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Golfing in Sicily

by **Olivia Greenway**

Until Donnafugata seduced me, I had never been to Sicily before. I ought to explain that Donnafugata is not the name of my Italian lover, but the name of a resort – NH Hotel Donnafugata Golf Resort and Spa - and that it is here I fell a little bit in love with – and learned to play – golf.



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Olivia Greenway

I must admit I was a little sceptical about golf. It's a sport I associate with portly middle-aged businessmen, sealing a deal on the fifteenth hole, not something a woman would be interested in, although truth be told, she is portly and middle-aged herself.



It helped that I was being taught at a superb new training centre - the Golf Academy by an excellent professional and bilingual golf tutor – Gary Hughes; and of course, that it was in Sicily, the balmy day-long spring sunshine being pleasantly warm. The academy has two professional 18-hole golf courses attached – the South Links and the North Parkland.

“ *Two hours in, I was hooked* ”

Always game for almost anything, I threw myself into it. Two hours in, I was hooked.

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For our first lesson, the twelve of us had to throw a golf ball overhand as far as we could. Of course, our balls didn't go far. This demonstrated to us the importance of using a club. Gary then explained the basic rules of golf and we practised learning to rotate the body. We then learnt how to grip the club, how to swing the body like a pendulum and finally, we were allowed to hit the ball. Of course, I made the classic beginner's mistake of missing completely.

"The ball is very small and the earth is very large. Aim to hit the ground slightly before you hit the ball."

With Gary's advice on board, I began to hit a few balls successfully.

For our second lesson, we were on the training putting green. To stop us making the mistake of moving our wrists instead of the body, we had to put a golf ball in-between our right wrist and the top of the club. Gary suggested we always aim a bit further than the hole as if you hit short, your ball will not go in, but if you hit slightly too far, you might be lucky.

“

It is very satisfying whacking a small ball quite a long way!

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For our third lesson, we practised our swing again and then went to attempt the sand bunker. The secret of this shot is not to hit the ball, but to strike the sand a few inches away from it so the sand blasts it onto the green. We all had a go and suddenly the pristine green looked like a sand play pit for children.

Finally, we had a go at driving. It is very satisfying whacking a small ball quite a long way. For a bit of fun, we were split into teams – three beginners and an experienced player in each - and played four holes, taking it in turns to drive the two electric golf buggies.

Considering none of us had played before, we were surprised at how many of our shots were reasonably accurate, but more to the point, how much we all enjoyed ourselves.



As an added bonus, instead of (or as well as) the nineteenth hole, there's the spa in which to indulge or one can have a dip in the pool. The spa has an indoor relaxing area, heated pool and Jacuzzi; outside is a larger pool with sunbeds overlooking the golf course.

The complex was built on the grounds of an old manor and consists of several low rise buildings, some modern, some old, including an ancient chapel, sympathetically restored, using trademark colours of terracotta, yellow and cream. As one would expect from a five star resort, the food from the three restaurants is of a high standard. All the rooms have balcony or terrace; the suites have a large sunning area and terrace with uninterrupted views over the golf course.



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As one would expect from a five star resort, the food from the three restaurants is of a high standard

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You are not likely to suffer from cabin fever here, but if you wish to visit the coast, the hotel offers a free shuttle service to its own private beach, with café and sun deck. The resort is open all year, but I would recommend avoiding the very hot summer months; spring and autumn are perfect.



BA flies directly to Catania from Gatwick. Donnafugata is just over an hour's drive away. Golf lessons are arranged to suit, priced from €95 per session. They also have a special taster three-day golf-learning package. It comprises a three night stay in a classic room with breakfast and three course evening meal, two

golf lessons with the resident professional tutor and two sessions in the spa with hydro massage and fitness training in the gym, ideal for before or after your golf. This package costs €660 per person for two sharing a room or €930 for a single. You must quote GOLF BEGINNERS SICILY when you book. The offer is available all year. It's a good way of seeing if you get the golf bug too.

For more information visit the [Donnafugata Golf Resort website](#)

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