

THE BEST OF GOLF IN FRANCE

A 40-PAGE GUIDE TO GOLF IN
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YEAR'S RYDER CUP

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UGOLF

WELCOME TO FRANCE



What makes France such a great choice for a golf break? Convenience, accessibility and value immediately spring to mind. But, for me, the biggest draw is versatility. Long weekend? Stick your car on Le Shuttle at Folkstone and you'll be on the tee at the revamped Le Touquet or Hardelot less than two hours later. Sunshine and wine-tasting? Jet into Marseille and either head east along the coast to the sumptuous Terre Blanche or west to the Seve Ballesteros-designed Pont Royal, taking your pick of a multitude of good courses – and chateaux – along the way. Sightseeing and culture? You won't need me to tell you Paris has some of the world's finest architecture, restaurants, galleries

and museums, but you might be surprised to learn it hosts some of Europe's very finest golf courses. Morfontaine and Fontainebleau, for example, are consistently placed in the highest echelons of our Top-100 Courses Continental Europe ranking.

However, this year, I would be remiss if I did not mention the one Parisian course we will all be familiar with come September – Le Golf National. While it may not be the city's most aesthetically-pleasing golf course, it's certainly the most challenging. The venue of the Open de France on the European Tour is a hugely technical golf course with danger lurking at every turn – especially over its four-hole closing stretch where water lurks everywhere. Throw in some do-or-die par 5s,

driveable par 4s and some epic short holes and you have everything you need to create plenty of Ryder Cup drama. I'm hoping the huge attention the event generates finally puts France on the map as a golf destination.

This guide highlights the five key golf regions in France and some of the best golf to be found in each area – from links to woodland, heathland, parkland and resorts. We also introduce you to tour operators and networks, and reveal some of the more interesting off-course cultural, historical and gastronomical delights. In short, everything you need to book a great golf break in this beautiful country is at your fingertips. Enjoy!

Nick Wright
Editor, *Golf World*

TOP 100 QUALITY

France has 16 courses in our *Top 100 Courses Continental Europe* list.

1. Morfontaine, Paris
3. Les Bordes, Orleans
6. Fontainebleau, Paris
11. Chantilly, Paris
14. Golf du Medoc (Châteaux), Bordeaux
15. Terre Blanche (Chateau), Fayence
19. Saint Germain, Paris
24. Hardelot (Les Pins)
32. Golf National, Paris
57. Sperone, Corsica
51. Seignosse, Landes
52. Golf du Medoc (Vignes), Bordeaux
31. Le Touquet (La Mer), Pas de Calais
73. Chiberta, Landes
77. Saint Emillionais
87. Moliets, Landes

The beautiful 2nd hole at Morfontaine in Paris – ranked No.1 in our *Top-100 Courses Continental Europe* ranking.



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EXPERT ASSISTANCE

YOUR PASSPORT TO FRANCE'S CLASSIC COURSES

Whenever you venture overseas to new countries, regions and golf courses, how handy would it be to have a local guide on speed dial. Someone who knows everything about everything you will need when you land on the other side of the Channel – from where to go and what to experience to the crucial information on how to get on to the courses you choose. Luckily, a number of golf management companies and tour operators now offer their expertise to assist you in discovering the best experiences within France. With their help, you can organise the perfect trip, and secure the best deals and access. Here are four of the very best networks.

UGOLF Founded in 2007 to make golf accessible to the greatest number of people, U Golf brings the experience of golf to France and beyond. Its Le ClubGolf network gives access to more than 350 courses worldwide. Offered through three brands, from Garden'Golf and Daily'Golf, to the more upmarket Exclusiv'Golf, on courses that have Châteaux attached, with emphasis on excellent public courses around Paris. **The benefits:** U Golf's BINGOLF Pass offers various tiers of membership that offer unlimited and exceptional golf for a one-off fee. www.jouer.golf

BLUE GREEN One of the biggest golf course management companies in Europe with 49 clubs across France, many of them down the west coast, Blue Green aim to

deliver innovation, great service and top-class golf. The BG stable includes courses in Alsace, Aquitaine, Brittany, Bourgogne, the Centre, Franche-Comté, Île de France, Languedoc-Roussillon, Midi Pyrénées, Pas de Calais, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Pays de la Loire, Poitou-Charentes and Rhône Alpes. Big-name venues include Seignosse, Pléneuf-val-André, Le Golf National, Hardelot, Pont Royal, Le Touquet and Omaha Beach – but there are a wealth of courses of all budgets and types to choose from.

The benefits: Blue Green card holders save 25 per cent on full-price green fees and reduced fees for bookings on bookandgolf.com. It's valid for a year and includes complimentary green fees on the date of issue. **Details:** www.bluegreen.com



OPEN GOLF CLUB Boasting a strong family tradition in tourism and high-end leisure sports for more than 50 years, OGC has a presence in nine countries – including France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and Portugal. The group offers a choice of 55 quality

courses including several big names. Within France, OGC represents 25 exceptional courses, many among the Top 100 in Continental Europe, including Le Touquet's myriad options, Hardelot's duo, Biarritz le Phare, the magnificent Château de Vigiers and 2018 Ryder Cup host Le Golf National. This powerhouse stable is complemented by hotels close to each course, offering three and four-star accommodation. **The benefits:** Open Golf Club can take care of packages, green fees, golf passes and gift certificates, leaving you free to enjoy your golf break. **Details:** www.opengolfclub.com



PRIVATE GOLF KEY Established in 1992 to spread the gospel of the game in France, Private Golf Key has helped build the nation's reputation as one of the key destinations in world golf. But more than that, PGK has sought to celebrate the French Art de Vivre, celebrated the world over. Private Golf Key gives you member-level access to all the most prestigious golf clubs in Europe including private country-clubs. Experience off the beaten tracks travel with your friends and discover the rich European heritage playing historic golf courses where legends have played.

From start to fin, Private Golf Key takes care of every step, be it an eight-day Paris Top Golf Courses package, Bordeaux Wine & Golf or the full Ryder Cup package. **The benefits:** As the name suggests, Private Golf Key can open doors you wouldn't otherwise be able to access, for once-in-a-lifetime golf (and beyond) experiences. **Details:** www.privategolfkey.com ■

YOUR DREAM FRENCH GOLF BREAK IS A CLICK AWAY

The Play Golf in France website offers essential information on France's key golf tourism regions.

The website incorporates an exhaustive list of 'must play' courses in France and has official support of the French Golf Federation.

For more information, visit: www.playgolfinfrance.com



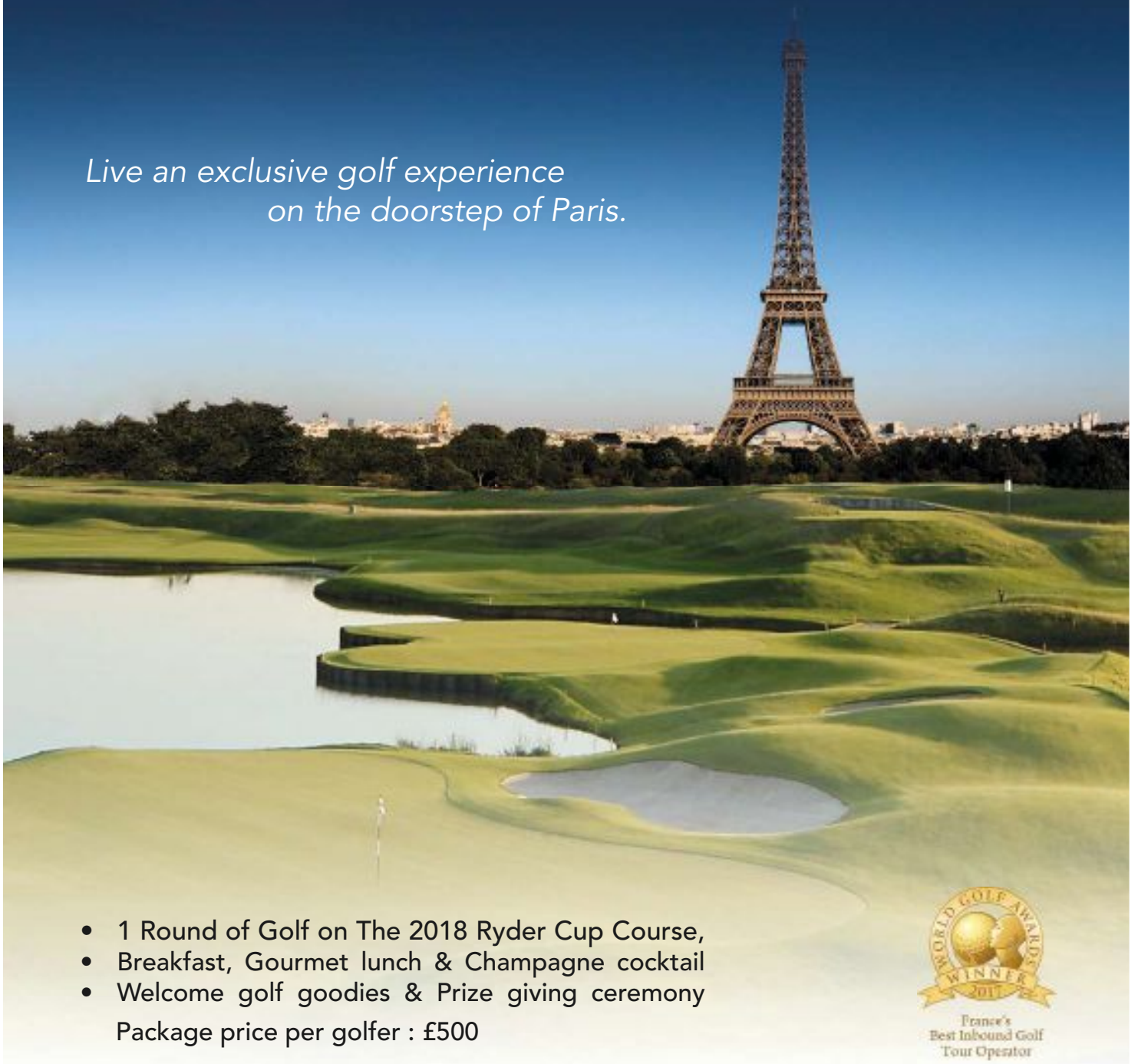
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INCREDIBLE NORMANDY

