

France's Golf Cup Run neth Over

By Dave Lockhart



Le Golf National



Chateau Versailles



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The golf world was in a state of shock back in 2011 when France was awarded the privilege of hosting the world's premier professional golf event: the Ryder Cup matches. Thanks in part to donations from players in The French Golf Federation, the near-equivalent of one's community golf association, along with financial assistance from the French government, this massive worldwide golf event will take place next year. In hindsight, France seems like the perfect country to host these historic matches, as golf has been played here dating all the way back to the 1800s. The game remains an integral part of French culture with over 400 courses strewn throughout this diverse, beautiful and fantastical land mass.

France has seen more than its share of wars, but the Ryder Cup is a battle of a different kind that takes place every two years. The twelve best players from the United States versus the twelve best from Europe. The Europeans were on a nice run winning six of the last seven matches until the Americans triumphed by the score of 17-11 in 2016 at Hazeltine Golf Club in Minnesota. So come 2018 in France, the European side will look to settle the score.

With the great international showcase going to France comes the opportunity to indulge in golf on Gallic turf, as well as taking in the sights. Herewith, a brief review of some of France's best golf courses and more: The host course for the 2018 Ryder Cup matches is Le Golf National located just outside of historic Versailles and about 40 minutes from Paris. The Albatross course is a water-laden design that brings to mind the Tournament Players Club in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. The layout is full of risk reward shots; as such, it is an ideal venue for match-play formats used in the Ryder Cup event. Robert Von Hagge and Hubert Chesneau are credited as the course's primary architects and collaborated with Pierre Thevenin to serve up an interesting combination of Scottish links and target-style golf. One of the great virtues of the layout is that it is open to the public. As of press time, one deal offered through the renovated Novotel Hotel, located right on property, includes an elegant room with a round at the Albatross course for less than \$230.

This stadium-like venue is much in the vein of a TPC track with large mounding providing ideal views of the action for the fans. In fact, there are a number of spots where you can see three to four holes at one time. If you thought



the crowds at the 2016 Ryder Cup in Minnesota at Hazeltine National Golf Club were massive, the folks managing the French event anticipate crowds of 60,000-plus patrons per day, much like the final day of the 2012 Ryder Cup at Medinah Country Club. Now that's a lot of cheese and wine!

The Palace of Versailles (known in France as the Château de Versailles) is the world's largest palace spread over 2,000 glorious acres. Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette spent some serious time here back in the 17th century. After two years of work, a replica of the original 80m wrought iron and gold leaf gate now graces the entrance to Louix XVI's former power base. One of France's most visited tourist sites, the palace, west of Paris, has been undergoing renovation work since 2003, when the government launched a 17-year "Grand Versailles" project to fully restore it to its former glory. Hall of Mirrors, Gallery of Battles, the Queens Bed Chamber and the huge and beautiful Palace Gardens are just a few of the area highlights. When you think about this being built in the 1600s it really is mind-blowing. The only way to tackle this architectural marvel is to have a guide like my escort on the trip, Denis Verdier-Magneau, who can depict all of the history inside and out at this fascinating palace.

Up in the north of France lies the charming seaside towns of Honfleur and Deauville, Normandy. Honfleur has a feel that is pure France with a scenic harbor that is surrounded by numerous restaurants serving delectable food and tasty wine. There's also a variety of street musicians adding a background ambiance that puts you in a total chill mode.

For the past 42 years, the city of Deauville has hosted one of the world's largest film festivals, oddly named the American Film Festival. Over that amount of time, the event has attracted a virtual Who's Who of Hollywood including the likes of Jack Nicholson and Angelina Jolie. When in town, be sure to check out the Hippodrome – a thoroughbred horse racing track—as well as a sprawling and spectacular beach.

The Golf Barrière Deauville boasts three nine-hole courses (Red, White and Blue) that wind their way up and down the undulating property wrapping around the stately hotel. There are some fun shots to encounter here where negotiating the land is paramount to scoring well. Only a couple of hours from Paris places you in a relaxed environment enjoying courses designed by Tom Simpson and the immortal Henry Cotton. Here you can take in spectacular views of the town of Deauville and the Atlantic Ocean from high above. The highlight of your round is an interesting ruin of a castle wall to the right of the 12th hole of the White Course. A number of movie stars have teed it up at Golf Barrière, including Samuel L. Jackson and Morgan Freeman.

As great as the golf is in this region, all Americans need to set aside a few hours of their trip to visit Normandy. Stroll the sands of Omaha Beach and you can still feel the history and turmoil that took place here on June 6, 1944. At Pointe Du Hoc, many remnants of World War II can be still be found.



Honfleur Harbor, town of Honfleur, Normandy



D-Day Landing on Omaha Beach, Normandy



D-Day Landing on Omaha Beach, Normandy



Le Chateau Course

Be sure and get a tour guide like the engaging, knowledgeable Phillip Carey, who tells the amazing story of D-Day in a way that puts you practically in the middle of the action. The American Cemetery is also nearby where 9,387 brave soldiers rest. Visiting the memorials and grave sites here is a truly a humbling, moving and unforgettable experience that every American needs to see.

