

SPRING IN FRANCE

SOUILLAC GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

A day visit to play golf at the Souillac Golf and Country Club last autumn was just enough to whet the appetite for a return visit to enjoy a stay in one of the delightful Scandinavian cabins. The drive to Souillac from the South is quite spectacular, there are so many magical sights, it is impossible not to stop to take in the views. The Chateau at Bonaguil, will create images of medieval knights and jousting. The vista from the clifftop looking towards Rocamadour is hard to describe, the photograph can scarcely convey what a spectacular place this is, one of the most visited towns in France, linked to the pilgrim route.



The task of building high on the cliffs would daunt builders of today. Then to finally arrive at the country club, to be settled into a beautifully equipped house, made from Douglas fir, and overlooking the golfcourse, and a complimentary bottle of wine, a perfect day.

During the period before April, the restaurant at the clubhouse is not open, but that is no distraction, as we soon found out. It is a short drive into the town of Souillac, and several restaurants with a choice of menu, for those wishing to be economical, the lunchtime *plats du jour* are always best value in France. Our choice for the evening was the Grand Hotel, the restaurant was first class, excellent service, a wide choice of food, beautifully cooked and presented, wine of a quality to match, and well priced.

The medieval town of Sarlat is not far, and a hotspot for visitors, but with that comes a bewildering choice of great restaurants, patisserie shops and tearooms waiting to be sampled.

After a good nights rest, the morning chorus greeted the day, a stretch out to the balcony with a steaming cup of coffee, looking over the course, dew still lying, to ponder the golf for the day. It was originally only a six hole layout, that was extended to nine holes by Jeremy Pern, and then finally made into the full eighteen holes of today.

The course at Souillac is a very real test, a glance at the card would lull you into thinking this might be a stroll with a few



clubs, it is comparatively short at 4465 metres (4885 yards), and the par fours a good drive and a short iron. However, it does not take long for a revision in thinking, for this is a tight, well designed course that demands the best in course management.

Too long and you in the oak trees, wrong side of the fairway and you are blocked out, so bringing the knowledge of our last visit to bear, it was a very different approach from the first tee. None of the first three holes is over 300 metres, but each leaves no margin for error. The fourth is the only par 5, but the drive is over a lake to a narrow landing area, then a severe climb up the valley to an elevated green set into the hillside, a par is a great result. There are six par threes, varying from 106 to 174 metres, and each a challenge in a different way. When speaking to the members and visitors three words were repeated when asked to describe the

course, testing, challenging and enjoyable, and all were truly appropriate. The wildlife is abundant and varied, and for birdwatchers a delight, from early in the morning until dusk, there are so many varieties to observe.

The resort is set in a valley, with a very unusual concept. The development is in a series of eight small hamlets, on varying size. Some have as few as six houses, and the largest has nineteen. Each has a distinct and descriptive name, and La Vallee and Les Orchides need no translation.

The houses are built of Douglas Fir, each has a balcony and all have superb views across the golf course and the surrounding countryside, some have the bedrooms downstairs, so that the lounge and dining room enjoy the better view. Each hamlet has it's own swimming pool, and some of the larger ones have two, ideal to wallow and



relax after a round of golf, or just to lie and read in the sunshine. The hamlets are set away from the central complex, which houses the reception area and the clubhouse, swimming pool and restaurant.

Most of the properties are privately owned, but are available for renting. The minimum stay is for two nights, and is the ideal stopping place to break the journey when travelling South. There are properties for sale, and the owners we spoke with, described themselves as content owners and members, a good recommendation.

Golfing breaks at the resort are wonderful value, especially with cheap flights into Bergerac and Brives, and the team will be happy to help you find the one for your needs. There are other fine courses within a short drive for those who like a little variety, there is a regional Limousin Pass and the club has arrangements with Golf de la Porcelaine and Golf du Coiroux a Aubazine.

For non golfers there are special breaks for wine tasting, gourmet cooking and photography, I would be a candidate for all of them. We are already planning a return to enjoy the personalised service, peace and quite, and the beautiful surroundings.

For those tempted top do likewise, there will be no disappointment.



Michael Rees