From the green slopes of the Pays d'Auge to the elegant Planches boardwalk in Deauville, great opportunities await. A breathtaking view from atop the cliffs of Etretat or a land steeped in history surrounding Golf Omaha Beach. Each and every course offers a unique, spectacular view. Golf Barrière Deauville, set at the foot of Hôtel du Golf Deauville****, offers diverse courses and breathtaking vistas. The 18 holes of the Rouge & Blanc course present numerous birdie opportunities.

ATLANTIC MOOD

Nestled between umbrella pines and turquoise ocean, the high prestige of the greens of the Loire-Atlantic region owes much to the spectacular surrounding landscapes: discover golf clubs immersed in the beauty of nature which are regularly cited as among the most magnificent in France. Golf International Barrière La Baule and its duo of courses guarantee a competitive, exciting and technically challenging round of golf. Surrounded by thousand-year-old forests and the Emerald Coast, Dinard sparkles in splendour.



L'Hôtel du Golf Deauville****

© F. Rambert

YOURS IN SPORT

Discover the Côte d'Opale through the greens and driving ranges of Le Touquet. A resort renowned for its lively and distinguished atmosphere, Le Touquet invites golfers of all abilities to take on an outstanding course. Thanks to the diversity of the region's courses, you can



Golf International Barrière La Baule



Golf du Touquet

perfect your swing in a unique setting. Golf Le Touquet Paris Plage and its legendary courses, set between wild dunes and dense forests, offers golfers the chance to get away from it all, enjoy themselves and relax.

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WIN A GOLF BREAK IN PARIS WORTH £3,000

You can stay at the palatial Mandarin Oriental, Paris – one of the city's most desirable addresses – and play the 2018 Ryder Cup venue Le Golf National.

Private Golf Key – the expert in luxury French golf breaks – and Mandarin Oriental, Paris have teamed up to offer one lucky reader and a partner the chance to enjoy a luxury golf break in one of Europe's most enchanting cities and one of the world's most impressive hotels.

Our lucky winner plus guest will receive two nights at Mandarin Oriental, Paris including breakfast and a round of golf on Le Golf National.

All transfers are included, with a private driver during the three days and a wine tasting in a private 'cave'.

Mandarin Oriental, Paris is at the very centre of everything you could wish for in a true Parisian experience; culture, fashion and gourmet dining.

Its address is in rue Saint-Honoré, one of the most fashionable streets in the world, where Parisians shop in style. The world-famous Louvre is within a five-minute walk, as are the elegant Tuileries gardens where Parisians stroll and relax.

The spaciousness of its 138 guestrooms is enhanced by a contemporary French design and oriental touches.

And as you'd expect of this gastronomic capital, fine dining is a key ingredient of your stay. The hotel boasts four distinct dining experiences, from the sensory experience of Sur Mesure Par Thierry Marx to the classic French dining experience of Camélia, and from the irresistible Cake Shop, to the exquisite L'Honoré. Named after the street where the hotel is located, L'Honoré offers a healthy food menu served in the cosy and tranquil atmosphere of the lobby alcoves.

Mandarin Oriental, Paris is also your home for unrivalled leisure and pampering. Work up a sweat in the cutting-edge fitness centre, or relax in the peaceful green courtyard with its ambience of oriental calm. The Spa is a serene oasis, created for pure relaxation with steam showers, vitality tubs, a steam room and pool.

To enter, answer the following question:

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Bauer Media competition T&Cs apply.
Travel to and from Paris is at the winner's expense.



THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Paris and Le Golf National will host the next Ryder Cup in a year's time, only the second time Continental Europe has staged the tournament after Valderrama in 1997. To plan any visit to the city before, during or after the Ryder Cup, contact Private Golf Key, the specialist in golf experience packages across Paris, France and beyond. For details, see the contacts below.



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REGIONAL GUIDE

THE BEST OF PARIS

Ahead of the first ever Ryder Cup on French soil, we visit Le Golf National to explore a course that will transfix the world for three days in September.



Looking back down the daunting par-4 15th and par-4 18th on the Albatros at Le Golf National.

A great Ryder Cup course needs several things. It must offer superb viewing opportunities for tens of thousands of fans. After all, Ryder Cup fans don't just want a spot to watch the golf; they want a stadium atmosphere where they can virtually surround tees and greens, cheering the heroes of their team and booing the villainous players who dared to turn out for the opposition. It needs to provide a stern challenge for 24 of the world's best golfers, but also offer opportunities for spectacular shots and the resulting birdies and eagles. It needs to tick the unsexy but important logistical boxes of accessibility, public



transport links, car parking, infrastructure, and space for enough refreshment stands and merchandise stalls to ensure you're never more than 50 yards from a hotdog or logeod polo

shirt. It should ideally be a course that ordinary golfers can go and play, both before the Ryder Cup to get a taste of what's in store for the teams, and in the many years afterwards, so fans can attempt to recreate the magic moments they watched unfold during the big three days. But, perhaps more than anything, the perfect Ryder Cup course is set up to produce almost guaranteed matchplay drama, particularly in the closing stretch.

The Albatros Course at Le Golf National, home of this year's Ryder Cup, meets all these requirements in abundance, and could hardly be more primed to generate the kind of dramatic moments that fans will remember for ➡



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Whether it's sand, water, rough or simply a fast green, there's always a hazard nearby at Le Golf National.



a lifetime. More on a four-hole closing stretch that could be the most dramatic of any Ryder Cup venue later. . .

What it's like to play

The traditional wisdom of golf course design was that the opening hole should offer a warm welcome to the course. Not a pushover, but not a hole with the potential to ruin your scorecard before

you've even had a chance to write on it. Some modern courses choose to eschew this policy, preferring to rouse early-morning golfers with an immediate test that requires their full attention. The Albatros course, designed by Hubert Chesneau and Robert Von Hagge and opened in 1990, definitely fits that latter style, greeting you with an opener that is fraught with danger on both the tee shot

and approach. Your opening tee shot will likely be a long iron or hybrid, where water will penalise any shot hit left of the fairway, or even a straight one that travels too far, as the fairway ends abruptly between 200 and 240 yards, depending on the tee you play from and the exact line you take. If you're thinking of playing safe by bailing out to the right, think again. Dunes covered in heavy rough there will make your second shot almost impossible, if you manage to find your ball in the first place. Even a tee shot that safely finds the centre of the fairway will leave a tricky short to mid-iron into a green guarded by water left and bunkers right.

Water comes into play on 10 of the 18 holes, not least the par-3 second, which is 210 yards over water if you're brave (arguably foolish) enough to tackle it from the back tee. You're playing over the same mass of water that may have cost you a ball on the first hole, which will make it all the more painful if you come up short on the second tee.

Anything short will swim, but play safe by going long and you'll likely find yourself in one of three hungry bunkers, playing a nery sand shot onto a green that slopes straight back towards the water. That trend of greens guarded by water on one side and bunkers on the other is present numerous times ➔

PLAY IT

How to get there

Le Golf National is a three-hour drive from Calais, two hours from Le Havre, or just 30 minutes from Paris.

Where to stay

You can't match the convenience of walking from the on-site Novotel to the first tee, which will take a matter of minutes. The four-star hotel offers 131 rooms, some of which overlook the final four holes of the Albatros Course. Double rooms are available from £99.

How much does it cost?

