

**I ♥
GOLF**

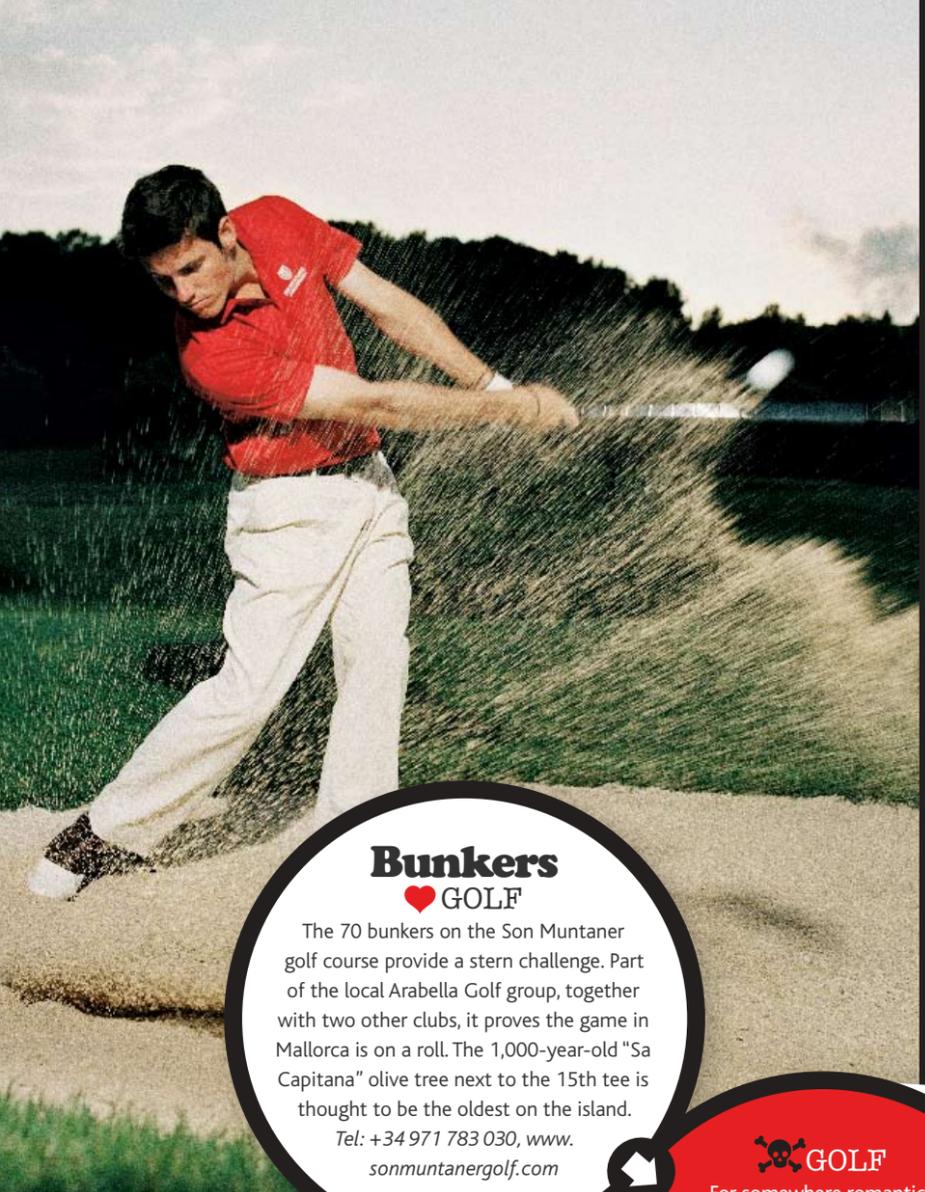
**I ☠
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*Love golf?
Really don't
love golf, but
love Mallorca?
Either way,
this island's got
you covered*

BY PETER SWAIN



There are two ways of looking at Mallorca. For the golfer whose pulse quickens at the thought of putting across pristine greens, the appeal of this Mediterranean island, with more than 20 great golf courses, is obvious. And for the non-golfer, there are brilliant beaches, fine dining, an exciting nightlife, beautiful scenery and special spas. *yeahbaby* visited the island paradise to bring you a glossary of golfing terms – and their alternative meanings – for anyone who agrees with Mark Twain and thinks that golf is just “a good walk spoiled”... →



