

→ Continued from page 17

**U**nless you agree with Mark Twain that golf is a good walk spoilt, owning a holiday home beside a highly rated golf course has obvious appeal. You max out opportunities to play, get a view over manicured greenery with no responsibility for maintenance and can rent it out to fellow golfers when you're not using it. And with the number of European golfers up 32 per cent from 2020 to 2022, demand to live on the fairway remains strong.

When Alex Roberts, 49, was looking for a family holiday home, Portugal's Algarve hit the spot. He bought a property in 2017, upgrading to a three-bedroom villa on the Vale do Lobo resort during lockdown in 2020. With waterlogged courses near his Monmouthshire home unplayable for much of this winter, the Algarve's warm climate is a big attraction.

"Vale do Lobo makes an easy and safe holiday destination," he says. "It has wonderful facilities, pools, gyms and a spa, direct access to the sandy beach, good restaurants and nightlife for

PATRICK PIMENTA

# In the swing

*Cathy Hawker on the  
best golf resorts where  
you can buy a home*







my wife, Claudia, and me and our three adult children, and everything within an easy walk. The golf courses are immaculate and forgiving, and the club holds regular weekly competitions where we've met so many interesting people."

The couple visit their property once a month, sometimes driving down in summer and exploring Portugal's wine regions en route. "From May to October there are 12 daily flights from Bristol to Faro airport and the same number again from Birmingham so we have great options," he says.

One and two-bedroom apartments at Vale do Lobo start at €350,000 (£300,000) and €500,000 respectively, with townhouses by the beach from €850,000, and the best detached villas from €4 million-plus.

"Vale do Lobo has a hugely loyal following, for its character and child-friendly community," says Iain Begg, from QP Savills. "It was taken over last year by Kronos Homes who are investing to add quality and, despite some negativity around announcements on the end of the non-habitual tax regime and changes to the rules on obtaining local licences so you

can rent your property out, we've seen huge interest, selling six properties in the past three months."

Golfers are out on the Algarve's first new golf course in a decade, which already holds a GEO Foundation Certification for sustainability. Ombria is a 153-hectare resort due to open this autumn, with a five-star Viceroy hotel with 65 residences, 83 non-branded apartments, townhouses and villas and long-term plans for 380 homes. Prices start at €659,200 for furnished one-bedroom properties.

The resort is ten minutes from Loule and a 30-minute drive from the Atlantic, an unusual inland location in this beach-focused region.

"It's an exciting and rare alternative to the usual Algarve golf resorts, well-integrated into the beautiful countryside and with a strong focus on sustainability that's increasingly important to clients," says Joao Richard Costa, Ombria's chief commercial officer. "We use

solar and geothermal energy and have returned to the heritage of the region through our use of natural materials and craftspeople."

Sustainability has been at the heart of Quinta do Lago for over 50 years, says its chief executive, Sean Moriarty. This is one of the most prestigious sports resorts worldwide where continuous hefty investment by its billionaire owner Denis O'Brien and a rigid adherence to the original plan allowing only 25 per cent of land to be developed,

have kept the resort at the top of its game.

"Our location on a massive green belt beside the Ria Formosa nature reserve means we've always had a firm environmental focus,"

Moriarty says. "During Covid we spent €7 million on extensive renovations to the South course, the oldest of our three championship courses, which improved the playing experience but also cut water consumption by 60 per cent."

Properties start at €525,000 for resale apartments and €2.2 million for villas. The latest

addition is the release of the North Grove plots, the final virgin plot development for sale through Quinta do Lago Real Estate.

## FORE! OTHER RESORTS SOTOGRADE, SPAIN

Keen golfers know Valderrama, venue of the 1997 Ryder Cup and widely rated as one of the world's finest courses. It joins two other courses at Sotograde, a magnificent sporting estate at the western end of the Costa del Sol. Apartments by the marina start at €350,000, while at La Reserva, a superb 400-hectare country club within Sotograde with its own championship golf course, golf academy, racquet centre and kids' clubs, villas reach over €20 million.

## COSTA NAVARINO, GREECE

Voted the world's best golf venue at the 2023 World Golf Awards, Costa Navarino in the Peloponnese has Greece's top four rated 18-hole courses. Other facilities are equally impressive: tennis, an NBA basketball school, watersports, Bayern Munich football camps, hiking, biking and rock climbing – and that's just for starters. Properties



## VILAMOURA, PORTUGAL

Vilamoura's beachfront facilities include a marina, a tennis and padel academy and five championship golf courses headed by the Dom Pedro Old Course, ranked as the third best in Portugal.

Significant investment is underway, including upgrading the golf offering, building a marina and adding properties. New homes beside the golf courses start at €570,000 for two and three-bedroom flats at The Nine.

## ABAMA, TENERIFE

Lines of tall palm trees and elevated views to the sea are features of the 72-par golf course at Abama, a 162-hectare sporting estate with a Ritz-Carlton Hotel on Tenerife. New plots on the front-line of the golf course have been released, priced from €1,060,000, for buyers to design their own super-villa.

**Continued on page 20 →**

“  
A strong focus on sustainability is increasingly important