18 holes on the Albatros Course is €200. Special

offers mean you can get B&B in the on-site hotel, plus 18 holes, for €185 per person Nov-Apr and €210 in peak season. 18 holes on the sister course, the Eagle, costs €92 at weekends and €77 during the week.

Choose the right tees

It's always tempting to tee it up from the back tees and pretend to be the pros. Unlike at some courses, Le Golf National won't try to deter you from taking on this challenge, provided you keep up with the recommended pace of play. We'd recommend maximising your enjoyment by selecting a set of tees that make the course a similar yardage to the

course you usually play. It will likely be tougher than your home club, anyway, so adding an extra 500 yards could make things unenjoyably difficult, which isn't what you came for.

Get a French golf licence

A French Golf Federation licence is €54 for the year and gives you the benefit of insurance and reduced green fees. It can be bought on site and will reduce your green fee enough to more than pay for itself in just one round. If you are playing more than once, it can yield some substantial savings. The licence lasts one calendar year, so hang onto it for return trips.



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Play the Albatros, The 2018 Ryder Cup Course until August 31st 2018!

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THREE MORE TO PLAY IN PARIS...

Morfontaine Golf Club

It's an exclusive, private members club, so it won't be easy or cheap to play, but we could not leave out the course that tops our current Top 100 Courses Continental Europe ranking. The stunning heathland layout will require some advance planning to secure a tee time, but it will be well worth the effort.

Fontainebleau

This beguiling pine and heather Tom Simpson layout is ranked sixth in our list of European courses. While still a private club, a gentle policy change means that visitors are increasingly being welcomed.

Saint Germain

Designed by Harry Colt in 1922, the beautiful, undulating fairways weave through forest to produce a tranquil and heavenly golfing experience. If you stay out of the 100 bunkers, that is.



Morfontaine is Europe's No.1 ranked course.

throughout the 18 holes. There's simply no safe place to miss on the majority of approach shots. You either hit the green, or you could find yourself struggling to even escape with a bogey.

It's exactly the kind of course you want to tackle on a day when you're playing well. Every fairway you hit, every green, every par, every birdie – will make you feel like you've truly earned it. The course doesn't give you anything for free, which makes the sense of accomplishment all the greater when you successfully overcome its many challenges – even if it's only for one hole.

Visit on a day when it feels like you've left your golf swing in the hotel room, however, and you'll find a course ready to punish you at every turn. It's certainly not unfair, but there are plenty of instances where no strategy can guarantee safety; you simply need to hit a good shot. Play too safe away from the many water hazards and you'll find severe slopes covered in thick, heavy rough. Finishing 18 holes with one ball is an achievement worthy of accolade.

That said, you'll still need to use your brain as much as your swing if you want to put together a good score or win a match, whether there's a Ryder Cup point at stake or just bragging rights over your playing partners.

The par-5 third hole measures 558 yards off the black tees and 519 from the whites, so the temptation will be to go for it in two. It's achievable, but requires an accurate tee shot that avoids the water on the right and the dunes on the left, before a long approach shot to green guarded by trees and a large bunker short-right. Get either of those shots wrong and you'll be wishing you'd played it as a manageable three-shotter.

Certain pin positions should come with a health warning, but play too safe away from them on expansive, slick greens and you'll leave yourself in a position where a three-putt is likely. The ultimate ignominy of putting off the green into the water is a possibility on several greens if you happen to find yourself above the hole, putting back towards the drink.

From the black tees, the par-71 layout measures 7,271 yards. From every other set of tees, par is 72, thanks to the 18th hole becoming a par-5. The course measures 6,830 yards from the whites, 6,402 from the yellow tees and 5,510 from the reds.

How long it feels will be determined by the prevailing wind on the day. It's an open layout, built on what used to be a cornfield, with very few trees to offer any shelter from the breeze. ■

A DRAMATIC CONCLUSION

15 The hardest hole on the course measures 408 yards from the black tee and 377 from the yellows. It's not length that makes the hole so challenging, but the fact you will need to hit two of your best shots just to keep your ball on dry land. Depending on the wind, you'll need a long iron or fairway wood from the tee to find a fairway flanked by water down the right-hand side. You will then be faced with a testing shot to a small, island green. There's a good reason this hole is dubbed 'The Judge'.

16 Known as 'The Call', this par 3 is all about choosing the right club and committing to

the shot. Water will catch any shot that comes up short, but play long and you'll face a very testy chip towards the water on a green that is now sloping away from you.

17 The penultimate hole offers some respite from the watery doom awaiting you on the other three holes down the final stretch, but there's a reason it's the fifth hardest hole on the course. At 480 yards, it's one of the longest par 4s on the course, has a narrow fairway flanked by heavy rough and plays uphill to a severely raised green.

18 The final hole runs down the opposite side of the water that flanked the 15th, meaning left off the tee is dead. Heavy rough and bunkers will catch any tee shot that goes too far right, making an already difficult approach shot over water all the more challenging. With the wind whipping and thousands of fans watching, a

second shot that finds dry land will grant players a sigh of relief. At least there's no shortage of water to throw the winning captain into come Sunday evening.

"The last four or five holes are going to create incredible drama," says 2014 Ryder Cup captain Paul McGinley, and he's not wrong. With more water than grass on this four-hole stretch, matches that go to the wire will really test the nerve of the players. One slightly erroneous shot at this stage could cost you a ball, your match, or even the entire Ryder Cup.



The closing hole at Le Golf National: not for the faint-hearted.



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Le Manoir hotel is yards from the 1st tee of Le Touquet's new clubhouse, so you have 45 holes literally on your doorstep, while the other courses mentioned are within half an hour's drive. Le Manoir is a characterful hotel with fabulous food and superb wine.

REGIONAL GUIDE

OPAL COAST

A trio of epic courses form the core of a trip to this north-eastern corner of France.

With only eleven 18-hole courses and three nine-holers in its portfolio, it's difficult to describe the Opal Coast as a heavyweight golf destination. But when you consider that three of the courses – Hardelot, Le Touquet and Wimereux – feature in our *Golf World* Top 100 Continental Europe Courses and Resorts rankings, you'll begin to appreciate that quality over quantity is the overriding mantra of this popular holiday destination.

Le Touquet and Hardelot have grabbed most of the headlines for this region during the past several decades, so

let's start this time with Wimereux. It's the first golf course you encounter after leaving Calais and it's no exaggeration to state that within 30 minutes of driving out of the port you can be sipping an Espresso in the welcoming clubhouse.

Wimereux is a firm and fast-running links-style course with a set of challenging par 3s and some penal rough.



A grand seaside course tucked away among the 80-mile stretch of sand dunes that link Dunkerque and Baie de Somme, Wimereux is the perfect introduction to golf in the region.

But to describe it solely as a warm-up act to the more celebrated Le Touquet and Hardelot would be wholly unfair. At almost 6,800 yards off the tips and featuring a selection of tough par 3s and stiff rough, the course can comfortably hold its own against any level of golfer, especially if the prevailing winds get a little lively. Fun, friendly, down-to-earth and ever interesting, Wimereux walks the fine line of being both playable ➤



Following extensive renovation,
Le Touquet now more closely
resembles its original 1931 design.



THE BEST OF THE OPAL COAST

The Côte d'Opale Golf Pass is stunning value. Play six 18-hole rounds from nine selected golf courses in the region for €250! Given the pedigree of courses, this just might be the best value-to-quality green fee pass on the Continent.

Golf de Wimereux

A fun seaside course that plays like a true links.
www.golf-wimereux.com

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Golf d'Hardelot

The recently revamped Les Pins is one of Europe's best. Les Dunes is also a must-play.
www.hardelotgolfclub.com

Golf du Touquet

The new La Mer course returns to its former fast-running, sandy links-style glory.
www.opengolfclub.com

Golf de Nampont Saint-Martin

A 36-hole complex that delivers a grand parkland and woodland experience.
www.nampontgolfclub.com

Golf de Belle Dune

An engaging blend of pines and dunes.
www.baiedesomme.fr

Golf d'Abbeville

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www.abbevillegolfclub.com

Aa Saint Omer Golf Club

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www.golfsaintomer.fr



The 16th hole at Abbeville.

