

# Above *par*

Catalonia's abundant courses cater for golfers of all abilities, with everything from on-site academy to a Spanish Open venue on offer, says **Peter Swain**

## BEST FOR BEGINNERS

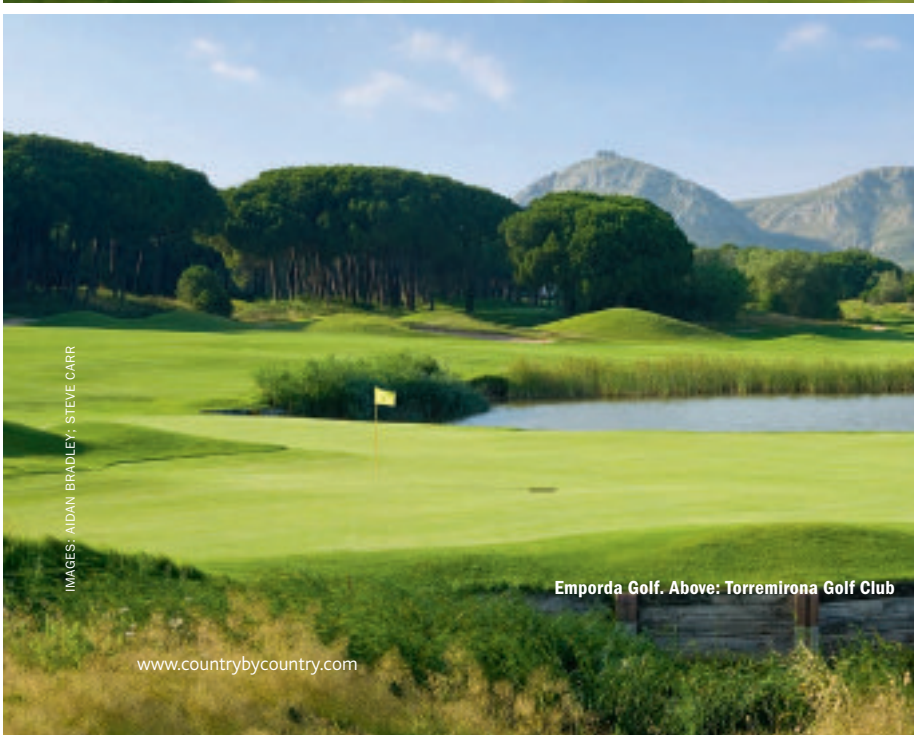
● **Where to go:** Emporda, near Torroella de Montgri, 10 minutes from the beaches of the Costa Brava.

● **Why:** The 36 Robert von Hagge-designed holes at this fine golf resort provide just the variety and challenge beginners need. Wandering through the dunes, the Links course is pleasantly open and welcoming, so novices and high handicappers should have an enjoyable round playing from the forward tees. The wide fairways of the Forest course snake through manicured pine stands, making it the more scenic of the two, with the condition of both set-ups invariably excellent. But what really makes Emporda ideal for beginners is the outstanding on-site Academy. Anyone taking up the game needs lessons, and this facility offers bespoke instruction, as well as group classes, for children of all ages. Right next door, the modern, well-equipped, 87-room Emporda Hotel & Spa is competitively priced.

● **Green fee:** £54. [www.empordagolf.com](http://www.empordagolf.com)

● **Alternative:** With the picturesque Pyrenees in the background, the generous and mostly forgiving set-up at Torremirona Golf Club is designed to offer encouragement to golfers of all standards. Large greens and relatively flat terrain, particularly on the back nine, make it a fun round for beginners and 'improvers', while children can practise for free. [www.torremirona.com](http://www.torremirona.com) ►

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Emporda Golf. Above: Torremirona Golf Club

## A-Z DESTINATIONS • SPAIN

### BEST FOR GROUPS

● **Where to go:** Lumine, near Tarragona, a 45-minute drive south of Barcelona.

● **Why:** Groups traditionally want a number of high-quality courses, reasonably priced accommodation, entertaining apres-golf and a diversity of other amenities — which just about sums up Lumine. Greg Norman has laid out 45 holes, across two long courses and a short par-3 set-up, that please most golfing palates. Meandering through the Sequia Major wetlands, the 6,890-yard, par-71 Lakes is the toughest challenge, and regularly hosts the European Tour Qualifying School. Affording dramatic Mediterranean views, the slightly longer Hills course threads its way past carob, olive and pine trees, while the flatter nine-hole Ruins bypasses ancient Roman ruins. The resort is managed by Troon, arguably the best in the golf business. There are two good restaurants on site, plus a beach club, all perfect for convivial post-game relaxation. Nearby Reus airport is a no-thrill hub.

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the slightly longer Hills course threads its  
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● **Green fee:** £57-£76. [www.lumine.com](http://www.lumine.com)

● **Alternative:** Ideal for groups, Golf Girona is close to the town's brilliant tapas bars, and just 10 minutes from the airport. More importantly, though, it's a Hawtree-designed parkland course that suits players of all abilities, with a hospitable clubhouse serving good but modestly priced local fare. Several other courses nearby offer variety if needed.

[www.golfgirona.com](http://www.golfgirona.com) ►

Golf Girona. Below: Lumine Hills



IMAGES: ADAM BRADLEY; LUMINE HILLS

### BEST FOR SERIOUS GOLFERS

● **Where to go:** Stadium Course at PGA Catalunya, near Girona, an hour's drive north of Barcelona.

● **Why:** A regular venue for the Spanish Open, the 6,588-yard Stadium Course is regarded by many as Spain's best test of golf. Heavily tree-lined, with elevated tees and water in play on seven holes, it looks stunning, but can be a beast from the back tees. The other 18-holer on site, the Tour Course, is wider off the tees and more accessible, but is still tricky. The condition of both set-ups is immaculate, and clubhouse facilities exemplary. PGA Catalunya is well situated just an hour from the culture, nightlife

and sport of Barcelona, skiing in the Pyrenees and the beaches of the Costa Brava. It's only 15 minutes from Girona airport, while nearby Can Roca is currently rated the world's best restaurant.

● **Green fee:** £67-£120. [www.pgacatalunya.com](http://www.pgacatalunya.com)

● **Alternative:** The aristocratic Real Club de Golf El Prat, 15 miles north of Barcelona, hosted the 2011 Spanish Open. The 45 Greg Norman-designed holes, split between three courses, feature elevated tees and big undulating USGA-spec greens. But the rolling fairways are narrow, and the designer's signature fairway bunkers command respect. [www.realclubdegolfelprat.com](http://www.realclubdegolfelprat.com) ■



IMAGE: AIDAN BRADLEY

The 13th at PGA Catalunya