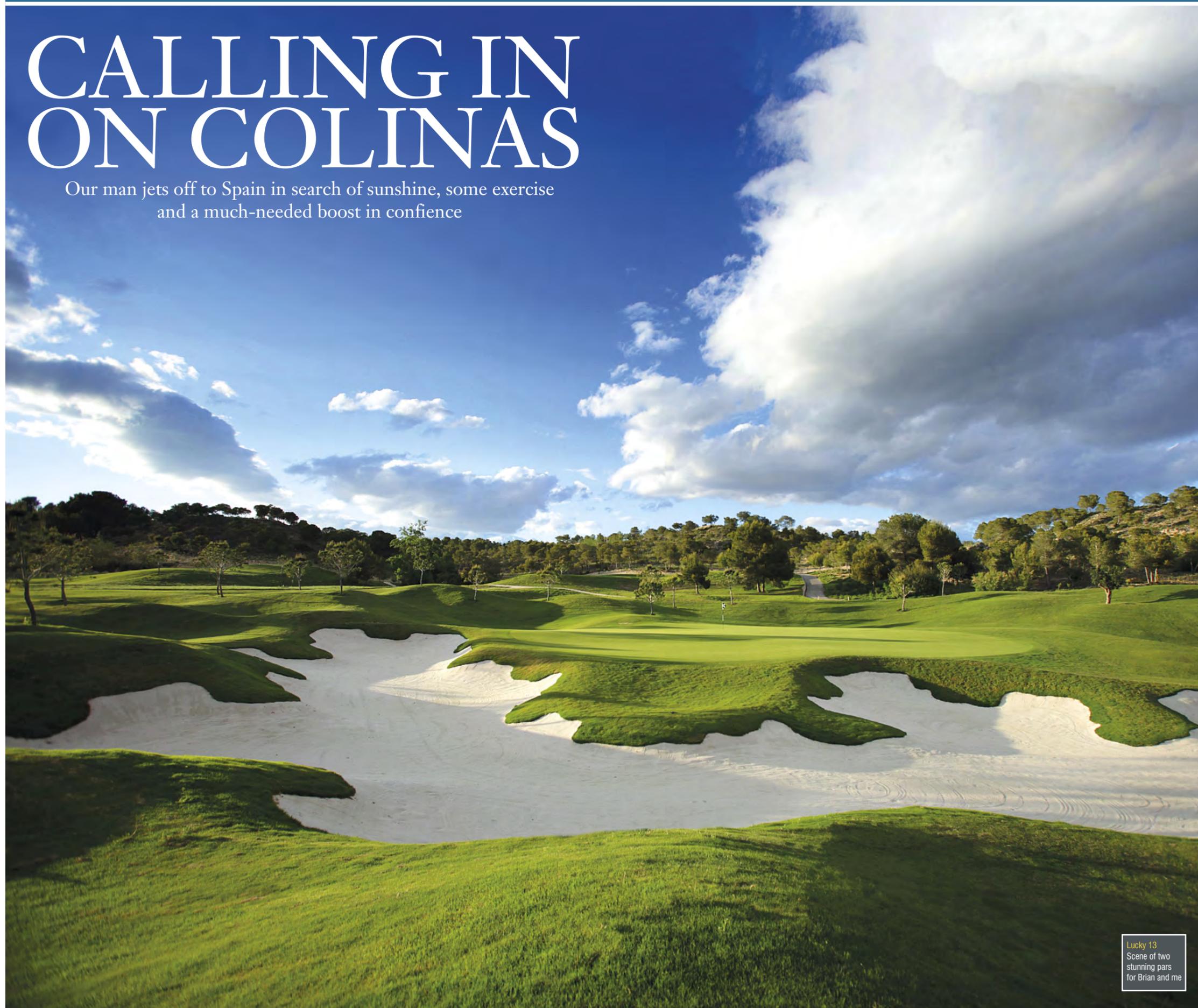


# CALLING IN ON COLINAS

Our man jets off to Spain in search of sunshine, some exercise and a much-needed boost in confidence



Clive is our undercover roving reporter, who tells it like it is. NCG's bon viveur plays off 13, always finds the best places to go and is an expert in enjoying himself, on and off the course

"In order to get the very most from my game I need to unwind away from the course and the three-bedroom apartments deserve special mention. "Just a couple of minutes from the 18th green was our quite brilliant villa with a garden big enough to hit a variety of lob wedges. I didn't. "Had time been on our side there is also entry to the exclusive Beach Club on the seafront at La Glea as well as the International School of Falconry. Many of my golfing walks are often spoiled by my random efforts though that is unlikely to be the case with a guided tour of the Mediterranean woodland with a Harris hawk for company. "All of which seems a very long way from the winter gloom."