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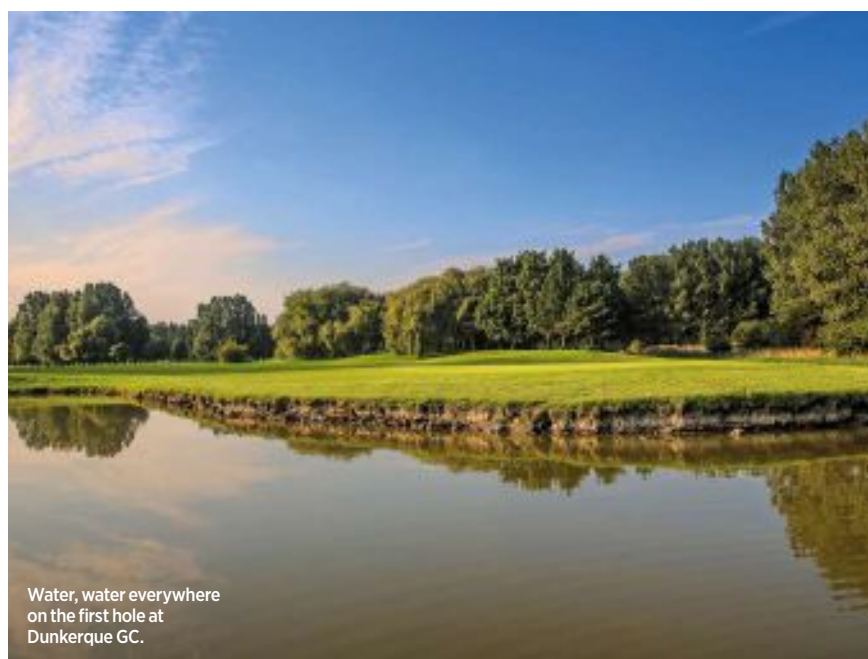
Hardelot's Les Pins course cuts through a pine forest, but is blessed with sandy links-style turf.

and challenging.

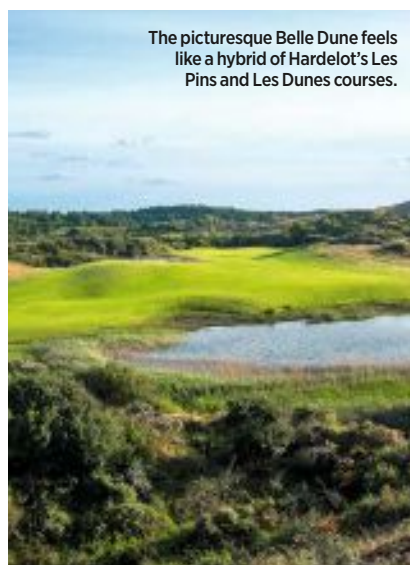
Wimereux has appeared in many guises over the years. It was originally designed in 1901, but was given a complete makeover after World War II by Guy Campbell and Cecil Hutchinson. During the past seven decades or so, it has received numerous nips and tucks but it has matured gracefully and, despite the advent of modern equipment and technology, still expects visiting golfers to arrive with a solid ground game – ready, willing and able to use the contours of the land to work the ball close into the flags on its tiny greens. Wimereux may not be a links course in the truest definition of the word, but with fast-running fairways cutting through imposing bluffs and dunes, and the salty sea air wafting in on the wind,

the difference is purely semantics. The standout holes are the par-3 2nd, which plays some 200 yards downhill from an elevated tee, the par-4 11th with its glorious vistas and the risk-or-reward short par-4 16th.

The seaside towns of Le Touquet and Hardelot, almost always mentioned together, have attracted visitors to the Opal Coast for more than a century. The precise point in time golf replaced the casinos and the shopping as the main draw to the area is unclear, but it's fair to say the stick and ball game has put these two towns on the map. Harry Colt designed the original 18-hole La Mer (the seas) course at Le Touquet, while Tom Simpson, a British architect with an extensive French portfolio, crafted Hardelot.



Water, water everywhere on the first hole at Dunkerque GC.



The picturesque Belle Dune feels like a hybrid of Hardelot's Les Pins and Les Dunes courses.

Le Touquet has just finished the first phase of a multi-year renovation to La Mer that has seen it painstakingly restored by Dutch architect and Colt enthusiast Frank Pont, and his design associate, Patrice Boissonais. The original 1931 layout was known for its open vistas of the rolling sandy links terrain, but over time the original character of the course had been lost as vegetation was allowed to grow unchecked. Fewer trees, wider fairways, reshaped greens, restored bunkers and the addition of a spectacular new par 3 helped La Mer rise an incredible 35 places in our 2017 *Golf World* Top 100 Courses Continental Europe ranking.

Hardelot's Tom Simpson-designed Les Pins enjoyed an even more impressive rise. The celebrated course, which cuts through a pine forest yet is blessed with sandy, linksland soil, was on the brink of tumbling out of the Top 100 but after an overhaul by the same Pont and Boissonais partnership, it shot up into the 20s a couple of years ago. The encroachment of the forest and unchecked tree growth over several decades had turned what was a hard, fast-running links into a lush, soft, layout hemmed in by unchecked tree growth. Following an extensive tree management programme, the course has shed its claustrophobic feel and the soil

has improved immeasurably.

Elsewhere along the Opal Coast, the aptly-named Belle Dune plays out over natural, rolling sandscape. The combination of pines and dunes make it feel like a hybrid of Hardelot's Les Pins and Les Dunes, and it's every bit as fun and engaging as the name suggests it should be.

If your goal during a golf trip is to test the quality of your ball-striking, head straight to Golf d'Arras, located at the heart of the Scarpe Valley. The strategic La Vallée course hosted the Ladies French Open for a decade. Similarly demanding, AA St-Omer is also a European Tour venue. It plays through some 6,800 yards, combining undulating and pretty woodland terrain.

At the other end of the scale, the 27-hole complex at Dunkerque Grand Littoral delivers generous tees and fairways, but plenty of ditches and water to keep you honest. It's a course full of character, playing through bastions, curtains and artillery towers while delivering splendid views over the towers and belfries of Flanders.

And last, but not least, the two courses at Namport Saint-Martin offer vastly different experiences. The wide fairways of Les Cygnes thread through ornamental lakes and the chateau, while the Les Belvederes is woodland golf all the way. Abbeville, on the edge of the Somme bay, combines valley and plateau holes. ■



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THE FABULOUS FORTRESS

Chateau De Chailly mixes the modern and medieval in the heart of Burgundy.



The stunning medieval four-star Chateau overlooks the pristine parkland course.

In the heart of Burgundy, one of France's most revered wine regions, lies Chateau De Chailly, a stunning four-star hotel and golf course set in the picturesque countryside.

Taking full advantage of its natural surroundings in the heart of the 185 acres of gently undulating countryside, designers Terry Sprecher and Géry Watine, a former French PGA Champion, were hired in 1990 to create a parkland course fit for any golfing holiday. The duo have gone on to design more than 50 courses in 14 countries.

The Long Drivers European Tour competed here in April, but at 6,721 yards from the tips, and with four teeing options, length is not the course's defence. Instead, the natural streams which come into play on three holes, large lakes, century-old trees and the countless (often vast) bunkers are what brilliantly protects this immaculate par 73 layout.

The quartet of par 3s here are particularly special, none more so than the 11th with its semi-island green sitting in front of the stunning chateau hotel, a building classified as an historical monument. Formerly a medieval fortress, it

was tastefully converted into a Renaissance chateau offering 45 modern rooms and eight luxurious suites in a traditional French surrounding, while maintaining the external fortress styling. The majority of the rooms are located in annexes overlooking the estate, courtyard and golf course, while each suite benefits from stunning exposed timber beams.

When you're ready to dine, the choice is as impressive as the building. L'Armancon gourmet restaurant serves authentic cuisine



Stay in luxury and relax by the pool while trying some of the region's superb wines.

STAY & PLAY

Flights

More than 18 flights per day operate direct from London to Dole-Jura Airport. Flight time is less than an hour with a transfer of around 50 minutes.

Stay

One night's B&B for two in a superior room, two menu, three course dinner in Bistro Le Rubillon, two green fees or a 90-minute golf lesson for two. From €433.

Contact

T: +33 (0) 380 90 3030.
E: reservation@chailly.com
W: www.chailly.com

with an innovative spin and the finest Burgundy red wines. Alternatively, Le Rubillon serves more simple, quicker dishes. If it's a drink you'd like then the Lions bar and wine cellar lets you taste some of the region's celebrated wines, while the Sports Bar allows you to relax with a beer or cocktail, watch the sport in front of an open fire and enjoy a snack.

In those moments when you aren't wining and dining, playing golf, taking advantage of the vast practice facilities (you'll find a 20-bay grass range, short game area, wedge zone and large nine-hole putting green), or having a lesson in the ZONESAcademie there's an array of relaxation options.

The all-new Spa Vinésime and Charme d'Orient, located under stone vaults directly from the hotel, opened in March and includes a six-place Jacuzzi, hammam, sauna and massage and beauty institute. An outdoor heated pool, fitness studio, tennis court, and a billiard room offer further stress-reducing options, while you can even take cookery classes, rent a bicycle, visit a local vineyard or arrange a hot air balloon ride.

★ ★ ★
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3rd night offered.**

6 continental breakfast, 4 green-fees on our 18 hole course.

