standard hotel just 10 minutes

from Cannes and perfectly situated to give golfers the opportunity to explore the region.

**NORMAN DEANE, COLCHESTER**  
At Royal Mougins I was pleasantly surprised to discover a small piece of paradise on the French Riviera. At the heart of the golfing world hides a great spa providing a terrific variety of services.

**ALAN JOHNSON, PROVENCE**  
Set among the Bandol vineyard of Fregate with stunning views of the Mediterranean, Dolce Fregate Provence is both testing and enjoyable. I've been playing this course for 20 years and can highly recommend it. The hotel is handily placed to play other courses such as St Baume and Barbaroux.



Dolce Fregate's accommodation is stunning.