

British Airways: The Collection

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The Collection

THE LUXURY HOLIDAY MAGAZINE

WINTER 2010



THE MALDIVES
Diving heaven in the Indian Ocean

NEW YORK
The ultimate shopping trip

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Golfing luxury in the Caribbean

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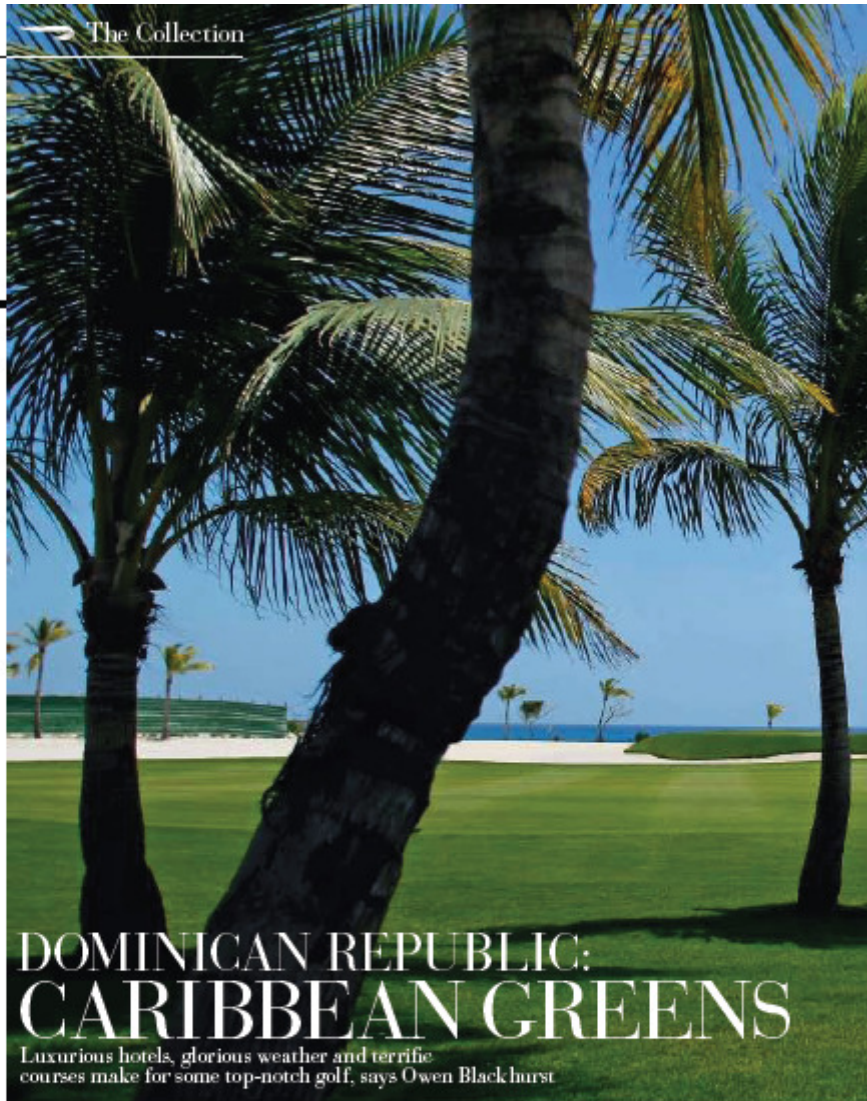


OUR EXPERT

Owen Blackhurst is a former editor-in-chief of *GolfPunk* magazine. He was on the 16th green with the players when Europe won the Ryder Cup in 2006.

'Playing golf in Punta Cana was a study in breathtaking luxury. In short, it's golf for the discerning, well-heeled player.'