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Tournament from
the 4th to 8th July 2018

REGIONAL GUIDE

BRITTANY &

Easily accessible and boasting no fewer than 50 courses, the regions of Normandy and

Easily accessible via ferries to Saint-Malo and Roscoff and regular flight routes into a number of airports, most British golfers' first taste of French golf will come on the Opal Coast. And with good reason. All too often overshadowed by the capital an hour south and the sunshine of the French Riviera, France's northern corner deserves deeper exploration. In many ways, what you will find is oddly familiar. With its gently undulating terrain rolling over lush meadows, rural farmland and rolling coastal dunes, Normandy has the feel of

Devon, a region of grand, dramatic coastal landscapes, while the craggier, harsher-edges and undiscovered feel of Brittany bear comparison with the landscape of Cornwall. Imagine both blessed with a more clement climate than we enjoy, courtesy of the Gulf Stream, and you have a compelling reason to visit, play and explore.

Brittany

If you're visiting the region by car – highly advisable, given how convenient it is to do so – one of the easiest ways in is via Calais, just over 90 minutes by ferry

across the Strait of Dover. Alight on French soil and you'll soon discover that Brittany is blessed with three coastlines, a variety of dramatic coastal landscapes, numerous fine pebbly beaches and plenty of very good golf. That golf takes second billing to those beaches for most visitors is no bad thing – the courses are usually uncrowded and the green fees affordable.

St Malo Hôtel, Golf & Country Club, Pléneuf-Val-André, Dinard Golf and Golf des Ormes are four of the region's standouts. The upmarket St Malo is a fine example of the new generation of French golf clubs, a sprawling affair

WHERE TO STAY

St Malo Golf Resort

Set in a restored 18th century priory founded by a hermit named Gaultier, the St Malo Golf Resort's hotel's past life is evident in the open beams and stone walls. All 30 of its rooms are well equipped, very spacious and air-conditioned with their own balcony or terrace overlooking the golf course. It also features an outstanding restaurant in the l'Etang, which offers a wide range of local cuisine and panoramic views over the beautiful Mirloup Lake.
www.golf-brittany.com/hotel

NORMANDY

Brittany have plenty to offer the travelling golfer.

whose principal 18-hole parkland Surcouf course covers 250 acres of land on the edge of the Mesnil forest and borders the picturesque Mirloup Lake. Designed by Hubert Chesneau, architect of Ryder Cup venue Golf National near Paris, the 6,700-yard course was created in 1986 but has the feel of an old established estate. And like Le Golf National, Surcouf features heavily.

Complemented by a restored 18th century priory hotel (see box) and with an excellent, nine-hole par-36 course, St Malo is the type of place you'll want to enjoy at leisure, ideally overnight.

Founded by a group of British settlers in 1887, making it France's second-oldest club, Dinard was designed by the Scotsman Tom Dunn who was clearly influenced by the courses of his homeland. Oozing quality and sophistication, it delivers everything you would expect of a commanding links – sandy turf, rolling fairways, classic pot bunkers, superb sea views, heather, gorse and some small and well-guarded greens. What's more, at less than 6,000 yards, it's the perfect example of how a shorter course can still present a stiff test.

By contrast, some 40 minutes south

east, Golf des Ormes is a pretty parkland course played out through rolling woodland. It's laid out over the grounds of a private castle in the heart of a 370-acre estate, and is every bit as enchanting as that sounds. Stay on site at the hotel, apartment/studios, nature lodges, tree or raft houses and enjoy a variety of family activities.

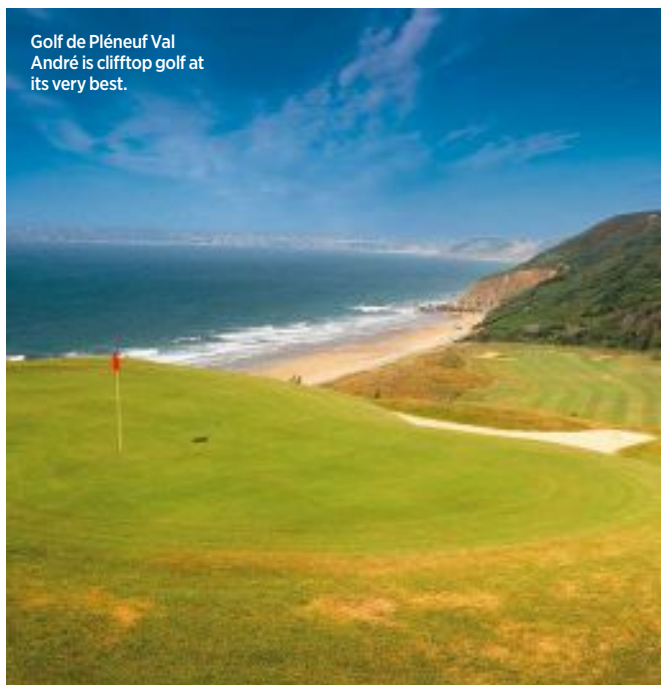
Nearby, Pléneuf-Val-André is more spectacular cliff-top than traditional links, and none more spectacular than on the par-5 11th, one of Europe's most spectacular holes, played out alongside the cliffs. The challenge you'll encounter ➔



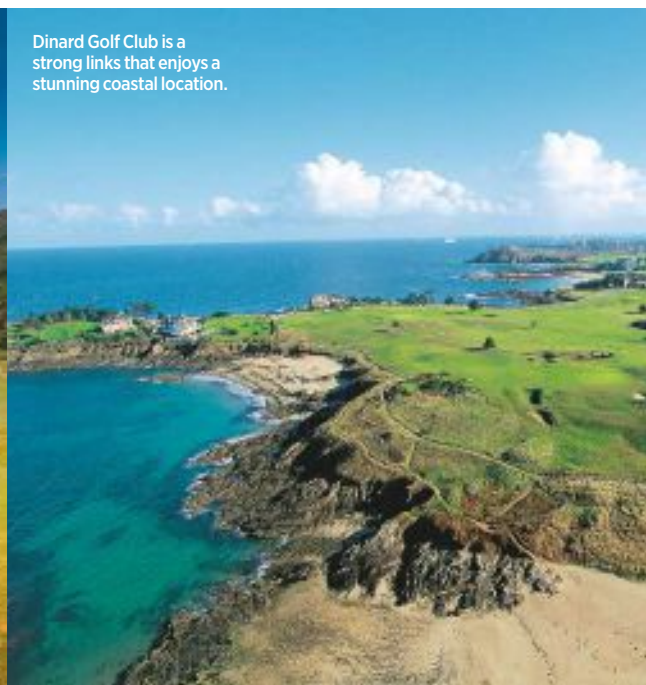
The sprawling St Malo resort course is set on the edge of the Mesnil forest and plays around the beautiful Mirloup Lake.



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Golf de Pléneuf Val
André is clifftop golf at its very best.



Dinard Golf Club is a strong links that enjoys a stunning coastal location.

changes drastically when the wind whips in off the Emerald Coast.

Normandy

Resist the overtures of Paris and drive west through Brittany and you'll soon find yourself in Normandy. If this is your first port of call, it's easy to enter Normandy via the port of Cherbourg, via a ferry from Southampton or Portsmouth. Normandy is also just an hour's drive from the northern fringes of the capital and an even shorter jaunt from the Loire Valley, making this a golf destination that can be enjoyed and reached in several ways. Whichever route you take to get here, though, you will have a wide variety of top quality golf courses from which to choose.

In this region, famed for its camembert, apples and cider and the fresh seafood, there are more than 40 courses spread as far afield as the Bay of Mont Saint-Michel at the south-west corner to the Seine Valley to Pourville in the northeast.

Many of the best courses are located in the Deauville area, including the historic Golf Barrière de Deauville and its sister course, the picturesque Golf Barrière Saint-Julien. Founded in 1929, Golf Barrière de Deauville is located just a couple of minutes from the centre of the trendy, well-to-do seaside town and enjoys three nine-hole loops (red, white and blue) crafted by Tom Simpson and Henry Cotton. The widely preferred

HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE

While it would be remiss to overlook Monet's waterlily pond at Giverny and the ancient Bayeux Tapestry in the town of the same name, all roads historic lead to the iconic medieval abbey of Mont-St-Michel, one of the wonders of the true Western World. Set in the bay where Normandy and Brittany merge, at the mouth of the Couesnon River, the Mont is accessed by a causeway uncovered only at low tide. It attracts vast numbers of tourists for very good reason. From the rock-top abbey to the narrow alleys below, stepping onto the island is like stepping back into the Middle Ages, albeit with some of the region's best museums, hotels, restaurants and shops squeezed into the equation. Only during the highest of tides is the island entirely surrounded by water, but be warned. The distance between low and high tides can reach an astonishing 15m, with the waters sweeping in at ferocious speeds, said to be as fast as a galloping horse.



red/white 18-hole combination mixes parkland and woodland, and also delivers some magnificent coastal views.

