



Whale
Beach



SYDNEY

Home in one

YOU DON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO TRAVEL FAR TO EXPERIENCE A PREMIER GOLF COURSE IN STYLE AS *Matt Cleary* DISCOVERED IN HIS HOME TOWN OF SYDNEY ON A LUXURY GOLF, PLAY AND STAY TRIP.

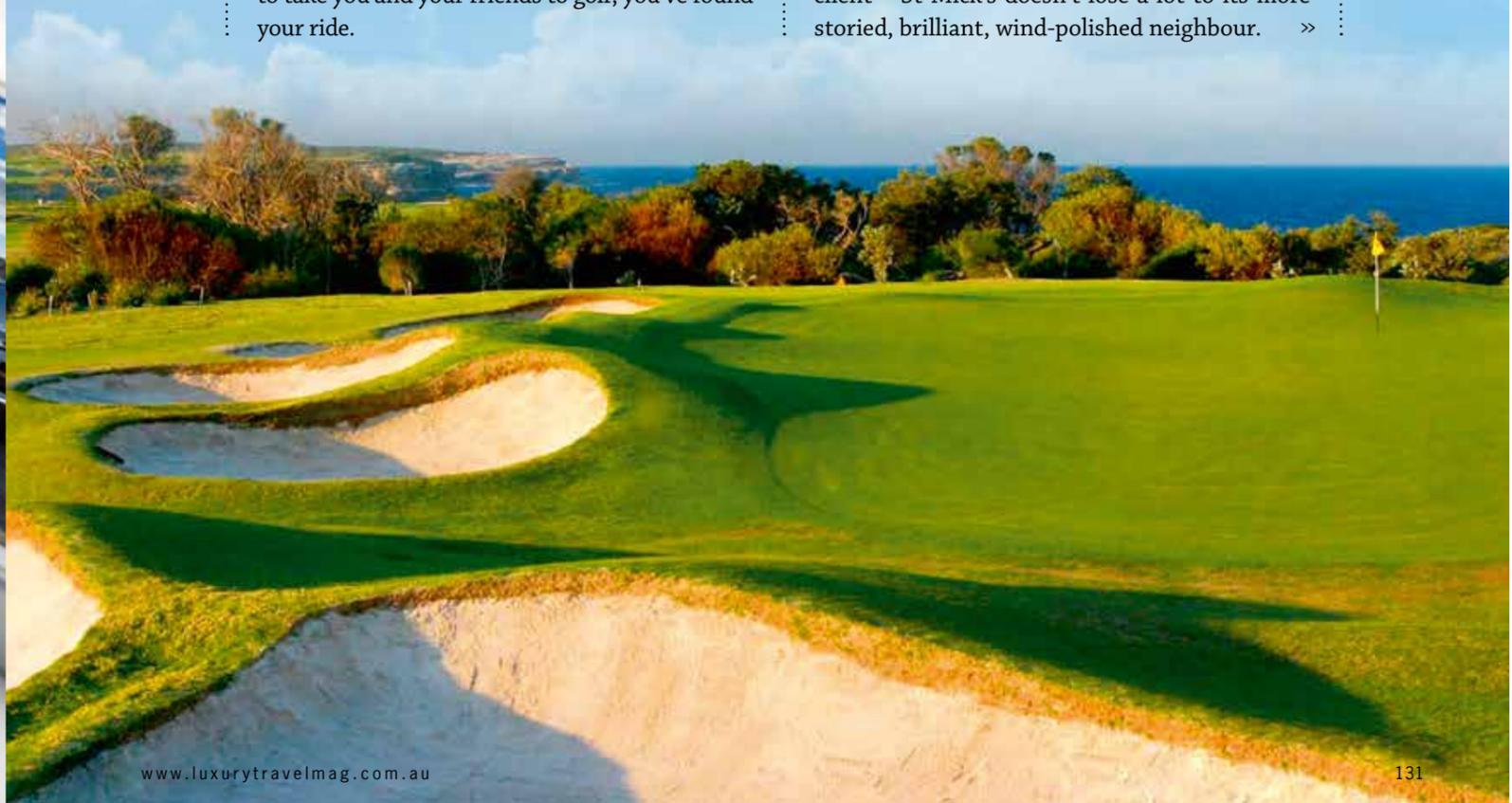
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HE PORSCHE CAYENNE has a top speed of 260 kilometres per hour, can leap from a standing start to 100km/h in 5.4 seconds and packs with-

in its six-cylinder engine 420 horsepower. It has leather seats and more safety features than the Space Shuttle. It's a wild beast in a velvet glove. And if you're after a luxury super-cruiser with the heart of a mountain lion to take you and your friends to golf, you've found your ride.

