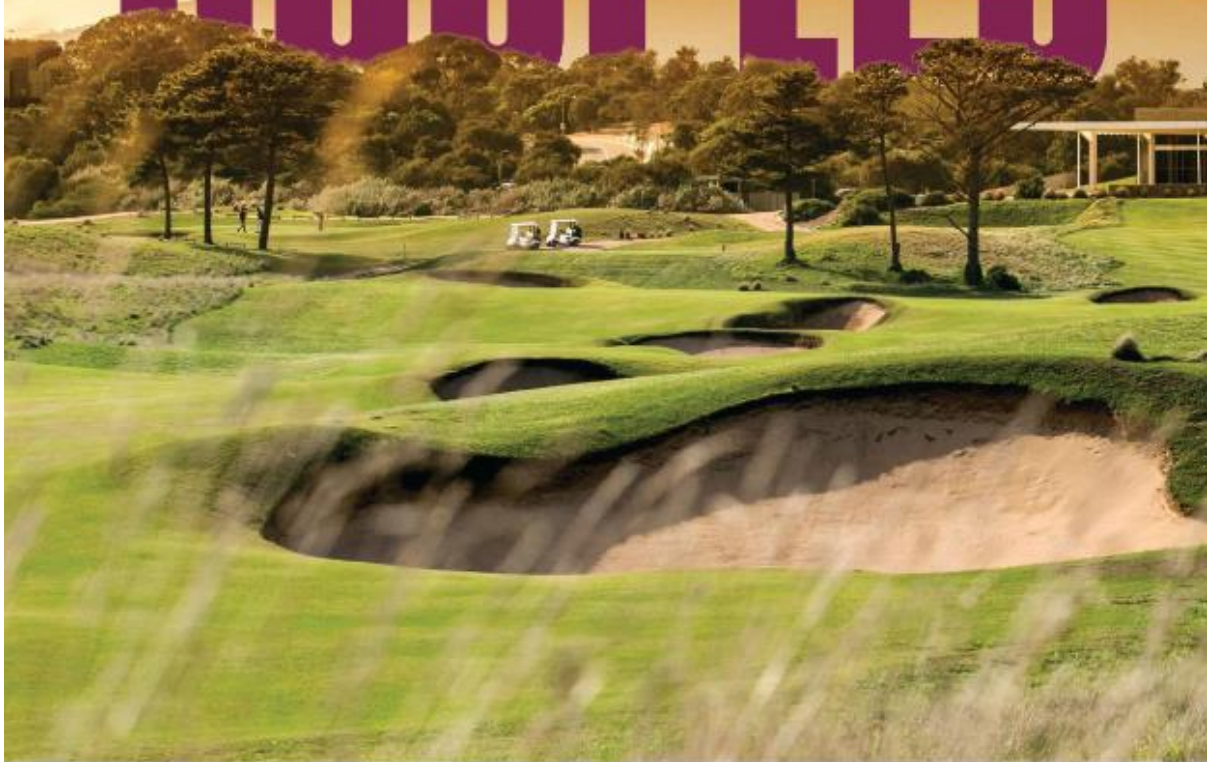


COUPLES



The success of incorporating golf into a weekend away with your partner depends entirely on the destination. **By Tony Webeck**

AS WE slowly meandered hand-in-hand from the resort restaurant back to our hotel room, I knew that this was the moment. We'd never discussed it at length previously, but as the line of spotlights bounced off the abundant palm trees I decided to make my move. With just enough evening light and a couple of clubs strategically left at the top of the range, I popped the most important question a

golfer can ask of their partner: do you fancy a swing?

My bride made a couple of half-hearted swishes towards the ground, brushed the side of the ball with one of them and stopped. I looked at her, she looked at me and in that moment we both knew beyond a shadow of a doubt; golf was not going to be a shared part of our relationship.

Plenty do, and if I'm honest there's a part of me that wishes the woman I love would fall in love with golf the way I did, but it

hasn't prevented us from enjoying jaunts where a round or two is part of the itinerary.

The aforementioned honeymoon was at Laguna Whitsundays, the wife was spoilt in decadent style while I played the golf courses of Mauritius and she put a book and the resort pool to good use in Fiji as I played the courses at Denarau and Natadola Bay. And we're not the only ones.

In his pursuit of playing AUSTRALIAN GOLF DIGEST's Top 100 Courses in the country, Carl Murphy regularly took wife

RETREAT



Annette to all corners of Australia. As he became well versed in the ways of our finest layouts, she indulged in day spas, retail therapy and explored various tourist activities within the region.

These were her five favourites:

- 1. Lost Farm:** "The day spa at Lost Farm is the best I have come across in Australia. Great service and nice view over the course and out to sea."
- 2. Palmer Sea Reef:** "For a nice relaxing time, going from the room straight into the pool is hard to beat."
- 3. Mornington Peninsula Cups Region:** "Close to many of the courses in the area are the natural hot springs. Enjoyable all year round."

4. Perth: "Rottnest Island is a small journey to get away and relax. Take in some great nature and a quokka selfie or two."

5. Hamilton Island: "A lot to keep you occupied on the island itself or take off to Whitehaven Beach, one of Australia's best."

But the Murphys don't always go their separate ways on holiday, using golf as an excuse to share quality time together.