Omaha Beach Golf Club is a worthwhile golf experience, all while taking in a bit more history. Here you will find a wide assortment of golf holes and breathtaking views on two different 18-hole layouts. The La Mer championship course goes right up to the scenic blue Atlantic Ocean. World War II is memorialized here as each tee marker represents key figures in the war, including Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton and Winston Churchill. Just behind the sixth green you can walk into an actual bunker from the war to look out at the sea and attempt to comprehend those monumental battles. There's also a number of interesting plaques dedicated to the men and moments that happened right here.

In the south part of the country, just outside the city of Nice, is continental Europe's No. 1 golf resort in the Terre Blanche Hotel Spa Golf Resort. World-class touches abound in this secluded all-suite and villa hotel that certainly has it all.

Nestled in unspoiled lush nature of rolling, scenic terrain, Terre Blanche is easy to reach via a 35-minute drive from Cannes, and 45 minutes from Nice International Airport. The five-star resort is designed like a Provençal village on a hillside, with 115 suites and villas, each with a private terrace. The hotel's infinity pool overlooks the resort, offering a breathtaking panorama of the hills and their perched villages. The magnificent spa is the ideal place to work off the various pains of the day with a massage or take a dip in the vitality pool. If want to toughen yourself up a bit, you can hit the fitness center where you can pump some iron and build some muscle for your next round.

Terre Blanche Golf offers two 18-hole championship golf courses designed by ex-professional golfer and renowned golf course architect Dave Thomas called Le Château and Le Riou. If want to fix up your game then you will want to check out the state-of-the-art Albatross Golf performance center, complete with a David Leadbetter Golf Academy. American favorite Matt Kuchar is a regular guest at the property.

Le Château is an outstanding 18-hole public course that is 7,235 yards long and is the more demanding of the two courses. The bunkers and greens enable players to experience the true playing conditions of a championship course.

Its water hazards are beautiful, yet treacherous. A multi-tiered waterfall flows downhill in front of an elevated green on the par-3 second hole. Each year in September Le Chateau Course hosts the French Riviera Masters, the only Senior European Tour championship in France. The course is strong, ranked No. 14 in Continental Europe by *Golf World UK*.

Le Riou (The River), built in 2004, is 6,567



Eiffel Tower, Paris



The author in US Ryder Cup Captain Jim Furyk's cart



Tee sign at Omaha Beach Golf Club

yards long and features fairways with significant drops and greens that will test your stroke. This course was a joy to play and not as testy as Le Chateau. The par-4 ninth hole stands out, playing uphill with a waterfall and a pond along the right side. The par-5 18th starts with a tee set high on a plateau playing down to brilliant water features along the entire right side, making it an ideal and scenic risk-reward finishing hole.

The gourmet restaurant at Terre Blanche's Le Faventia is quite prestigious, with Michelin-starred status due to its unsurpassed cuisine and service. Treat yourself to choices that are inspired by the seasons, the Provençal land and local products.

While French-U.S. relations have sometimes been chilly over the years, know that Americans are today warmly welcomed across the country. You will note that most countrymen and women are fit and happy. This may come as a surprise due to the vast quantities of bread and amazing rich butter that are served everywhere you go.

The 2018 Ryder Cup Matches should serve to educate and win over golf travelers to the spectacular country of France. What's not to love? Encompassing medieval cities; alpine villages; Mediterranean beaches; the famed fashion houses and classical art museums of Paris; and, of course, the Louvre and the iconic Eiffel Tower. Versailles might just be the best place the Ryder Cup matches have ever been held. Fantastique!

For more information on France and its golf offerings, visit: <http://us.france.fr/>

Hotel Novotel Saint Quentin Golf National
<http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-1139-novotel-saint-quentin-golf-national/index.shtml>

Pointe du Hoc
<https://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials/europe/pointe-du-hoc-ranger-monument>

Philip Carey of Normandy Sightseeing Tours
<http://www.normandy-sightseeing-tours.com/d-day-tours.html>

Normandy Tourism
<http://en.normandie-tourisme.fr/normandy-tourism-1-2.html>

Deauville Tourism
<http://en.deauville.fr>

Terre Blanche Hotel Spa Golf Resort
<http://en.terre-blanche.com>



When the snow begins to dust the streets across Chicagoland, Arizona is where Windy City golfers jettison the street slush and their snow shovels for a Sonoran retreat. From the greater Phoenix metropolitan area to Tucson, great golf is as abundant as sunshine. With nearly 300 sunny days per year, this destination tops the country in sunshine, especially during the winter months.

Ditat Deus, the state's motto, translates to "God Enriches." From the cooper-and-orange banded mountains to the cactus-dotted deserts, this region is bursting with colors. Arizona golf is a paradise with sunscreen and shorts. In addition to the ideal temperatures, the varieties of golf courses offer Chicagoans a unique experience that cannot be found in the Midwest.

ARIZONA

THE GOLF STATE