

Here are the places to aim for if you want to buy a golf resort property in the sun. By *Peter Swain*

**B**uyers after fair weather and fairways are investing big in golf resorts in Europe and the Caribbean. The desire to escape inner-city congestion and the post-Covid shift to flexible remote working have made the prospect of living amid leafy, wide-open spaces increasingly seductive. So why not get your greenery with 18 holes and a spa as well?

Nadine St Gemme and her American husband Eric have just paid about £1 million for a three-bedroom villa with a small pool and easy access to the well-established Dave Thomas 18-hole course on the Abama resort in Tenerife, just over four hours from London and several regional UK airports, including Liverpool where they live. “It’s the full package here: warm weather, beaches, sporting facilities, golf and good food,” Eric says.

Four of these ten newly launched Atlantic Ocean-view villas, priced from €1.255 million (£1.1 million) to €1.345

million, have sold so far, with the Abama Prestige Owners Club taking care of their management. Unlike other Abama units that are part of the resort, these are private affairs with no pre-existing rental agreements, ready to move into in late 2022.

“We both work in tech, and since Covid we can now work remotely for a couple of months a year,” Eric says. “The virus has made us think more about lifestyle. In January it’s paradise, so a perfect sanctuary from the winter weather and all the health problems. Our six and nine-year-olds are taking golf lessons, and we’re using the new multi-court tennis complex. We love it.”

In France, Les Bordes in the Loire Valley has just added a stunning new Gil Hanse-designed course to its existing Robert Von Hagge-designed 18-hole masterpiece. More than half of the first phase of 45 three to six-bedroom houses have sold already, with prices starting at about £870,000. Buyers have so far

come from the UK, US, Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland and, of course, France. There are plans to convert the 19th-century Château Bel Air on the estate into an 88-room Six Senses hotel and spa, with tennis, fishing, bike trails, a village square and equestrian facilities. To toast victory in the clubhouse, the vineyards of Sancerre, Anjou and Chinon are all near by, but it’s the two fine golf courses and easy 90-mile drive from Paris that appeals most to British buyers.

Portugal has long been a favourite for golfing holiday homes, with Quinta do Lago in the Algarve still one of the market leaders. The new kid on the increasingly chic coastal block around Comporta and Melides, about an hour and a half







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**Left: the golf course at Cabot St Lucia. Top right: the course at Abama in Tenerife, Spain, where Nadine and Eric St Gemme, inset, have just bought a villa. Below right: the course at Andermatt in the Swiss Alps**

south of Lisbon, is the Costa Terra Golf and Ocean Club. This stretch of the Alentejo coast has something of the Hamptons about it – Prince Albert of Monaco, the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy and the football manager José Mourinho have all enjoyed its scenery and relative seclusion.

Built around the American golf course architect Tom Fazio's first course in Europe and ready for play next summer, 84 properties priced from £1.7 million have been sold so far at Costa Terra, of which 55 have been bought by British buyers. The developer's CEO, Mike Meldman, sees the way the market is moving. “Buyers are discovering they can work from a second home – their kids can even learn remotely. They want fresh air and fun. The pandemic is transforming the way people view holiday homes.”

The Casa Nova restaurant down on the beach is already open, with clubhouses and “comfort stations” (snack bars) around the property under construction. A vineyard and organic farm are planned, with the whole enterprise taking shape over the next couple of years.

Elsewhere in Europe, the Swiss ski resort of Andermatt has just launched two new apartment blocks, Mira and Elva, for energetic types who enjoy the piste in the winter and fairways in the summer. In the Peloponnese, southwest of Athens, Kilada is about to announce prices for the first 90 lots set around a new Jack Nicklaus Signature course. Of

the clubs in southern Spain, Finca Cortesin near Marbella and Las Colinas near Murcia have interesting new offerings this winter.

Over in the Caribbean the other big issue of the day, climate change, has had a big impact on one new golf development. In 2017 Hurricane Irma damaged about 95 per cent of homes as well as the electricity and water supplies on the island of Barbuda. Its roughly 1,500 inhabitants were moved to its big-sister island, Antigua. Barbuda is as flat as a blank sheet of paper and overnight became effectively just that – a precarious economy, dependent on sand mining and subsistence fishing, was no longer sustainable without massive investment.

