

# Palmares and the Python

by **Illona  
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I play golf in Scotland—and anywhere I visit in the world!—but every holiday is booked with caution. You see, I have the most hellish and unbearable phobia of snakes. It's blighted my life since I was 8 years old, when I lived in Singapore. See-

ing a whopping great snake slither across our garden was the start of it.

I know they are out there—I just don't want to see them! Here are a few examples of what tends to happen when I do ...

- **Barbados:** One was wrapped around the neck of a nightclub entertainer, and I had to be sedated with Valium.
- **Penina, Portugal:** After I saw one slither into a ditch, I had screaming nightmares for three nights.

One of my favourite golf courses—and I want to point out that there are more than one—had been Palmares. To

give its full title, it's the Onyria Palmares Golf Resort, perched high on a hill overlooking the beach in Lagos, Portugal. It's rated seventh of the top courses in Portugal.

I've watched Palmares change over the years; at first it was a scrappy, 18-hole course with two halves. The top half was essentially parkland, while the bottom claimed to be links type. They were certainly two very different halves to play, but to us it was always 'holiday golf' with less pressure from the heavily booked, more popular course in Villamoura.





In fact, when we first visited way back, the 'clubhouse' was a wooden hut outside the pro shop, and served the best lunch ever. In 2010 Robert Trent Jones Jr. upgraded the course into three separate nine-hole courses and while we holidayed there, we watched the massive building work that went on all day.

We couldn't wait to play the new 27-hole course and booked as soon as we could. What an experience that was! Each hole was so different, and every corner turned unveiled either brilliant views across the sparkling ocean or a hole that looked almost impossible to play. We loved it, and have visited every year since.

In 2015 we decided to take our whole family, baby grandson included, and

booked a whole month in a beautiful villa in Praia de Luz. After a bit of negotiation, we joined Palmeres for the month.

Every day my golf got better. Beating my husband's score was a regular occurrence, and soon I was playing to a handicap of 8 when my normal was 14! After a fabulous month, we sadly played our last game there.

At one particular hole, I usually always left the buggy and walked forward to the ladies tee. I don't know why, but this time I dropped hubby off and drove to it instead.

That night at dinner and after a lovely bottle of red and a few gins, Jim leaned forward with a big smirk on his face and said, 'Did you see it then?'

I knew just knew what he meant. He said I had driven over a small green snake (not on top of it) at that particular hole.

And, more importantly, he knew straight away that he'd said the wrong thing. He loves the course, and our time there holds so many fantastic memories. But that's it! No more Palmares—in fact, maybe no more Portugal at all!

So the moral of the story for my husband is: Don't drink too much on that last evening on holiday, and keep your mouth shut.

However, if you haven't played it and you're not afraid of possibly seeing a snake, please play this magnificent course and send me the pictures, because I know I'll miss it! ■



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