



**GOLF IN THE VAR  
NO. 1.**

**GOLF DANS LE CIEL at  
CHATEAU DE  
TAULANE**

**By 'Bogeyman'**

Chateau de Taulane is roughly midway between Cannes and Digne, just off the N85 Route Napoleon, and only squeaks into the Var by a matter of a kilometre or so. But keen Var golfers – and even occasional ones – will find the logical approach route – a long haul up the Gorges du Chateaudouble from Draguignan – amply repaid by one of the better golfing experiences in the South of France.

The course is centred on an 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Chateau tastefully converted into a hotel and golf complex. The course dates from 1992 and was designed by Gary Player. It's a scenic delight – the 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> holes sweep down symmetrically out of the pines to a vast, kidney-shaped double green guarded by a lake, with the rest of the course rolling through woods in a natural bowl in the hills. You can sit on the terrace outside the Chateau sipping a post-round drink, and watch the approach shots rifling in to the pin, or disappearing into the water as the case may be.

From a golfing standpoint, the course is an excellent challenge for the single-figure handicapper, whilst not intimidating the less able. The fairways are fairly wide, and if your ball does divert into the pines which line many of the holes, you will normally find it on reasonably open ground, with a chip back to the short stuff. There are few carries from the tees, and it's a course you can see your way round even the first time you play it. There

are virtually no blind shots and the hazards are clearly visible; most of the water (on half-a-dozen holes) can be circumnavigated with a careful choice of line.

Several holes, notably the 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, invite a full-blooded drive from a raised tee to a generous landing zone. This last hole is a downhill 540-yard par-5 where a good tee-shot invites you to attack a green half-protected by water – a very fair risk/reward proposition typical of the course. Masochists will also enjoy the 6<sup>th</sup>. This is a shortish downhill par 4 where you can cheer as your approach finds the front of the two-tier green, and groan 20 seconds later as it rolls sedately off the back. As on many holes, choosing the right side of the fairway, and picking your spot on the green, is key to a good-looking card.

The greens (when we last played there on a wet October day) were a credit to a green keeper working at 1000 metres up – fast and true with plenty of borrow. Some of those on the edges of the course, where you are heading up into the hills, are on slopes so severe that you may not have a feasible putt if your approach ends up far above the hole. All in all, they are good enough to make one deeply regret the French golfer's apparent blind spot about pitch-mark repair.

The tees are sensibly graded to give everyone a good game: 6,850 yards off the back, 6,350 off the yellows and just 5,350 for the ladies, so don't be surprised to find your wife consistently outdrives you! Par is 72 with Standard Scratch 74.1 off the whites and 71.8 off the yellows. 'Slope' is 134/131, if you're into that sort of thing. It's certainly a walkable course, with few severe hikes from green to tee, though a buggy (even at a hefty 38 Euros) may add to your enjoyment. It doesn't appear too crowded in Spring and Autumn, though it may well fill up in the hot, high summer when the altitude will be an attraction for many.

What about costs? The 18-hole green fee (you won't want to do just 9 after a trek into the hills) runs from 52 Euros in April and October up to 75 in July/August. (They quote a green fee for November but the course is closing at end-October this year at least.) Buggy and club hire are at the top end of the South of France range. There's an adequate spike bar where you can get a sandwich or croque monsieur

before or after playing – though check when it closes if your preference is the latter. The driving range is fine and not too far from the first tee.

The Pro Shop is cheerfully manned by a receptionist and – as so often in France – is stronger on clothing than equipment. One of our party was sorely tempted by lemon-yellow golf shoes at 35% off, until noting that the original price was 335 Euros.

If you choose to stay and make an occasion of it, demi-pension in a 'standard' – quite luxurious – double room with two 18-hole green fees is quoted as 359 Euros low-season and 461 in high summer. However they offer a good off-season deal of 300 Euros for two, including dinner, room, breakfast and 18 holes, with a reduced green fee if you play twice. This was on in October and should be available in April 2005. Be warned that drinks and wine don't come cheap (glass of champagne 14 Euros to celebrate your hole in one!), and our party weren't deeply impressed by the (55-Euro) dinner menu. However the overall welcome and standard of service were all we could ask.

**Bogeyman's at-a-glance ratings out of ten:**

Course design	8
Course condition.	9
Pro shop/amenities...	.6
Hotel - bedrooms	.8
Restaurant	.6

**Overall assessment 7.4/10**

**GREEN FEES 18 holes**

**Low (Apr/Oct) Mid(May/Jun/ & High (Jul/Aug) Sept/Oct)**

Weekday	52	55	75
Weekend	52	65	75
<b>Carnet</b>	5+1 375E,	10+3	750E

**Buggy 38.**

Information plus a good plan of the course, which includes a heli-pad, can be found on [www.chateau-taulane.com](http://www.chateau-taulane.com) concerning hotel rates etc. The complex also features covered swimming pool, and fitness and beauty centre.

\*Competition play continues until December 7<sup>th</sup>.

\*Bogeyman plans to visit and report on most of the courses in the Var in due course. Please feel free to write or email him via VVV with your own golfing views and experiences.

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