



Family friendly

Looking for a golf getaway with a surprising twist? You don't have to travel far to find it all at the Western Abu Dhabi Golf Resort & Spa

Little arm-twisting is required when a stay and play invitation pops into my inbox.

Fancy some golf and a night or two at the Western Abu Dhabi Golf Resort & Spa? That's the hotel on the doorstep of Abu Dhabi Golf Club, the luxurious sanctuary for golf's best early season field each January and the course they market as the 'The Home of Champions', right? Okay, let me think ab...Yes please!

Why not take a detour to our sister property Saadiyat Beach Golf Club on the way down from

Dubai and play their annual Gourmet Golf day. You already had me at 'stay and play' if I'm honest but that sounds mouthwatering. Count me in.

Just one thing, there seems to be something amiss here with this otherwise tempting itinerary. I can find no mention of golf on The National course where Tommy Fleetwood won the 12th Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship a few weeks back. I'm not so sure I want to emulate Tommy's mullet and I'm absolutely certain I can't play golf like the Englishman. But I'd love



Top left: The 25th hole on Abu Dhabi GC's nine holer can play anywhere from 165 to 88 yards. **Above:** The par 3 12th hole on the Peter Harradine-designed National is just as picturesque

the chance to try on the Peter Harradine-designed course. Any chance?

A whiz-boing of emails confirmed my disappointment. I'm down to play Abu Dhabi GC's nine-holer, secretly referred to as the Garden Course but officially

known as 'Holes 19-27'.

I feel so close and yet so far from the European Tour course when I eventually arrive at the Westin to meet the already checked-in family after being well and truly fed and watered during a grand afternoon at Saadiyat Beach GC. Eighteen holes on a European Tour venue or half as many on a course with no real name. Ah well, beggars can't be choosers I suppose.

Fast-forward to the following



Clockwise from above: There are two pools at the Western Abu Dhabi Golf Resort & Spa, this one kid friendly; Fairways offers international dining; Dine before or after golf on the floodlight '19-27' course which is a hidden gem beyond the driving range; There are plenty of classy after hours options at the luxury hotel



evening after a relaxing day by the pool and its time to get this half round of golf out of the way. Out of the way...how wrong I was. Holes 19-27 (seriously?) is a not so little gem. From the black tee tips it measures 3341 yards and is home to some truly memorable holes – the picturesque, slightly downhill par 3 21st hole (the 3rd to the rest of us), the par 4 23rd hole which doglegs left around a lake and the island-style green on the tiny par 3 25th the best

among them. I could easily have looped the course over and over but a cold wee caddy and a dinner date on The Terrace back at Abu Dhabi Golf Club (tasty fare and even better service) mean we'll definitely come back another time. For a golf addict, nothing can beat 18-holes on a course that regularly hosts the European Tour's best. But our stay at the Westin was a timely reminder

that precious family time needn't be golf free time. A fractured left pinky finger precluded the little one from playing but with forward tees offering nine holes from just 2530 yards, this is an ideal course for families with golf rookies or for nine more after your Fleetwood impersonation act. Mullet optional. We'll definitely hit the range next time too – Mum and Dad were super impressed with the well-

organised Future Falcons junior coaching we spied from our hotel balcony while sipping coffee the following morning, and junior more than a little intrigued. With six dining outlets including 'Fairways', the resort's all-day restaurant with live international food stations, and golf for all levels, the Western Abu Dhabi Golf Resort & Spa is proof you don't have to travel far for a great stay and play. – KENT GRAY