The 27-hole Golf Barrière Saint-Julien is just a 15-minute drive away and while it lacks a little of its big sister's sophistication and character, it's an enjoyable heathland test of golf. The Valley is a demanding tree-lined layout with plenty of water hazards to hold your attention, while the Woodland is a scenic and altogether more comfortable nine-holer that the less accomplished golfer will relish.

Continuing the heathland theme is Champ de Bataille, located 15 miles from the Gallic town of Evreux. Set within the estate of the Chateau du Champ de Bataille, the 6,600-yard par 72 flows through avenues of mature trees, simultaneously evoking thoughts of Woburn and Wentworth.

Heading out towards Paris from Deauville, Golf d'Evreux is framed by naturally rolling land and is noted for the year-round quality of its greens. Other notable must-plays include the stunning 109-year-old Etretat, which starts inland before taking you on a spectacular five-hole stretch of cliffside golf, the classic links at Granville in the bay of Mont Saint-Michel, Willie Park's Dieppe-Pourville, one of the oldest in France, Omaha Beach, and Golf de la Presqu'île du Cotentin on the edge of Cherbourg & Bessin Natural Park. ■



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NORMANDY

THE SOUTH WEST

AQUITAINE

World renowned for the quality of its wines, France's south-west corner is also home to many of Europe's finest golf courses. The wise traveller knows to combine both.

THE INSIDER'S PASS

The Biarritz Destination Golf Pass allows visitors to play at up to eight courses while enjoying preferential green fees. Courses signed up include Arcangues, Biarritz le Phare, Chantaco, Hossegor, Ilbarritz, Makila Golf Club Bayonne Bassussarry, Moliets, Mont de Marsan, Pinsolle-Soustons and Seignosse. Green fees rise from €100 for two courses in the low season to €134 in the high. For details see biarritz-destination-golf.com

For Aquitaine, read the south-west of France. And for the south-west of France, read the country's largest wine-growing region. Aquitaine is France's largest region full stop, a land comprising five departments: the Gironde, the Landes and the Pyrenees Atlantiques along the coast and Lot et Garonne and the Dordogne located inland. It's a world of magnificent forests, parks, lakes, ski slopes and the beachside resorts of Biarritz, Lacanau, Mimizan and Archachon, not to mention some of the country's finest golf courses. Most visitors to the region make straight for Bordeaux and raise a glass or two of Cabernet or Merlot, which is all well and good. But for golfers, the region is home to several hidden gems and boasts great variation and strength in depth. Six of Golf World's most recent Top

100 Continental Europe courses can be found in and around the Aquitaine area.

Even more impressively, those six are complemented by a strong supporting cast that are all within easy reach.

Easy access from a variety of British airports, excellent transport links across the region, accommodation to suit every budget and taste and weather far better than we typically enjoy, Aquitaine ticks every box for the travelling golfer.

Heathland heaven

Head to Bordeaux, to its northern outskirts and the region of Pian Médoc, home to the exceptional resort of Golf du Médoc. Home to two courses in our Top 100, Le Châteaux is the number 1 (GW's no.14), but Vignes (ranked 52) certainly doesn't suffer from being a 'second' course.

Laid out by Bill Coore in 1989 –

before he was the big draw in golf course design he is today – Le Châteaux is one of the classiest venues on the Continent, a heathland with echoes of Walton Heath. It darts about an expanse of prime terrain in no discernible configuration, its holes are named after Grand Cru wines and the link to the area's most famous export continues in the large wine bottles that sit on the side of the fairway to signify 165m. Play here and you'll be following in the footsteps of greatness: when the European Tour stopped here for an event in 1999, the field featured Seve and Jose Maria Olazabal – though both were upstaged by eventual winner Retief Goosen. By contrast, the Vignes course offers more of a woodland-parkland setting but the same sense of escapism and tranquillity. No visit to the region can be considered complete without a ▶



Château des Vigiers, home to world-class golf and a luxury hotel.



visit to Golf du Medoc and at least one round on both courses. The neat hotel gives you every excuse to extend your stay – and sample those wines at leisure. (www.golfdumedocresort.com)

Three nines and four stars

Your next essential stop lies an hour to the east of Bordeaux at Château des Vigiers, home to three Donald Steel loops of nine and a magnificent castle revamped as a four-star hotel, another perfect base for an overnight stay. From there, set your sights south and towards the resort town of Biarritz and the border of Basque Spain, where a number of excellent courses lie in wait. Here alone you'll find four that grace *Golf World's* Top 100. The woodland holes

GOLF AND GRAPES

For any golfer with even a passing interest in fine wines, this corner of France is a dream destination. All roads lead inevitably to Bordeaux, from where it's easy to take one of the many chateaux and vineyard tours. One of the best lies 45 minutes east of the city at Saint-Émilion, a UNESCO World Heritage town. Known worldwide for its Grand Cru wine, it's one of Bordeaux's largest winemaking appellations and a more picturesque alternative to the big city. To gain a greater understanding of the wine-making process, Private Golf Key offers exceptional tours of the region's finest châteaux, gaining access you otherwise wouldn't enjoy.

at Moliets (ranked 87) weave between tall pines and over distinctive mounds, circumnavigating 'proper' bunkers along the way. The front nine is impressive enough but the real surprise awaits after the turn, when genuine linksland awaits at 13. It is as excellent as it is unexpected, with a huge bank of pure white sand stretching up the left edged by a carpet of rolling, vibrant-green fairway, the distinct colours providing a jagged contrast. The funky, North Berwick-style green concludes one of the finest holes in France, a single hole worth the journey alone. The ocean-side holes that see you home are played out with the sound of the Atlantic waves crashing in the background – and as good as ➤



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- Ilbarritz
- Moliets
- Pinsolle
- Biarritz Le Phare
- Hossegor
- Makila Bayonne
- Mont de Marsan
- Seignosse

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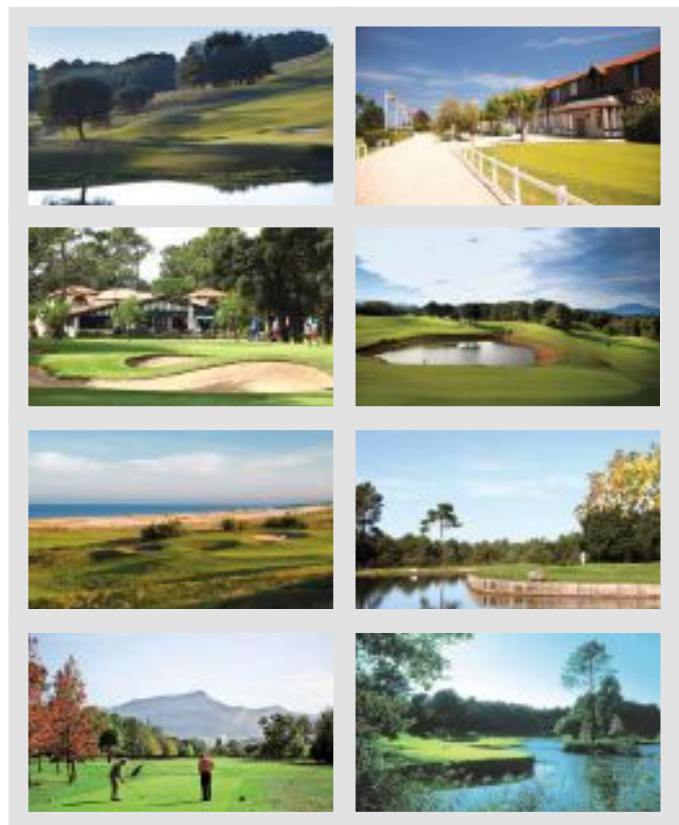


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Biarritz Destination Golf : see destination golf news on Facebook 

The surprising and superb 13th and 15th holes at Moliets.



anything on the continent. (www.golfmoliets.com)

Beauty and the Beast

An easy 25-minute drive south lies another essential stop off, in the shape of Seignosse (ranked 51). Laid out by the enigmatic Robert Von Hagge and surrounded by a small number of houses so costly they'd make even a sheikh sweat, Seignosse is an absolute must play, but it comes with a warning. Beautiful when the conditions are benign, when Seignosse turns and the wind whips in off the Bay of Biscay, she can feel like a more exacting Carnoustie. Expect a relentless examination of your game and mind among pine trees and around water hazards. Expect sweaty palms and nervous excitement. (www.seignosse.com)

[bluegreen.com](http://www.bluegreen.com)). Less than 10 minutes further south stands Hossegor, a leafy, English-style parkland that lacks the

drama of previous courses but is still worth a visit. (www.golfhossegor.com)

If you have time – and if you don't, make time – drive 45 minutes further south towards Biarritz and you'll reach Chiberta, located in Anglet. Expect another hybrid that combines seaside inland appeal with enough seaside excitement to rank 73 in our Top 100. In truth, the journey is worth making for Anglet alone, a charming fishing port with an upmarket marina and a distinctly upmarket resort feel. Make time to stay in the chic, four-star Hotel du Chiberta, from where you can explore any of the 16 courses surrounding Biarritz – including the historic Golf de Biarritz le Phare, right in the heart of the town – or just soak up the sunshine and wish you didn't ever have to go home. ■

ESSENTIALS

HOW TO GET THERE It's far easier to fly than drive, with loads of flights from the UK to both Biarritz and especially Bordeaux, both ideally placed for all the courses mentioned here. Flight time is around 90 minutes, so up then down.

