

# The Perfect

THE TRUE GOLF LINKS IS A COURSE LAID OVER SAND DUNES, LAND LEFT BEHIND WHEN THE SEA RECEDED AEONS AGO. SO THE ORIGINS OF THE GAME ARE CLOSE TO THE SEA AND MANY OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST COURSES ARE LAID ON COASTAL TERRAIN, IN IDEAL SUPERYACHT CRUISING TERRITORY. SPORTS WRITER AND GOLF SPECIALIST **BARRY WARD** MAKES HIS SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PERFECT DAY'S ROUND FROM YOUR YACHT.

Four Seasons Resort Provence  
Terre Blanche, Var, France

Sperone Golf Club  
Bonifacio, Corsica

Pevero Golf Club  
Costa Smeralda, Sardinia

# Round



**Sperone Golf Club**  
Bonifacio, Corsica

In golfing terms Corsica plays second fiddle to neighbouring Sardinia but there's little to separate them. In fact the Sperone Golf Club, reclining on cliff tops near the fortress town of Bonifacio, is considered Europe's most scenic golf course and, by acclaim, among the world's top 10 in terms of challenge.

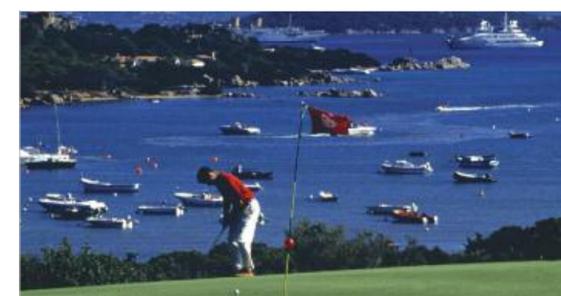
*"It's an insane pleasure to play such exceptional golf,"* wrote a visiting journalist.

*"The most beautiful 18 holes in France,"* wrote another. *"It's paradise; a unique golf experience."*

The cliff-top holes from 12 to 16 have been compared to the ocean holes at Pebble Beach in California. There is no greater praise.

From the first tee the foreground is the sparkling Mediterranean with the Lavezzi Islands in the middle distance and the not-too-distant peaks of Sardinia as the backdrop. But the pulse-racing scenery is reserved for the homeward loop, which is routed along seaside cliff tops and comprises a string of pearls, one amazing hole after another.

After a while, totally distracted, you cease caring about how many balls you dispatch careening down to the rocks and crystalline water below. Final scores become irrelevant in such a sublime setting.



**Pevero Golf Club** Costa Smeralda, Sardinia

When American architect Robert Trent Jones Senior first set foot on this site his shoes hit solid granite: only the odd weed was surviving and there was virtually nothing in which to plant grass seed.

As an alternative to spending millions importing top soil, Trent Jones persuaded the Aga Khan, the owner, to buy a crushing machine. Thus armed, Jones converted the rock into ersatz soil, added nutrients to produce a root zone and completed a project that many thought impossible.

Two years later, in 1974, Pevero Golf Club staged the Italian Open and has been growing in stature ever since.

Soon listed among the world's finest, the course became the focal point of the Costa Smeralda, an achingly beautiful coastline that is heaven on earth for yachting. Described by Condé Nast Traveler USA as "a Mediterranean paradise", for sea-going golfers there are few more desirable destinations.



**Four Seasons Resort, Nevis** Caribbean

This hedonistic hideaway was rated No.1 Golf Resort in the Caribbean in Condé Nast Traveler's Annual Readers' Poll of 2005 and won a 4 star ranking in Golf Digest's "Best Places to Play." You'll gather it's an agreeable spot to drop anchor!

The resort emulates the stratospheric standards common to the Four Seasons chain and the course, designed by Robert Trent Jones II, is of comparable quality.

From the first tee it climbs to 450 feet above sea level via a rain forest to a plateau before creeping back towards the finishing hole by the clubhouse on Pinney's Beach. Breath-stopping views are ten a penny and from the 15th tee, the highest point, you can see St Kitts. It creates a magical, if distracting, backdrop as players face a muscular carry over a 150 foot deep ravine.

At 6,682 yards the card suggests it's not a long course but the terrain stretches it and the par of 70 leaves little margin for error. So use the forward tees, drink in the sights and simply have fun.



**Four Seasons Resort, Emerald Bay**  
Great Exuma, Bahamas

Sharks are bad news at holiday resorts but Greg Norman, aka The Great White Shark, was greeted with open arms when he cruised into Emerald Bay in the Bahamas and, what's more, he left to ringing acclaim.

The reason: his ingenious design of the Four Seasons golf course at Great Exuma. At one with the sea, it has six holes laid over a spectacular peninsula and others embroidered the ocean edge as they wander through dunes leading to the finish on a rocky peninsula with spectacular ocean views. Concentration is hard won here. To call the setting beautiful is like saying that Tiger Woods plays golf.

But it's not simply a pretty site: there are white-knuckle shots aplenty out there and unless you breakfast on red meat you'd best use the forward tees. At 7,000 yards, stretched by the seashore paspalum grass that Norman uses as his canvas, this par-72 card-wrecker is no place for bravura.

Don't count the shots or the lost balls; just gaze in awe and enjoy!



**Four Seasons Resort, Provence** at Terre Blanche, Var, France

You need no excuse to take your superyacht to Cannes or Antibes but if you have a golfer aboard, one has just arisen: the opening of the Four Seasons Resort at Terre Blanche near Fayence. It has Michelin-starred cuisine, sumptuous facilities and service that leaves nothing to chance. It's a place guaranteed to soothe all the senses and awaken a few you weren't aware of. Life here assumes a different hue, almost a golden glow.

Two bewitching golf courses complete arguably the finest such resort in mainland Europe. Designed by Britain's David Thomas, they meander through pine-clad hills giving eye-spinning views of Provence and the Southern Alps.

Opened in September 2003, Le Chateau (7,088 yards) is punctuated by a series of lakes and major trees with gently undulating fairways to add spice: it demands some muscular tee shots allied to a deft short game. Le Riou (6,567 yards, also par-72) opened a year later on the higher ground and a series of dog-legs require accuracy, the use of every club you have, plus a surfeit of imagination.

Flip a coin to decide your favourite. A round on each, either side of lunch on the club terrace, would bring a day to savour.