A consortium called PLH (Peace, Love and Harmony... no, really) already had an eye on two prime tracts of beachside land, and decided to act. Its managing partner, Discovery Land (DL), has 23 other high-end, mostly golf course-based developments across the Caribbean, North America, the Caribbean, Hawaii and Mexico, so they know what they're doing. A couple of years on they've taken \$375 million in sales at the Barbuda Ocean Club (BOC), while 250 construction workers are right now building dozens of grand homes, an 18-hole Tom Fazio-designed course and luxe club facilities.

Concerned about the potential loss of cultural identity, certain Barbudans have objected to “persons who have the wealth” buying



### ST LUCIA FROM £1.5M

On 375 acres of Point Hardy at the northern tip of the island, the Cabot St Lucia course is expected to be playable in late 2023. The estate will also have three and four-bedroom townhouses and 3,000 sq ft flats. [cabotstlucia.com](http://cabotstlucia.com)



### SPAIN FROM €1.255M

Les Atalayas are a newly launched set of ten villas in the Tenerife resort of Abama. As well as access to the golf course and professional tennis complex, you are also near the beach. [abamahotelresort.com](http://abamahotelresort.com)



### FRANCE FROM €1M

The Les Bordes golf estate in the Loire Valley have a development of 45 stone and timber houses designed by the architects Michaelis Boyd. Ranging from three to seven bedrooms, you also get a concierge. [lesbordes.com](http://lesbordes.com)



of the most exclusive private clubs in the region, complete with spas, restaurants, kite-surfing, scuba diving, tennis, golf and best of all, the famous pink-tinged sands of the island's practically empty beaches at the end of their gardens. They're a sporty crowd – I was told the gift shop stopped selling XL T-shirts due to lack of demand. A new private airport on Barbuda opens next year, but there are no plans yet for a hotel.

The events of the past 18 months have been game-changing. “People can now work anywhere with fast broadband and good transport links,” says James Burdess, Savills estate agency's man in the Caribbean.

“Destinations such as Barbuda, St Lucia and Barbados have become even more desirable, especially at the top end. It's no longer just retirees – heavy hitters in their fifties and even forties, who can live anywhere, increasingly want to be in the sun, by the sea, with plenty of sporting and recreational facilities for their families.”

Two hundred and sixty miles south of Barbuda, Cabot Saint Lucia ticks all those boxes and then some. On 375 acres of Point Hardy at the northern tip of the island, the golf resort has nearly a mile and a half of ocean frontage; its significant elevation changes are perfect for what its designers Coore and Crenshaw describe as an “off-the-charts spectacular” golf course, expected to be playable in late 2023.

“We've already done \$120 million in sales,” says Ben Cowan-Dewar, the co-founder and chief executive of Cabot. He adds that the three and four-bedroom Fairway Villas, which start at £2 million, are “popular”. These and larger four-bedroom, 3,000 sq ft lateral flats costing upwards of £3 million should be complete in 2023; 130 custom properties starting at £1.5 million are the jewels in this particular Caribbean crown.

As in Barbuda, Cowan-Dewar observes, “Covid has undoubtedly increased the demand for holiday real estate. We've got flights coming in every day from Heathrow and Gatwick [about nine hours' flight time] and there's an established Greg Norman course half a mile away.” The development will also have a 50-suite boutique hotel, resort and spa designed by the British architect Richard Evans of Six Senses Seychelles fame.

After an extended lull caused by the financial crisis and Brexit, a comfortable greenside home in the sun is now seen by some as a haven from overcrowded city life and never-ending health challenges. In fact, it's a hole in one.

property on the island. However, a former member of the Barbuda council told *The Sunday Times*: “It is vitally important that the developers continue investing in the island's infrastructure and people.”

So far DL and interested philanthropists have built a 250,000-gallon tank and desalination plant to supply fresh water to the capital, Codrington, new roads and “Clinic in a Can” health facilities, and set up interest-free loans for local home restorations, as well as investing in small businesses through a well-resourced community outreach programme. BOC employs 240 Barbudans and is restoring two miles of dunes, some destroyed by sand mining and the hurricane. The region's biggest colony of breeding magnificent frigatebirds, one of the wonders of the Caribbean natural world, is fast recovering post-hurricane in the mangroves a few miles around the coastline.

To date, buyers at the BOC are American and prices are punchy. Three-quarter-acre to three-acre beachfront plot begin at about £2.25 million, and buyers can expect to spend the same again building a 2,500 sq ft house – some owners are budgeting £8 million to £16 million for air-conditioned, hurricane-proof mansions. More modest, turnkey 2,000 sq ft three-bedroom *casitas* (“little houses”) start at about £3 million. In all, about 495 residences are planned on Coco and Palmetto Points.

Owners will belong to one