



**LEFT:** The Legend course by Nicklaus Design is a predictably bold creation that offers lots of excitement and a modern challenge. **ABOVE:** Both courses benefit from the naturally rolling landscape and mature pines. **BELOW LEFT:** The Heritage offers a more traditional experience. **BELOW RIGHT:** The accommodation overlooks the lake that features around the turn on the Heritage.



## SOMETHING DIFFERENT

# Penati Resort, Slovakia

Two Top 100 courses have catapulted this new country on the golf map, says Chris Bertram.

**W**hile it is true you can travel to almost any country in the world for a golf holiday these days, it is also equally as veracious that you can't travel anywhere for a really good golf break. If you want to play a course better than the average course in Britain (and while establishing what the 'average' course in Britain looks like is wildly subjective, we can all imagine the kind of perfectly pleasant venue I am imagining), your options are more limited.

Even some of the foreign fields well

trodden by British golfers down the years do not manage this feat, the better weather making up for average venues.

So it is hardly fair to expect all of golf's 'new' destinations to achieve this standard. Some do though, notably in Belek and also to some extent in Bulgaria. To that duo we can categorically add the country of Slovakia, by virtue of the Penati Resort.

For a country with no golf pedigree to suddenly boast of a resort of this calibre is impressive verging on remarkable.

Penati only opened a couple of years ago but has two championship courses settled into awesome landscapes, a swish clubhouse and neat accommodation.

Witness what Penati have achieved in the past few years, as we have, and you wonder how others get it so badly wrong. The resort has got it right by making good decisions, starting by leaning on outside expertise in creating the courses.

Jack Nicklaus' design team routed the first, The Legend, then Englishman Jonathan Davison the second, The

Heritage. The former was included in the 'Next 100' of our 2015 Continental European Top 100 while the latter made it into the prestigious main list – and you won't be surprised to learn it was our maiden Slovakian entry.

Taken together they offer a calibre of golf that only the leading areas of Europe can offer; to enjoy two courses of this level side by side you would need to be in the Quinta do Lago estate, the Sotogrande area or in northern Paris.

While they lie within the same outstanding terrain, illustrated by the enticing images on these pages, the courses offer a notably different experience. The Legend is predictably muscular (it has a par 6, after all), while The Heritage – by Davison, who hails from Whitburn in north-east England – is a more subtle examination inspired by 'Golden Age' architectural philosophy.

If you are surprised by this quality of golf in Slovakia you might also be

surprised to learn it is a lot closer than you might think; a two hour 15 minute flight from Stansted takes you to Bratislava and from there it is a swift 60-minute drive to the resort. Vienna is a similar distance away should your flight options be better to the Austrian capital.

The resort is offering play-and-stay packages of scarcely believable value (see deal below right) to start luring golfers to experience their resort and it feels like they should be snapped up quickly because once word of mouth confirms how good it is here, it would be easy to imagine these prices rising considerably.

The accommodation is in the form of neat bungalows right next to the course and the picturesque lake. You will also find yourself enjoying immensely the robust clubhouse menu and beer.

The town of Senica is 10 minutes' drive away and has a casino and bars if you want to leave the resort – and clearly Bratislava and Vienna are very worthy

day trips out – but this to us feels like a destination for a long weekend where you do nothing but enjoy 36 holes of Top 100 golf, strong beer and enormous steak sandwiches. To us, this comfortably means Penati deserves to be categorised as 'a really good golf break'. **GW**

## KEY INFORMATION

**GETTING THERE:** Fly to Bratislava (Ryanair from Stansted) or Vienna then it's an hour transfer.

**WHEN TO GO:** When we visited in August it was very hot, but it is cold October to mid April. April is also dry so late April looks a nice option.

**THE DEAL:** A group of four can lease a cottage for one night and play on the Heritage and the Legend for an astonishing €272 (£200) or €342 at the weekend. That's per cottage!

**CONTACT:** [penatigolfresort.sk/en/](http://penatigolfresort.sk/en/)