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COMPORTA, FINALLY

The long-awaited Comporta Dunes course opens this year in Portugal's hippest coastal getaway. Ann Abel shortlists the best spots to stay and eat when you play it



Comporta's 18-hole links-style course

Scottish golf course architect David McLay-Kidd has been working on Comporta Dunes since 2007. This protracted timescale isn't typical – his most famous track, Bandon Dunes in Oregon, took just five years from first murmurings to opening – but slow living

From left: the beach at Comporta Café; Alentejano pork-shoulder croquettes at Cavalariça; inside a locally inspired suite at AlmaLusa



McLay-Kidd's course is the latest step towards the next evolution of the sleepy village that has gone from Portugal's best-kept secret to one of its hottest destinations

is part of Portuguese life. McLay-Kidd's links-style layout, which will open later this year, is now the latest step towards the next evolution of the sleepy village that has gone from Portugal's best-kept secret to one of its hottest destinations.

On the golf side of things, the excitement is palpable: Rodrigo Ulrich, director of golf at Terras da Comporta, says, "It feels great that the course will finally be opening this year, and it is a real privilege for me to work on such an amazing project. The unique stretch of unspoiled coastline and the surrounding area give us an incredible opportunity to create a golf destination which, I believe, will attract attention on an international scale."

He's certainly right about that, especially when the second layout, Torre, is completed towards the end of next year. It's a first-of-its-kind

collaboration between PGA Tour veterans José María Olazábal and Sergio García. But the Dunes course is itself stunning: "It takes my breath away every time I come to work in the morning," says Ulrich. "I particularly like the way [McLay-Kidd] respects the natural slopes and has created a layout that, while not easy, is challenging but forgiving at the same time, which is very difficult to do. It's a pure links course."

Ulrich gushes with admiration for the closing trio of holes but also notes, "There isn't a bad hole on the course." A similar kind of sentiment can be had, at the moment, about the experience of visiting Comporta itself – the options are relatively broad and uniformly enjoyable.

The hotel that helped put Comporta on the international travel map and remains the standard bearer, Sublime Comporta (sublimecomporta.pt), is a rustic-chic retreat on 17 hectares with cork oaks and umbrella pines. Along with 23 rooms, it has 22 villas, ranging from two to five bedrooms, with fireplaces, private pools and large outdoor areas. In recent years, it's acquired some low-key competition in the form of the wellness boutique resort Quinta da Comporta (quintadacomporta.com), whose pool villas,

townhouses and standard suites go heavy on traditional decor and natural materials, and the even more pared-down Spatia Comporta (spatiacomporta.com), where the 20 rooms emphasise the luxury of space.

Another contender is AlmaLusa Comporta (almalusahotels.com), a spinoff of the popular Lisbon hotel of the same name (which means “Portuguese soul”) and the first luxury hotel in the heart of the village of Comporta, an easy walk from the best restaurants and boutiques. And over in Melides, less than 30 kilometres from Comporta village, Christian Louboutin’s flamboyant new Vermelho (vermelhohotel.com) is the talk of the town in Lisbon, thanks to its gorgeous design and celebrity pedigree.

When it comes to dining, an ambitious project from two young chefs in a converted horse stable in the centre of the village, Cavalaria (cavalarica.com), remains one of the most critically acclaimed casual restaurants in Portugal, with a winning menu of wildly diverse small plates including grilled brioche with chicken liver pâté and orange chutney, and kale and shiso tempura with white bean hummus. For something equally upscale but more traditional, it’s hard to beat

the seaside Sal (restaurantesal.pt) for perfectly grilled fish and typical Portuguese starters like octopus salad and clams with garlic and coriander.

Among the restaurants that double as beach clubs, the best are Comporta Café (comportacafe.com.pt), an institution for more than 20 years, and the newish Sublime Comporta Beach Club (sublimecomportabeachclub.com), which has the same understatedly cool DNA as the hotel of the same name. Or for great food without the scene, it’s hard to do better than the roadside Dona Bia (@[dona_bia_comporta](https://www.instagram.com/dona_bia_comporta)), where the specialty is dishes centred on rice, a crop that’s plentiful in the region.

More developments are underway – so get in your 18 as soon as the course opens while the coast is still relatively clear.

The bucolic terrace of a two-bedroom Cabana Villa at Sublime Comporta