We're sluicing south on Southern Cross Drive, the arterial motorway out of Sydney's CBD, guests of LuxGolf Australia, the tour company that offers time-poor business types and golf hounds access to the best - and most exclusive - golf courses in Sydney and beyond.

Twenty-five minutes from town we cruise into St.Michael's, not far from La Perouse, the peninsula on the northern headland of Botany Bay. Adjacent New South Wales Golf Club - one of the top three in Australia and another LuxGolf client - St Mick's doesn't lose a lot to its more storied, brilliant, wind-polished neighbour. >>





We're dropped by the first tee and loaded up with the latest Callaway Legacy clubs. The gift bag has all the paraphernalia a golfer needs - tees, ball markers, pitch-mark repairer, glove and towel. There's a sleeve of three Callaway Tour iX golf balls. Let's hope that's enough.

The relatively new couch fairways of St Michael's feed up to hard, fast and true bent-grass greens. It's gnarly and forbidding on the fringes but highly rewarding for those who can thread their way around - and know where to miss.

While many holes are lined by gorse and prickly bush, others have an open, "links" feel. The back-to-back par-5s on six and seven have been beefed up with a giant complex of fairway bunkers that separate the holes. Holes seven and eight are separated by sandy waste instead of scrub. It's a group one, top-quality golf course - and highly enjoyable.

After a couple of cold Asahi Lagers in the clubhouse overlooking the course and Tasman Sea, the Porsche whisks us off to the Sydney Intercontinental Hotel - the venerable, five-star, sandstone hotel over-



INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL



ESTER



PALMER AND CO.

watching sail boats under spinnaker scorch down the coast. A dense wall of black cloud rolls in from the north and we're front row for an electrical storm. Bolts of lightning strike the water 300 metres out to sea while surfers and jet-boaters crazily brave the elements.

We slurp on Sydney rock oysters and delve into a 500 gram rib-eye steak that I could eat and eat. There is cabernet sauvignon from Marga-

ant steel colanders, mixing delicious cocktails and the crowd bubbling with chatty people. Then we're at Ester, in inner-city Chippendale, for pig tails, wood-fired oven chicken, snapper, prawns and duck. Plates are designed to share. Convivial, simple, tasty and top class and the best restaurant in New South Wales according to *The Good Food Guide*.

Next day it's brunch at Bondi Icebergs watching swimmers lap the

Rushcutters Bay and into the harbour proper and it's clear our pilot Nick can easily sail the great long vessel on his own. Yet we give him a hand, steering and running rigging up masts and feeling like an extra in Master And Commander (well, I do).

And so we make our way past the mansions that sit along Sydney Harbour's shore and Bradley's Head and across the heads where the swell picks up and we roll over bulbous fat waves. Nearly at Manly, Nick orders us to tack or go about, or something, and we cruise home sitting back, drinking wine and eating crusty bread with spicy pancetta. It's all sparkling waters, fresh wind, bluebird sky, salty sea-spume, wind in your hair and that certain indefinable, elemental something that's so good about being on the water.

It's no thundering Porsche Cayenne. But the boat could probably drop you near a golf course. Reckon LuxGolf could arrange it.

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looking the Royal Botanic Gardens and eastern stretches of Sydney Harbour.

We dine at nearby Cafe Nice, a French restaurant where tanned men in white open-necked shirts and pastel pants drink sauvignon blanc. Our waiter cracks wise as he brings us snapper and potato gratin and sweet little carrots. Garlic? Oh, yes. There is garlic.

Next day we're at Jonah's high on the escarpment over Whale Beach on Sydney's northern beaches,

ret River. The staff is attentive, unobtrusive and highly-knowledgable. Its wine list is magnificent: 1,500 labels with wines from Chile, California and Canberra. And if you're curious about a wine whose grapes have lived on the shady side of a hill and been lovingly caressed by winds off the Mediterranean, sommelier Luke Collard is your man.

Later we drink at Palmer and Co., an underground bar in the Sydney CBD like a Prohibition Era speak easy, with waiters shaking gi-

famous pool and surfers do their best on massive waves. Brunch is delicious food-art (ocean trout, fritata, prosciutto) and our bottomless glass is topped up all morning with prosecco. Is there a better way to ease into a Sunday? There is not.

Just to really top off one of the great Sydney weekenders and give you an idea of what luxury golf tourists might get up to when they're not playing on Sydney's best courses, we're onto a sail boat on Sydney Harbour. We putt out from

HOW TO PLAY
LuxGolf Australia
Luxgolfaustralia.com

WHERE TO STAY
Intercontinental Sydney
Prices start from A\$378 for a King standard city side room.
interconsydney.com.au

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK
Jonah's
(Jonah's also has 11 luxury accommodation rooms)
Jonahs.com.au

Ester
Ester-restaurant.com.au

Palmer & Co
Merivale.com.au/palmerandco

Bondi Icebergs
Icebergs.com.au