



GOLFING AROUND...

BARCELONA

Peter Swain tries his luck at some top courses in the vicinity of the Catalan capital

1. REAL CLUB DE GOLF EL PRAT

WHERE IS IT? 24km north of Barcelona

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The venue for the 2011 Spanish Open, which takes place next month, is an exclusive club with a proud 57-year history – the current 45-hole, Greg Norman-designed course opened in 2003 after a move north from its old site near the El Prat airport. Ranked fourth best in Spain by *Golf Digest*, the Rosa course has a tight front nine through the forest, then a much more open, in places positively agricultural, back nine. Elevated tees invite ambitious driving but the rolling fairways are narrow, with the designer's signature fairway bunkers much in evidence. The undulating US Golf Association-spec greens are generously sized and fast. With seven tee positions on each hole, the set-up suits a variety of handicaps, but only scratch players should attempt to play off the tips. The Amarillo course is slightly longer but just as tight, with several slippery multi-tiered greens guarded by massive bunkers. The Spanish Open is being played over the best 18 holes from the Rosa and Amarillo combined. The Verde course is a little shorter but still in immaculate condition and quite challenging. With no real estate in sight, this is Barcelona's premier club.

ADDRESS Plans de Bonvilar 17, Terrassa

CONTACT Tel +34 937 281 000; rcgcp.com

PRICE Weekdays €114, weekends and public holidays €228; buggy €52



CLUB HIRE €43, various makes

CLUB HOURS 7.30am-9pm May to October, 7.30am-7.30pm November to April

MINIMUM HANDICAP 28 men, 36 women

FACILITIES This is a 45-hole set-up – the par 72 Rosa course is 6,465m; the Verde and Amarillo courses share 27 holes between them, both using the middle nine – Verde is 6,210m, par 71; Amarillo is 6,637m, par 72. Next to the course is Valles Golf, a public course owned by El Prat with nine par 3s, a driving range, a clubhouse and a golf school.

AFTER THE GOLF The plush club restaurant is open 1pm-5pm on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, offering seasonal cuisine based on traditional Catalan fare. The chic, modern snack bar opens between 8am and 9.30am every day, depending on time of year, until close of play. Multi-function rooms are good for corporate events.



2. TERRAMAR GOLF CLUB

WHERE IS IT? 36km south-west of Barcelona

WHAT'S IT LIKE? This links-style resort course looks out over the Mediterranean, and you first encounter the sea on the 174m par-3 third, which plays straight into the prevailing wind coming off the beach. Unlike some other Barcelona courses, this one is flat, almost treeless and easily walked. Built in 1927 and much tweaked since, it would make an ideal first round in a tour of Catalan courses. There are tennis courts, a gym and a pool for non-golfers.

ADDRESS Carretera del golf, s/n, Sitges

CONTACT Tel +34 938 940 580; golfterramar.com

PRICE Weekdays €75, weekends €130; buggy rental €38, electric trolley €15

CLUB HIRE €25, Callaway

CLUB HOURS 8am-6pm in summer, 8am-4pm in winter (closed Mondays in winter)

MINIMUM HANDICAP 28 men, 36 women

FACILITIES 6,431m 18-hole par 72 course, plus pitch-and-putt, a driving range and a practice green.

AFTER THE GOLF With dramatic views out to sea, both the restaurant and bar serve a mixture of Mediterranean and Catalan dishes washed down with the finest local beverages. The nearby four-star Terramar and Sunway hotels offer special golf packages.

4. SAINT JOAN GOLF CLUB

WHERE IS IT? 20km north of Barcelona

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Commissioned to encourage local participation in the sport, it was designed by Severiano Ballesteros. As a public course it's rather more accessible, cheaper and a tad easier than nearby El Prat.

ADDRESS Finca can Sant Joan, s/n,

Apartado de Correos 148, Rubí

CONTACT Tel +34 936 753 050; golfsantjoan.com

PRICE Weekdays €42, weekends €56;

buggy rental €30, trolley €2

CLUB HIRE €21, various makes

CLUB HOURS 8am-8.45pm weekdays, 8am-5.45pm weekends

MINIMUM HANDICAP 36

FACILITIES 6,046m, 18-hole course (par 72), floodlit driving range, short game area, two practice greens and an academy.

AFTER THE GOLF The club restaurant is open Tuesday to Sunday, 8am to 6pm.



GETTING THERE

■ The Hotel 1898 on La Rambla in the heart of Barcelona is a stylish 19th-century one-time tobacco HQ. It has a heated rooftop pool with a view of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia, two good restaurants, a spa for post-golf physio, and a helpful concierge to book games at El Prat and other local courses. Visit hotel1898.com

■ British Airways flies from London Heathrow to Barcelona six times a day. Visit ba.com

3. BARCELONA GOLF CLUB



WHERE IS IT? 20km

north-west of Barcelona

WHAT'S IT LIKE? When current Ryder Cup captain Jose Maria Olazabal set out to design this course, he was faced with a mountainous, forested terrain divided in two

by a deep ravine. Built in 1990, it's a set-up that, unless your play is exceptionally straight, needs plenty of golf balls. Elevation changes make for a scenic round, with views of Montserrat mountain in the distance. But from the forbidding opening par 5 to the elevated tee on the par-3 second – not to mention the most difficult hole on the course, the dogleg eighth, which has a fairway no more than 25m wide – it's a severe test of accuracy. Olazabal has used aggressive US-style bunkering, so holes such as the 18th, with four traps on the fairway and five ringing the green, require good club selection and shot execution. To deal with the hills, a buggy is recommended for visitors. The modern 150-room four-star Barcelo Montserrat hotel, overlooking the first and 18th holes, makes a good facility even better.

ADDRESS Carretera de Martorell a Capellades, km 19.5, Sant Esteve Sesrovires

CONTACT Tel +34 937 728 800; golfdelbarcelona.com

PRICE 18-hole weekdays €75, weekends €170; nine-hole weekdays €12, weekends €26

CLUB HIRE €50, Callaway

CLUB HOURS 8am-8pm (7.30am on weekends, until 9pm in summer)

MINIMUM HANDICAP 28 men, 36 women

FACILITIES The championship 18-hole par 72 course measures 6,271m. The nine-hole Sant Esteve set-up, good for high handicappers, is 1,780m, and there is a big driving range and practice area. There are also squash and tennis courts, and family-friendly indoor and outdoor pools.

AFTER THE GOLF In the modern three-storey clubhouse, the Mallol restaurant features Mediterranean cuisine with house speciality *ous trufats* – truffled eggs – and is open 1pm-7pm Tuesday to Sunday. The friendly terrace bar is open all day.