Clive's  
Cigarometer  
Las Colinas scores...



I WAS reading recently in the local rag that, according to a study by the University of Bristol, 88 per cent of us fail in our new year resolutions. The majority have already given up by the middle of January.

I'm sorry to admit that I failed/fell off the wagon by the 3rd of the month.

It is around this time of year that I begin to get a little less taken with my appearance. The belt has already had to be extended by one notch and we're now not too far away from a second.

This is down to a multitude of reasons with the main one that I eat too much while my current gym membership is currently setting me back £30 a pop for a read of the Sunday papers. I was also looking a bit pasty and, as much as I'd like to book myself into a session at the local Tantastic, it just doesn't feel right.

As such I booked myself a few days on the Costa Blanca and make my way to, to give it its right and proper name, Las Colinas Golf & Country Club. Along with my foursomes partner Brian. Unlike many of the members at Royal Cotswold I have never settled on a shorter version of his name so I call him by his full and proper one, Brian. In turn he refers to me as Clive. It works, unlike our foursomes play.

Four hours later and we are in the hire car and on our way from Alicante to the resort, Brian at the controls, me with the map.

After 45 minutes of clear and concise directions we arrive and, before too long are discussing the merits of the Ensalada Cesar and Ensalada Colinas.

Before too long Brian launches into a Trio De Mini Hamburguesas while I, after catching sight of a nearby table's order, pathetically commence my assault on stage one of four on the Club UNiK. I'd like to say this translates as a light bite but I'd be lying. Lunch is punctuated, as ever, by sparkling conversation, a drop of Rioja and small periods of silence as we watch the 18th being tackled. Water on a golf course features very highly on my warning radar and there appears to be a vast expanse of it here.

At Royal Cotswold we have a small ditch on the 8th.

Lucky 13  
Scene of two  
stunning pars  
for Brian and me



Brian is now off 17 and is only going in one direction which is good news for the winter knockout. He's also been struggling with his knees but, with no room for sentiment, four shots are agreed. Brian knows the rules and I've come here to feel a bit better about myself.

And I am all ready; it is early January, there is frost on the ground at home and I have the slimmest of V necks on.

We fail miserably to come to terms with a lightning putting green. Being a numbers man I have already quizzed the head greenkeeper as to the pace of them and he proudly announces that they are running at 'once'.

Which to you and me is 11.

Another number I can't get out of my head is 16, the number of shots that a Dutch chap, Tim Sluiter, was under par at the Second Qualifying Stage of European Tour Q School. I know

it serves no purpose but I like to measure myself against the best and is a big part of the reason that I played to single figures for a number of years.

I enjoy the first two holes immensely, they let us know we are in for a treat, though more for the fact that Brian can't reach them and I go two up.

I reprimand Brian for getting the camera out on the elevated 3rd tee, it might well be 'stunning' but we are in the middle of a match. Minutes later I have to have a word with myself too after taking on the carry and coming up wet.

I can't help but wonder that a young Clive would have made it.

Anyway, we're rather enjoying ourselves and there is a little bit of everything to be savoured on the front nine. Not overly long par 4s, a very cute short hole in the pines and more spectacular tee shots come the 8th, if only in appearance.



## QUICK GUIDE

- **Time difference:** GMT +1
- **Climate:** Over 300 days of sunshine, its wettest month having four days of rainfall
- **Currency:** Euro
- **Transfers:** It's under an hour from Alicante airport
- **Nearby attractions** There are over 20 other courses less than half an hour away
- **Green fees:** Summer €90; winter €64

The design of the course is an interesting one given that it runs in a circular motion around property and shrubland. The beauty is that the property plays no part on the eyeline or the senses of the golfer and only at the 9th tee would you only realise that

it exists. We are away from it all, the temperature is in the 20s, Brian's knees are holding up and we are all square.

I enjoy little more than a course that builds and we, and Brian's game, are hitting the heights. The closing five holes really are something else and offer variety aplenty with pars of 3, 5, 4, 5 and 3. Of these only the 17th has no water but, in many ways, this is the most dramatic and would grace any course in any part of the world. It is here that I make the most satisfying par of the day and it is here that I shake hands, in defeat, thanks to Brian's four.

We repeat this routine for three days, twice bringing the curtain down on the early evening with some clay-court tennis, and three times eating too much (and getting a little over-refreshed) at night.

Other than being another statistic for the new-year drop-outs why wouldn't you.