The Collection



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: CARIBBEAN GREENS

Luxurious hotels, glorious weather and terrific courses make for some top-notch golf, says Owen Blackhurst

Punta Cana, 8pm. Sinking further into the Jacuzzi clutching a cigar the size of Cornwall and an eye-watering Cuba Libre, I watch as the roaring sun melts to black over the distant mountains and decide that Christopher Columbus should be given a posthumous award for services to golf. It was in 1492 that his vessel, the *Santa Maria*, first landed on the northwest coast of the island he named Hispaniola – two-thirds of which is now the Dominican Republic. Despite a tricky start to life as a tourist destination, plagued by food hygiene problems, the lack of a direct non-charter flight from the UK and a reputation as 'the budget Caribbean', the country, and Punta Cana in particular, is now out of short trousers and ready to dine at the top table of luxury golf travel.

Tom Fazio, Jack Nicklaus and Nick Faldo are a few of the big dogs of international course architecture to have rolled into Punta Cana and left their branded pins on the map. Throw in the glorious weather, the new twice-weekly British Airways flight to Punta Cana airport and the supreme levels of service at Punta Cana's uber high-end resorts, and you can see why Columbus deserves the award.

I don't know about your golfing proclivities, but I'm a sucker for an elevated par-three, and the 17th hole of the Nick Faldo Legacy Course at Roco Ki is among the greatest and most aesthetically pleasing short holes that I've played – and that includes the 17th at Sawgrass and the Postage Stamp at Royal Troon. In fact, the course as a whole is an absolute better.

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BONUS BA MILES

5,000 - 10,000 (see page 5)

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Starting fairly moderately, it shows me its hand at the third, uses the same hand to slap me over 13 holes surrounded by jungle and swamps and then, as I climb to the top of the hill that houses the tees for both 17 and 18, makes a fist and delivers a brutal uppercut to my senses in the form of crashing waves, jagged rock formations and an undulating green that lies 100ft beneath me. With construction of the hotel above the 18th set for completion in 2011, Roco Ki is set for bigger and better things.

As far as the locals are concerned, tourism has been a force for good in what is still an underdeveloped country. Wages are rising and increased opportunities guarantee that more Dominicans can stay in their own country to work. A progressive and increasingly eco-friendly structure is in place, with the

big hotel chains realising that there is no point building a concrete jungle when you are blessed with a real one. As Ruth, my local Amstar guide and surrogate Caribbean mum tells me, 'Trees do not make us money, but they do give us life.'

Nowhere is this more in evidence than at the stunning Puntacana Resort and Club. Miles of coastline house the colonial suites, private residences and ecological reserve that make up this palatial resort. For part of my visit I stay in one of the villas at Tortuga Bay, the jewel in the crown - if I'd had the choice, I'd have moved in for eternity. The Clintons are regular visitors, and renowned architect PB 'son of Pete' Dye liked the place so much that he lives here permanently. He also designed the on-site La Cana course, a study in how to work with what

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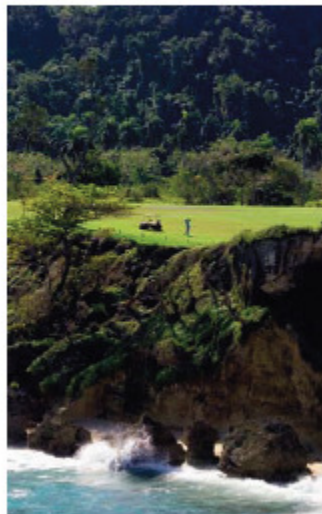
OF THE BEST
PUNTA
CANA
HOLES

Details Hole 17, Nick Faldo Legacy Course at Roco KI
Statistics Par-three, 103 yards.
How to play it Hang a wedge out to the rocks on the right and watch it drift onto the green. A solid two-putt will take care of the rest.

Details Hole 7, La Cana
Statistics Par-four, 326 yards.
How to play it The fun way is to hit over the palm trees and try and drive the green, but to score use the lay-up area for a clear route to the flag.

