

SHORT HAUL

# A traditional welcome

Cascais, half an hour west of Lisbon, offers an excellent base for some interesting local courses, as Roderick Easdale discovered

14th at Oitavos Dunes

**T**he British have much to thank the Portuguese for. In particular to Catherine of Braganza, a Portuguese princess who married Charles II and who took with her to England the Portuguese aristocracy's custom of afternoon tea. Catherine's dowry was free trade for England with the Portuguese colonies, 500,000 pounds of gold and a box of tea.



Cascais town centre

Tea at that time was a most expensive, luxurious item. The aristocracy in her new country adopted the royal taste for afternoon tea. That it was an excellent way of displaying one's porcelain collection was one of its attractions.

I was told this story by our host after lunch, at Belas Golf Club, the comment prompted by my 'English' habit of ordering a pot of tea. The lunch that Sunday had been splendid,

with a fine selection of desserts which is always a winner with me.

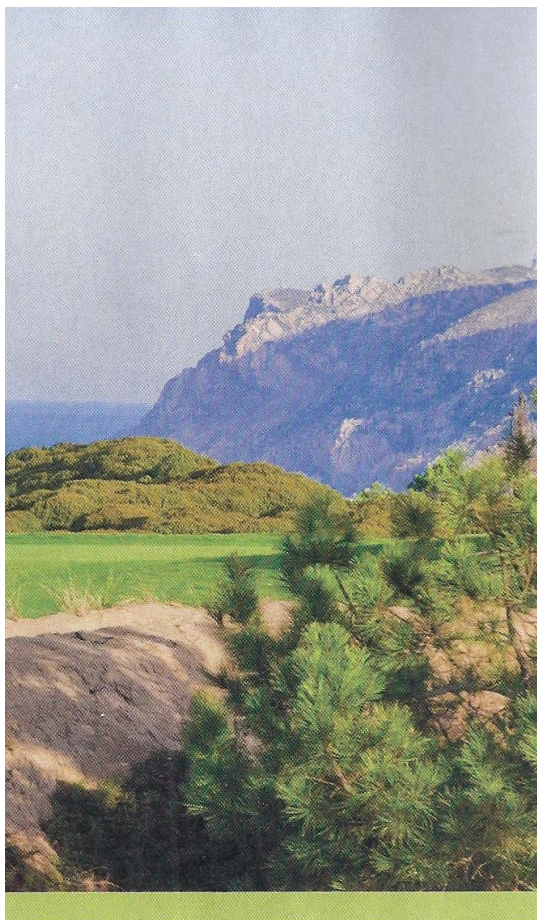
Belas is the perfect template for a golf club. The vibrant welcoming clubhouse, full of families and golfers and with abundant good food, is an excellent 19th hole to complement the 18 that had preceded it.

We teed off on 6, a happy accident as this left the best holes to last. After the 1st hole, the course takes to the hills with the next three sweeping

Belas







through vegetation-saturated steep hillside. The views and isolation are glorious. The course then turns back towards the residential areas. These holes have a different ambiance, but the real estate does not intrude unduly, and the holes throughout the layout are varied and interesting.

Another traditional English custom was encountered at Lisbon Sports Club, the origins of which are in Lisbon Cricket Club founded in 1873 by British expats working in the local railway industry. On display in its clubhouse are the first balls hit at the club – the first golf ball, (struck by one Sir Lancelot, British ambassador) and the first tennis and cricket balls.

Lisbon Sports Club dates from 1922, making it the second oldest golf club in Portugal. The club has been in its current home since only 1964. Originally nine, then 14 holes, the course here was only extended to 18 holes in 1992.

As you may imagine from this, the course is compact. You have to be straight but the terrain does not gobble balls. Good use is made of the land. For example, the 14th is a 288-yard dogleg with a stream to cross and steep rise to a green tucked



Queluz National Palace

away to the right – a hole which cannot be overpowered despite its modest length.

Four of the six par 3s are from elevated tees. One of the two exceptions was the attractive par-3 11th over a wee pond.

One oddity was the par-5 16th which petered out into shrubland and mystery 150 yards from the hole. The green was way below the fairway and off to the left on a late-turning dogleg, and invisible from all but a small section of the right side of the fairway. For three-quarters of our fourball it was a case of hit and hope and a subsequent lost ball.

The most popular of the four courses we played in terms of number of visitor rounds was Quinta da Marinha. This reflects its accessibility, as the resort has two hotels. The course is a decent one, with three memorable par 3s: one over water, one beside it and one over a chasm.

Oitavos Dunes also has an on-course hotel, where we were billeted. It is fairly minimalist in style; on the stark side could be another description. The rooms are spacious and open plan. As I sat in my bath, enjoying the view over the 18th fairway, I could only hope the golfers were equally enjoying the view of me in my bath.

Oitavos Dunes is another enjoyable course, beautiful and open. It is sometimes described as a links but, although on sandy soil by the coast, it is not a true links. There are some wide fairways to aim at and also some tight holes. My favourite hole was the exhilarating 160-yard 14th, which played up to the green over a chasm which runs diagonally from left to right. ■



Quinta da Marinha Resort

## ESSENTIALS

### Getting there

TAP Portugal flies direct to Lisbon from Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester.

### Where to play

#### Quinta da Marinha

**W:** [quintadamarinha.com](http://quintadamarinha.com)

**Stats:** par 71, 6,420 yards

**GF:** €95, €52 (guests)

#### Oitavos Dunes

**W:** [oitavosdunes.com](http://oitavosdunes.com)

**Stats:** par 71, 6,526 yards

**GF:** €115

#### Lisbon Sports Club

**W:** [lisbonclub.com](http://lisbonclub.com)

**Stats:** par 69, 5,805 yards

**GF:** €61wd, €86we

#### Belas

**W:** [belasclubedecampo.pt](http://belasclubedecampo.pt)

**Stats:** par 72, 6,681 yards

**GF:** €80wd, €95we

### Where to Stay

#### Quinta da Marinha Resort

**W:** [quintadamarinha.com](http://quintadamarinha.com)

#### Oitavos Hotel

**W:** [theoitavos.com](http://theoitavos.com)