Rough
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Some of the most punishing rough on the island is at the Robert Trent Jones Junior-designed Club de Golf Alcanada, panoramically perched overlooking the sea in the far north-east of the island near Alcudia. Arguably the most scenic and difficult 18 holes on the island, wayward drives can easily end up on the beach. Tel: +34 971 549 560, www.golf-alcanada.com

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If you're feeling a bit rough, or just need pampering, head to the palatial Valparaíso Spa in Palma to be body-wrapped with algae, luxuriate on a heated waterbed or enjoy an aromatic steam bath. Best of all, though, is the "thunder shower" – when the overhead rain shower comes on – and so does the sound of thunder and lightning! Tel: (+34) 971 401 712, www.grupotelvalparaiso.com



Driving
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Just below the palatial Castillo Hotel Son Vida, frequented by King Juan Carlos of Spain, lies Mallorca's oldest golf course, the Son Vida. The broad fairways invite ambitious driving, while the fast greens demand accurate approach play. The 18-hole, 5,601m, par 71 course would be the perfect first day's play of a week-long golfing tour of the island. Tel: +34 971 791 210, www.sonvidagolf.com

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Driving a car through the Tramuntana mountains, running along the northwest coastline from Andratx to Pollensa, is an absolute delight. With peaks over 1,400m and steep, narrow, winding roads, the drive is no picnic, so why not stop for lunch at one of the Hotels Rural, like the 15th-century S'Olivaret near Alaro? Tel: +34 971 510 889, www.solivaret.com

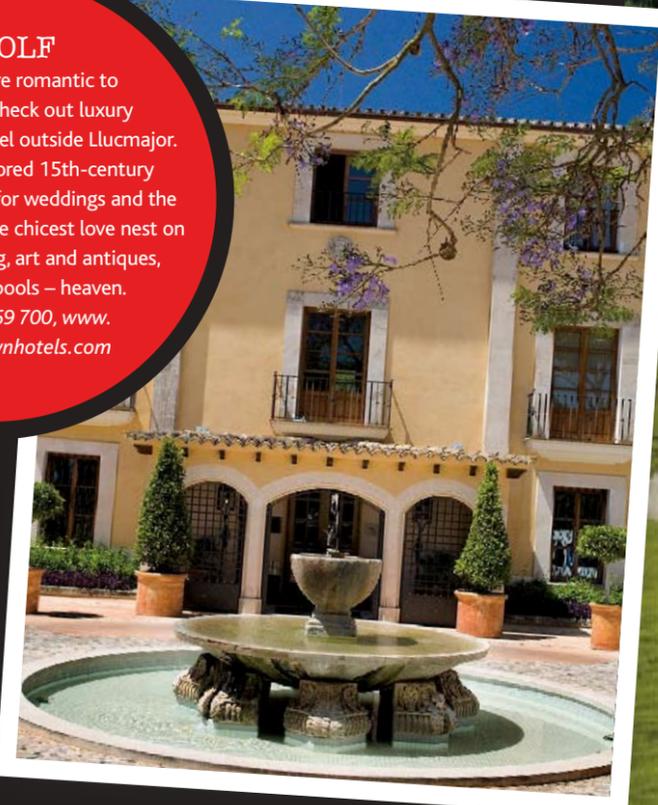
Bunkers
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The 70 bunkers on the Son Muntaner golf course provide a stern challenge. Part of the local Arabella Golf group, together with two other clubs, it proves the game in Mallorca is on a roll. The 1,000-year-old "Sa Capitana" olive tree next to the 15th tee is thought to be the oldest on the island. Tel: +34 971 783 030, www.sonmuntanergolf.com

🚩 **ON ARGUABLY THE MOST SCENIC AND DIFFICULT 18 HOLES ON THE ISLAND, WAYWARD DRIVES CAN EASILY END UP ON THE BEACH**

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For somewhere romantic to bunker down, check out luxury boutique Son Julia Hotel outside Lluçmajor. The beautifully restored 15th-century mansion has a chapel for weddings and the vast Imperial Suite is the chickest love nest on the island. Fine dining, art and antiques, a spa and three pools – heaven. Tel: +34 971 669 700, www.sonjulia.franklynhotels.com



Above: with something in the region of 300 days of sunshine a year, Mallorca is a bit of golfing heaven; right: the Son Julia Hotel offers modern comforts while retaining its 500-year-old period charm

