

HAVE CLUBS WILL TRAVEL ...

... SOUILLAC GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB La Belle Vie

When I first began to play golf, to me the Dordogne was simply a river in France. It has become to mean so much more in the succeeding years. For the Dordogne Valley is spectacular, the majestic scenery of the river gorges, the towns and villages perched precariously high on the cliff sides are set to amaze, and the incredible cave complexes, such as the wonderful Cavern of Padirac with its subterranean lake cannot fail to fascinate.

The ancient towns of Bergerac, Perigeux and Sarlat are all wonderful places for the tourist to visit, but for the travelling golfer, there are additional attractions to be savoured. One such is located just off junction 55 of the autoroute A20, the Souillac Golf & Country Club, one of the best kept golfing secrets and my diary finally allowed time to visit the complex of which I had heard such good reports.

The resort is set in a valley, and the concept is very very different, a series of eight small hamlets set in the wooded hills and valleys at varying distances around the main clubhouse. The main building houses the reception office, professional's shop and the restaurant and bar. Throughout the summer the restaurant is open every evening, and in the off season a few times a week, but it is a short drive to the town of Souillac where there is an ample choice of good eating establishments.

The hamlets vary in size, some as few as six houses, the largest of which has nineteen houses, each has a distinct name, suited to the location. La Vallee and Les Orchidees need no translation. The houses are log cabin in style, built from Douglas fir, each has a balcony and all have superb views across the countryside, some have the bedrooms downstairs so that the lounge and dining room looks out, it is not unusual to see eagles flying in close proximity, and the other bird and wildlife has to be seen to be believed.



Each hamlet has its own swimming pool. And some of the larger ones have two, ideal to wallow and relax with something long and cool after the stresses of the day. All this and a wonderful golf course to boot.

There are eighty one detached properties in all, and although most are privately owned they are available for renting. The minimum stay is for two nights, and it is an ideal stopping place to break the journey when going further South, or for a longer stay to enjoy the delights of the region. During lunch I had the opportunity to chat with several golfers, who described themselves as "contented owners", there could not be a better recommendation.

For those wishing to purchase a home in France, this could be the perfect solution for the investment, a home to use in a wonderful region, and also to generate income, whilst being very professionally managed by the operators of the resort. Plus the added bonus



of free membership of the club and all its facilities. The visitors gave a similar response to the owners, but after our visit it would be difficult to imagine any other. Personalised service, peace and quiet, and beautiful surroundings, utopia.

At first glance at the scorecard, the golf course would appear to be on the short side, but do not confuse shortish, with either easy or uninteresting, for it is neither, but a genuine test particularly for the driving accuracy. A visiting low handicap Scotsman at first thought he could get around with a fairway wood and a couple of short irons, but had no shame eating humble pie after his first round, and thoroughly enjoyed the challenge all week long. Armed with such prior knowledge, the challenge was taken very seriously, forewarned and forearmed being the belief.

The course measures 4465 metres (4900 yards), and a par of 67. There are six par threes and just one par five, but what a hole.

A drive through an avenue of trees, over a lake, and then a steeply rising narrow fairway to an elevated green, where a par is cause for celebration. The par three's are an excellent mixture, the 5th bunkered front and back, the downhill 9th with lakes on either side of the green, the 12th uphill, and the 15th and 17th are sporty little holes of just over 110 yards, each different but charming and challenging. The excellent greens are very receptive, and

reward the good approach, but with some tricky borrows which demand attention once on them, to record pars or better.

The par four's are as good as you would wish, only two are over 400 yards, but it is the shorter holes that are the most enjoyable. Hit a good drive and the green awaits, but be off line and the narrow tree lined fairways will exact due punishment. This is a golf course set out to maximise the natural contours of the landscape, it started off as just a six hole course ten years ago, then grew to nine and now is a full eighteen hole layout, that is a pleasure to play.

Golfing breaks at the resort are wonderful value, starting at Euro 295 per person for a week, and with several options for cheap flights and ferry travel a great venue for the travelling golfer.

We will be returning, to enjoy again all the facilities of the resort, and the golf course in particular, guaranteed that little bit different. For those tempted to do likewise, there will be no disappointments.



Michael Rees

Contacts:

Email: contact@souillacountryclub.com
Telephone: 0033 565 275600
Website: www.souillacountryclub.com