"Annette does her own thing when I'm off playing golf, but close to many of our best courses are some wonderful experiences we've been able to enjoy together," Carl says. "The past two years we have visited Links Lady Bay and made the short journey to McLaren Vale. This year we were able to take in the annual Sea and Vines Festival, a delicious





NOOSA SPRINGS PROVIDES THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS.

food and wine pairing with seating in the kitchen at Shingleback.

"The restaurant at Lost Farm at Barnbougle has to be one of the best at any golf course in Australia and is a nice way to spend the night reflecting on your day, whether you've played golf or not."

So whether you and your partner are both golf nuts or don't mind a bit of 'me time' while on holiday, there are a host of golf destinations that will delight both on and off the course.

SUNSHINE COAST

A perennial holiday favourite of anyone living south of Brisbane, Queensland's Sunshine Coast is a destination that delights all of the senses. Whether you are drawn by the year-round temperate climate and pristine beaches, local produce and seafood that make the restaurants some of the finest



THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA HOLDS PLENTY OF APPEAL.

‘Noosa Springs works its way through a number of watercourses that present a challenge to those who take their holiday golf semi-seriously’

in the country or the wonderful collection of golf courses dotted along the coastline, the Sunny Coast never fails to disappoint.

Noosa Springs Golf and Spa Resort typifies the luxurious escapes available on the Sunshine Coast with a day spa, fine dining and the Graham Papworth-designed golf course that ranked 98th in our latest ranking. It works its way through a number of watercourses that, while alluring, present a challenge to those who take their holiday golf semi-seriously.

After golf take your pick from the wide

selection of treatments on offer at The Spa, including the special 'couples retreat' package in the designated couples treatment suite or surrender yourself to the couples flotation experience for the ultimate in relaxation.

The resort restaurant, Relish, infuses local produce into a blend of Mediterranean and Asian cuisine, including Noosa earth oyster mushrooms, Gympie green beans, Noosa Hinterland sirloin steak and Mooloolaba prawns. With a variety of festivals taking place throughout the year and golf courses such as Maroochy River, Pelican Waters and Twin Waters ready to welcome visitors, there is never a wrong time to plan a Sunshine Coast escape.

MORNINGTON PENINSULA

The long-time playground of Melbourne's well-to-do, Victoria's Mornington Peninsula emerged as arguably Australia's best golf destination after the opening of The Dunes in 1997 sparked a flood of new courses in the Cups region near Rye.

The Moonah and Ocean courses at The National, the Open and Legends courses at Moonah Links and St Andrews Beach all opened in the space of five years at the turn of the century and gave those with a golf

persuasion even more reason to visit the Mornington.

If golf is your main motivation, there is no better time to visit the Mornington, 60 minutes south of the Victorian capital, than for the annual Mornington Peninsula Golf Classic. Entering its ninth year in 2018 and to be held from October 29 until November 1, this year's classic will be played at The Dunes, Moonah Links' Legends course, Flinders and Portsea golf clubs and incorporates welcome and presentation dinners that partners are welcome to attend.

If you're not playing in the Classic, the Mornington Peninsula has a wealth of different ways to spend your days, whether it's relaxing in the Peninsula Hot Springs, taking in breathtaking views of Port Phillip Bay in Arthurs Seat Eagle, sampling some hops at the Mornington Peninsula Brewery or experiencing the romance of Lindenderry at Red Hill.

CHINA

Banned until the 1980s by the Communist Party because of its association with excess, golf now represents a window for the western world to experience the exotic delights on offer in China.

The capital of Beijing continues to attract tourists en masse to take in the wonders of the Forbidden City, Great Wall of China and sample Chinese culture at its richest, while Shanghai rivals New York and London for its modern energy. The explosion of golf courses in China in the 2000s was concentrated in three main areas offering holiday experiences hard to match anywhere else on the planet.

The province of Shenzhen/Dongguan is home to the world-famous Mission Hills



THERE ARE 10 COURSES AT MISSION HILLS HAIKOU IN CHINA.

golf city that boasts a dozen 18-hole courses designed by some of the greatest golfers to have ever lived. Hainan Island features a variety of lava rock and coastal courses that elicit comparisons with Hawaii, while the Lake and Mountain courses at Spring City are the highlights of golf in Kunming.

The '2 Resort Challenge' offered by China Golf Experience takes place across nine days over six courses at two extraordinary resorts on Hainan Island, Mission Hills Haikou and the Sheraton Shenzhen Peninsula Resort.

A four-ball pairs event, it is the ideal way for a golf-playing couple to enjoy a taste of China amid spectacular landscapes at resorts that feature natural mineral springs, day spas, movie theatres and spectacular unspoilt beaches.

MELBOURNE

Considered the cultural and sporting capital of Australia, a holiday in Melbourne never

seems sufficient no matter how long your stay. Every month of the year is overflowing with sporting highlights, a rich array of dining delights and a fusion of international influences that offers something diverse around every corner.

Any golfer worth their salt sets their sights on the Sandbelt whenever in Melbourne and the changing nature of the Australian golf landscape means all that is required is a little pre-planning to play some of the best this country has to offer. Interstate or overseas visitors are welcome at virtually every Sandbelt course; the most difficult challenge being to decide which one you'd like to play first.

With a rich history dating back to 1898, Yarra Yarra Golf Club's position as a perennial Sandbelt favourite will only be further enhanced given the current design influence of famed American architect Tom Doak. And with tee-times available from Monday to Friday, it creates the perfect opportunity to enjoy a long weekend away. **C**



MELBOURNE SANDBELT COURSES, SUCH AS YARRA YARRA, REMAIN APPEALING TO ALL.