Birdies
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Near Magalluf, the Santa Ponsa Golf Resort is home to one 9-hole and two 18-hole golf courses. Scoring birdies (one under par) at Santa Ponsa I, for six years the home of the Balearic Island Golf Open, is quite an achievement. At 590m, the 10th hole is one of the longest in Europe. If you manage it, celebrate at the Santa Ponsa Yacht Club. Tel: +34 971 690 211, www.habitatgolf.es

☠ GOLF

Birdwatchers looking to spot birdies like black vultures, Eleonora's falcons, Audouin's gulls, and moustached and Marmora's warblers, should head north to Puerto Pollensa. Albufuera Marsh, the mountains and Formentor seacliffs are all twitchers' paradises, particular in spring and autumn when migrants travelling between Europe and Africa need a stop-over. Non-feathered birds prefer the fabulous beach at Es Trenc, south of Campos. www.puertopollensa.com

Above left: take in some serious R&R at the Valpraíso Spa; above: drive through the mountains for gasp-inspiring views; left: the vast rolling greens on the island exert an irresistible pull for golfers

Handicap
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Every club golfer has a handicap, allowing him to compete against other players of different standards. Clubs in Mallorca, like the two at Son Antem, are pretty laidback about handicap certificates, but if you have one take it along. Talking in English certainly isn't a handicap, as practically all club staff are trilingual, speaking Catalan (the main language on the island), Spanish and English. Tel: +34 971 129 200, www.marriott-vacations.com

☠ GOLF

A handicap at the Hipodrome Son Pardo in Palma is altogether different. A near thing to chariot racing, drivers sit on a "sulky", or carriage, strung between two bicycle wheels harnessed to a horse "trotting" at 30mph. To handicap a horse, it simply starts 9 or 10m behind the others. There's racing Fridays and Sundays, it's free to get in – and a brilliant night out. Tel: +34 971 763 853, www.hipodromsonpardo.com →





Left: the lavish Son Gual golf club aims to provide challenging sport in stunning surroundings; below: head to Tito's nightclub for a bit of a dance and a no-holds barred burlesque show

Green GOLF

At this year's Mallorca Seniors Open, former Ryder Cup captain Ian Woosnam likened the giant rollercoaster greens of Son Gual to those at Augusta, home of the Masters. The vast greens have such wicked humps and hollows that club golfers greet regulation two-putt finishes as fist-punching triumphs.
Tel: +34 971 785

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Son Gual also has a revolutionary €2-million water-treatment plant on site, making it one of the greenest golf courses in Europe. Water shortages are a problem all round the Mediterranean, but Son Gual uses a German-designed "reverse osmosis" system, producing 3,000 cubic metres of water a day for the course. This green technology explains why the greens are so green!

THE NEWEST AND MOST PRESTIGIOUS GOLF CLUB ON MALLORCA IS A GREEN DREAM

Club GOLF

Overlooked by an ancient palacio, the newest and most prestigious golf club on Mallorca is Son Gual, the €30-million green dream of Adam Pamer, near Palma. The clubhouse is palatial, the restaurant exceptional, the design and course condition exquisite. From the back tees, with 10 lakes in play, this is a tough championship set-up. If you like it, you can even buy a house here.

Tel: +34 971 785 888, www.son-gual.com

GOLF

Tito's nightclub in Palma has been an institution since 1923. Marlene Dietrich, Josephine Baker and Ray Charles have all played here, and Paris Hilton, Jamiroquai and Cristiano Ronaldo all party here. Clubbers enjoy mostly house music, but beware: the burlesque shows aren't for the fainthearted!
Tel: +34 971 730 017, www.titosmallorca.com



THE 19TH HOLE

As golf courses only have 18 holes, the 19th is the place for a post-match bash.

Michelin-starred English chef Marc Fosh creates gastronomic nirvana in Palma Old Town at Simply Fosh. The braised beef cheeks with sun-dried tomato, basil and olives is meltingly tender, while the chocolate and olive-oil truffle with flor de sal and red pepper-raspberry jelly dessert is, in Marc's words, "a bit of a crowd pleaser". Yum. Tel: +34 971 290 108, www.foshfood.com

For a romantic terrace overlooking a private beach, try A Popa in the Nixe Palace Hotel in Palma. As you watch the sun set over the azure sea, try the day's freshly caught fish and shellfish, the house speciality. Tel: +34 971 700 888, www.hotelnixepalace.com

GETTING THERE

Don't be green with envy! Catch a bmibaby flight to Palma de Mallorca from Birmingham, Cardiff, East Midlands and Manchester from just £41.99 one-way, incl taxes. For more information log on to www.bmibaby.com