WHEN TO GO The south-west of France may not enjoy the outstanding climate of the south east, but between May and September you'll be unlucky to get anything other than glorious sunshine. Better still, with several of the courses mentioned here built on sandy soil, Aquitaine is also a very decent short-haul winter option.



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HOTEL ****



SPA



RESTAURANTS



CHÂTEAUX COURSE

Bill Coore (USA) - 1989



GOLF DU MEDOC RESORT

BORDEAUX - FRANCE

www.golfdumedocresort.com



VIGNES COURSE

Rod Whitman (CAN) - 1991



TRAINING CENTER BERNARD PASCASSIO



Situated among the vineyards of the Médoc between Bordeaux and the spectacular Atlantic coast beaches, Golf du Medoc's 36-hole resort offers access to some of the finest golf and wine tours in south-west France. Only 20 minutes from Bordeaux Mérignac international airport, the resort's elegant hotel is merely yards from the 1st tee of both highly regarded courses. For golf, gastronomy and wine tasting, a visit to Golf du Medoc Resort on the wine route is a must.



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contact@golfdumedocresort.com

WINE TASTING



A RESORT FIT FOR ROYALTY

Set against the backdrop of the Alps and overlooking the southern shore of Lake Geneva lies the Evian Resort – a tranquil retreat fit for a king.



Nestled among almost 50 acres of lush, green parkland and perched on a secluded crown overlooking the southern French shore of Lake Geneva, the five-star Hôtel Royal Palace is an opulent, decadent and tranquil retreat.

In 1909, the Evian mineral water company commissioned renowned French architect Jean-Albert Hébrard to create a hotel that would reflect the style and prestige of its future clientele. King Edward VII had promised to be one of the hotel's first guests, although he sadly passed away before he could enjoy the suite custom built for him.

Instantly recognisable by the elegant creme façade and brown

balconies that make it look like a grand old steamship – the aptly-named hotel has, for more than 100 years, been one of Europe's most fêted destinations.

With 11 bars and restaurants, another luxury hotel – the four-star Hotel Ermitage – and a casino among the extensive array of leisure facilities, it was no great surprise that the Evian Resort was crowned France's Leading Resort at the 2017 World Travel Awards.

The famous spa town of Evians-les-Bains is just a brisk walk downhill, although during the summer a free cable car-style railway can shuttle guests back and forth between the town and the resort.

STAY & PLAY

Flights

Fly direct to Geneva International from more than 20 UK airports in one hour and 45 minutes.

Hotel

Two nights' B&B for two at Hôtel Royal and a round of golf each costs from €764.

Contact

T: +33 (0)4 50 26 9595.
W: evianresort.com

The royals, celebrities and aristocrats used to come for the spa, the scenery, the service and the unbridled luxury, but just as many people today come for the golf. The Evian Resort Golf Club has hosted The Evian Championship – the fifth major in the women's game – since 2013 and the course itself has recently been upgraded to make it more challenging for the world's best golfers with the addition of 77 bunkers and 176 new trees.

The 18-hole course is one of the oldest in France. Scented by fuchsias, geraniums and century-old woodland, it snakes in and around towering pines, mountain tops and sun-kissed terraces.

At just under 6,500 yards off



the tips, length isn't this par 71's biggest defence. Negotiating the treacherous array of slopes on and off the greens is the real secret to good scoring. Courtesy of its hillside topography, almost every fairway cambers towards water, sand or rough, while the newly-enlarged greens are characterised by deceptive undulations and dramatic tier changes.

Your attention is drawn towards these changes in elevation as early as the 2nd hole. The short par-3 tumbles downhill to a putting surface divided into two sections by a large knoll. The next par 3 – the club's signature hole – arrives on the 5th and demands a 100-yard carry over two lakes with Dent d'Oche, the highest summit

of the Chablais Alps, providing an imposing and eye-catching backdrop.

By the time you reach the closing four holes, dubbed the 'Evian Puzzle', your course management, patience and green-reading will have been fully tested. Over these final holes, your ball will inevitably flirt with more water. The good news is that you can mull over your mistakes in the Anglo-Saxon clubhouse, and enjoy some local delicacies on the terrace overlooking the 18th green and the lake beyond.



FIRST-CLASS INSTRUCTION IN A FIVE-STAR SETTING

Leading coach David Leadbetter has recently opened a new academy at the Evian Resort.

David Leadbetter has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the Evian Resort. In addition to working with many leading LPGA Tour players, Leadbetter guided Suzann Pettersen and Lydia Ko to their victories at the highly prestigious Evian Championship – one of the five majors in the women's game.

Now with the launch of The Leadbetter Academy at Evian Resort's beautiful training course, players of all abilities – from beginners to aspiring professionals – will be able to benefit from the world's most famous coach's key teaching philosophies. The new facility offers covered and outdoor

bays and the very latest game-improvement technologies, including Trackman, Boditrak, SAM PuttLab, MySwing, and a WellPutt indoor putting green. The new academy is managed by the resort's head professional, Jean-Philippe Serres, who has spent 12 years learning David's teaching principles.

At this year's Evian Championship in September, David Leadbetter will open a luxury suite bearing his name at the Hôtel Royal. Guests will find some of his personal items, as well as tailored tips and services, including golf lessons available at the hotel itself.

REGIONAL GUIDE

THE SOUTH


Europe's most cultivated and sun-kissed playground is also home to more than 150 golf courses, including the No.1 ranked resort in our *Golf World* Top-100.

While it's fair to say that many of France's better-known courses can be found in and around Paris – or even further north – southern France has enough top quality courses and fringe benefits to attract even the most discerning golfer. For a start, there's the climate. Blessed with more sunshine

than the rest of the nation, the prime golf season in the south stretches from late April until early October. Then there's the cuisine. In this part of the world, the thrill of the golf is comfortably matched by the sumptuous post-round dining options. You can't leave Provence without sampling Bouillabaisse (a fish soup/stew), pastis (aniseed flavoured liqueur),

Daube (a beef stew) and the pièce de résistance, tapenade – an olive dip made of black olives, capers, anchovies, garlic and olive oil that is usually served with croutons or breadsticks.

And finally, there's the choice. Boasting well over 150 courses, a single visit will only scratch the surface of all the region has to offer. To make a visit to the south



Combining five-star accommodation with Michelin Star dining and incredible golf, Terre Blanche is the star attraction in the south of France.

more manageable, our advice is to divide it into three distinct regions: Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur; Rhône Alpes; and Midi Pyrénées Languedoc-Roussillon.

Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur

If you're a frequent reader of *Golf World*, you'll know there are significant differences between the golf courses featured in our Top-100 Courses ranking and those featured in our Top-100 Resorts ranking. In many instances, a great resort golf course won't cut it in our rankings that focus solely on the quality of the golf course. There are exceptions to the rule, of course, and it just so happens that one of them can be found in the south-east corner of France.

Terre Blanche is No.1 in our Top 100 Resorts Continental Europe ranking. Its flagship course, the Chateau, is also ranked 14th in our Top 100 Courses Continental Europe ranking. Nestled in

unspoiled lush nature, the resort combines five-star accommodation with Michelin-star dining and world-class golf. The resort is part of the prestigious European Tour Properties portfolio, which gives it access to a wide range of consultancy services from expert agronomists. As a result, it's always immaculately maintained. "Terre Blanche is like an oasis to me," says its German owner Dietmar Hopp. "An oasis which is soothing to the soul."

The resort boasts two Dave Thomas-designed championship courses, both of which blend seamlessly into the existing landscape. The Chateau is the stiffer challenge and, as a result, is the choice for hosting professional events, while the Le Riou course is largely reserved for members and guests. Aside from the excellent variety of holes, the Chateau is characterised by constantly changing vistas – from mountains to valleys to

woodland to ravines to lakes and streams and, of course, the famous chateau itself.

Terre Blanche may be the jewel in the crown of the region, but it's by no means the only option. In fact, there are some 63 other courses in Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur. Take Dolce Fregate, where superb Provencal cuisine and wines can be savoured alongside scintillating Mediterranean views, superb golf courses and four-star accommodation.

While in the region it would be folly not to visit Pont Royal in Mallemort. Seve Ballesteros' only design in France has lost its way on several occasions during the past couple of decades, but the resort is in the early stages of an impressive revamp that will see a seven-figure sum invested into the golf course, practice facilities and clubhouse.