Details Hole 10, Cocotal
Statistics Par-five, 622 yards.
How to play it Drive, three-wood, seven-iron, good chip and a nerveless putt in a nutshell. It's even 556 yards off the white tees, and the wind is in your face.

Details Hole 5, Punta Blanca Golf Club
Statistics Par-four, 479 yards
How to play it You have to hit a good drive here, followed by some solid approach play. Water lurks at the right and back of the green.



nature has provided to create a challenging layout of immense beauty. The coastal location also gives me the opportunity to dunk my head in the sea and cool off from the 88°F heat.

On my final day, after waking up at The Reserve at Paradiseus Palma Real, a glorious boutique hotel and home of the balcony Jacuzzi that I considered bringing home as excess baggage, I meet Ruth and head off for a rapid 36 holes. First stop is the neighbouring Cocotal course, a track that requires a mix of brawn and brain to avoid the monstrous fairway bunkers and attack the brutal pin positions. Following that, I race to the Punta Blanca GC, where a round with two Dominicans and a guy from Lanzarote – who have moved to Punta Cana for the opportunities offered in their respective fields: civil engineering, public relations and hotel management – goes some way to illustrating why Punta Cana no longer suffers in comparison to the rest of the Caribbean.

They love the area, are proud of the huge strides made in recent years and know that they have all of the required assets to gain a permanent dinner reservation at that prestigious golfing head table. Put it this way, I've played golf in every corner of the globe and luxuriated in some of the finest hotels, but the quality of the courses, from cut of fairway to comfort of locker room, the opulence of the resorts and overriding air of relaxation mean that I'm already badgering my wife to spend Christmas 2010 with me in Punta Cana...

Supplied via National Geographic/Getty Images; Swan/Sonnet/Getimages



INSIDE VIEW



CLAIRE BUCKLAND
British Airways Destination
Manager, Caribbean

There's an unexpected side to the Dominican Republic. It has luxury resorts on a par with other Caribbean Islands but without the crowds, and the beaches are some

of the best I've seen in this part of the world. Add to that the great food and the incredible friendliness of the Dominican people and I'm happy to say this delightful gem of an island is one of my favourites. Don't leave it too long before you go – word will soon get out.

WHERE TO STAY

Park your clubs in these luxury hotels.



TORTUGA BAY

Renowned local designer Oscar de la Renta has raided his Dominican heritage to design the villas at this exclusive retreat. Other features include the service of a personal concierge and access to the Six Senses Spa and La Cava Golf Club.
7 nights from £3,799 per person flying in Club World. Includes free VIP return airport transfer, room upgrade if available, fruit, Champagne and massage.



ZOËTRY AGUA

The Endless Privileges™ at this 53-suite all-inclusive resort include unlimited cocktails and complimentary return airport transfers. There are three gourmet restaurants and a wide variety of activities on offer, including yoga, tennis, wine tasting, cookery classes and Spanish lessons.
7 nights from £2,879 per person flying in Club World. Includes 30 per cent discount. Book by 30 April.



THE RESERVE AT
PARADISUS PALMA REAL

This ultra-luxurious collection of private suites has three exclusive à la carte restaurants and a private beach with full concierge service. Guests can also use the main resort facilities, including the VHI spa and the Cocotal Golf & Country Club. All inclusive.
7 nights from £3,299 per person flying in Club World. Includes 10 per cent discount, free spa treatment and use of golf buggy. Book by 30 April.



IBEROSTAR GRAND HOTEL
BAVARO

There are 274 suites at this Greco-Roman style, adults-only, all-inclusive resort. Fine dining comes from a choice of four à la carte restaurants offering Japanese teppanyaki, classic American, international gourmet fare and Italian cuisine. There are five bars and the 18-hole golf course was designed by PB Dye.
7 nights from £2,339 per person flying in Club World. Includes 2 free rounds of golf.

Book now

For more on hotel offers or to book, visit ba.com/thecollection or call 0844 493 0753