The major attraction at Pont Royal is the views. The course looks out over the Alpilles and Luberon, Durance Valley ▶



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The 2nd hole at Pont Royal is a delightful downhill par 3 over water.

and the mountains of Trévaresse. As you would expect from a Seve design there are plenty of do-or-die options and more than the occasional quirky hole – including the first, which slopes viciously from left to right and has a large tree in the middle of the fairway. The greens are quick and true, and several holes could stake a claim to being the resort's signature. Stay on-site at the Moulin de Vernegues hotel, not just for its two-minute cart ride to the tee, but for the exquisite cuisine, spa and secluded pool.

Rhône-Alpes

This region is home to Evian and its fabulous resort, built to attract Europe's travelling elite more than 100 years ago. The Evian Resort Golf Club annually hosts the final major of the ladies' season. Overlooking the shores of Lake Geneva and at the foot of the Alps, the course is characterised by sloping fairways, dramatic elevation changes and multi-tiered greens. Off the course, there are three impressive accommodation options – the exquisite five-star Royal Hotel, the four-star Ermitage and a lavish bed-and-breakfast in the centre of the academy, Le Manoir du Golf.

The remainder of the Rhone-Alpes collection is headlined by the Lyon area, home to a trio of outstanding courses in Lyon GC, Gouverneur and Salvagny. If you plan on venturing further afield, it's worth noting that the courses become more sparsely located and, therefore, require more careful planning to

experience them. Tignes, Avoriaz, Meribel, Courchevel, Les Gets, Three Valleys and Chamonix double up as ski resorts in the winter and golf resorts in the summer. The après ski seamlessly becomes après golf in the region's fabulous bars and restaurants.

Midi Pyrénées Languedoc-Roussillon

For now, the area of land between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean in the southwest corner of France is known as Midi Pyrénées Languedoc-Roussillon.

PAY A VISIT TO CARCASSONNE

The second-most visited location in France after Paris, Carcassonne is about 50 miles east of Toulouse in the Aude plain between historic trade routes linking the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and the Massif Central to the Pyrénées. Perched on a rocky hilltop and jammed with a chaotic array of battlements and turrets, the fortified city looks like something out of a children's storybook. It has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1997.



We say 'for now' because the French government is still debating the name following a restructuring of France's regions a few years ago. In this region, popular with holidaymakers and expats entranced by the warm climate, picturesque towns and villages, undulating countryside, chateaux, vineyards and Mediterranean beaches, the countryside varies from the Pyrénées mountains, beaches, the marshy Camargue and the Cévennes mountains.

The region is also home to almost 40 courses, the most northerly of which is Souillac. Carved out of an oak forest, its tight fairways and elevated greens demand pinpoint accuracy from tee to green. To the south, Golf Club de Toulouse is one of the premier golf attractions boasting city and mountain views. In the south of the Massif Central, Domaine de Mezeyrac offers golf in a 100-year-old oak forest, an on-site hotel and cottages. On the Mediterranean coast, Robert Trent Jones Snr's La Grande Motte is within walking distance of the beaches of the seaside resort that bears the same name, while Cap d'Agde is an excellent Ron Fream design with its very own Amen Corner.

On the Catalan coast near Perpignan, Saint Cyprien resort boasts two courses, while in the Pyrenees, Domaine de Falgos has an idyllic south-facing setting near the Spanish border. Nîmes Campagne, Nîmes Vacquerolles and Golf de Carcassonne complete the selection of high-quality courses. ■



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A PARADISE IN PROVENCE

Pont Royal blends golf, gastronomy, wine and relaxation in one luxurious resort.



Sitting in the foothills of the Alps in the very heart of Provence, it is no surprise that the great Seve Ballesteros chose this stunning piece of land to design his only French course.

What the Spanish great created in the small market town of Mallemort some 26 years ago is a par 72 masterpiece that reflects the way he saw and played the game. Drama, fun and a strategic test await as you weave through just under 7,000 yards of pine, plateaus and Provençal countryside flanked by Luberon and Alpilles mountains.

It's a combination that has attracted the Challenge Tour for its inaugural Open de Provence by Hopps Group in September, an event that will return until 2021. That news has seen Pont Royal's members, who have owned the club since 2001, announce a seven-figure investment plan to establish the resort as Provence's premier destination over the next five years.

Since taking over, the members

have already delivered a new clubhouse, irrigation system, two-tier driving range, six-hole golf course, Pont Royal Academy and a (David) Leadbetter Golf Academy based at the 37-acre Durance Training Centre. Plans to extend the short course to nine full holes have already been approved, while the clubhouse will be extended with new changing rooms, pro shop and terraces. A fitness centre and spa, to complement existing physio facilities, is also planned.

Exciting times lie ahead, just as they do on the 1st tee – a short, downhill dog-leg hole flanked by out of bounds, trees and with a huge pine in the middle of the fairway ahead of a shallow green.

A testing par 3 over water follows, taking you past the resort's four-star, and classically Provençal 102-room Moulin de Vernègues hotel and spa. It leads to a truly memorable stretch starring a par 4 that almost sings Seve's name. Flanked by stunning

mountain views, the dog-leg left 7th almost dares you to carry a drive over a huge valley towards a narrow strip of fairway for a short, downhill approach into a slick green with little room for error. You could always opt for a safe iron off the tee, but you'd know Seve would be disappointed.

A devilishly difficult par 4, and picturesque par 5 flanked by some of the many apartments and villas that make up the resort village follow, building seamlessly towards the signature par-3 11th – a 215-yard shot across a rocky valley to a raised green.

Seve, the master of drama, sets up a thrilling close with a narrow, undulating par 4 leading to the final three. The short par-4 16th's green is surrounded by trees and sand, before the 17th's fairway tries desperately to pull your ball left and leave one of the course's toughest greens blocked out. The par-5 18th is a classic finale. An elevated tee shot to a fairway that dog-legs left and is flanked by trouble leaves an approach into a long, narrow green with water looming left and sand right.

But whatever happens you can guarantee the array of local wines, beers and produce awaiting you in the adjacent clubhouse, hotel and restaurants will help you celebrate... or forget.

STAY & PLAY

The resort

Pont Royal includes a Provençal-style village, wooded areas, lakes, pools, bars, restaurants, and tourist information.

Stay

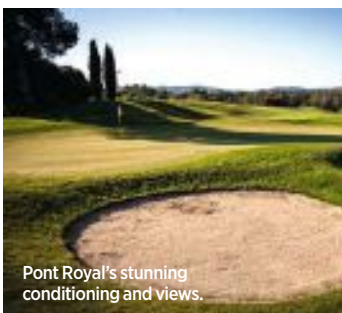
The four-star Moulin de Vernègues, or apartments, house and villas within the on-site Pierre & Vacances village.

Getting there

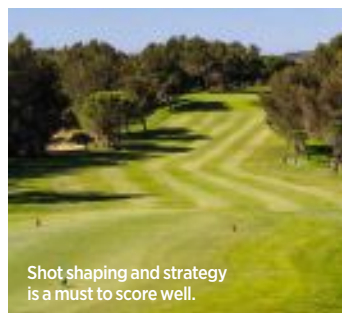
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FINDING FRANCE'S STARS

Where you will locate the 16 courses in *Golf World's* 2017 Top 100 Courses Continental Europe and the 16 that were in the 'Next 100'.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Morfontaine (1) 2. Les Bordes, France (3) 3. Fontainebleau, France (6) 4. Chantilly, France (11) 5. Golf du Medoc (Châteaux) (14) 6. Terre Blanche (Chateau) (15) 7. Saint Germain (19) 8. Hardelot (Les Pins) (24) 9. Le Touquet (La Mer) (31) 10. Le Golf National (32) 11. Seignosse (51) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Golf du Medoc (Vignes) (52) 13. Sperone (57) 14. Chiberta (73) 15. Saint Emillionais (77) 16. Moliets (87) <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Barbaroux (Next 100) 18. Belle Dune (Next 100) 19. Cannes Mougins (Next 100) 20. Chantaco (Next 100) 21. Chantilly (Longeres) (Next 100) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Evian (Next 100) 23. Granville (Next 100) 24. Hossegor (Next 100) 25. Joyenval (Marly) (Next 100) 26. Kempferhof (Next 100) 27. Les Aisses (Next 100) 28. Pleneuf-val-Andre (Next 100) 29. Saint Endreol (Next 100) 30. St Nom La Breteche (Red) (Next 100) 31. Terre Blanche (Le Riou) (Next 100) 32. Chateau de Taulane (Next 100) |
|---|---|--|

EUROPE'S CLEAR NO.1
 France had 16 entries in the Top 100 – one more than mainland Spain and two ahead of Portugal. It had seven of the top 20; the Netherlands was next with four.



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