

2013

The ultimate ticket

By Richard Asher

SO, YOU'VE GOT AN OPEN CHEQUE BOOK AND A YEAR'S SABBATICAL FROM THE DAY JOB. HERE'S HOW WE SUGGEST YOU WHILE AWAY 2013.

It never hurts to dream. Well, that's not quite true. Nightmares can scare you witless. Some people wake up from them with bruises. A few nights ago, I had one that took me deeper and deeper into Romania, home of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and it scared me witless. I'm just glad I awoke before the sun went down, as it were.

Daytime reveries are much safer. You're awake, but your thoughts run away with you. You imagine what you'd do if you won a lottery. You picture yourself over an eight-footer for victory at The Masters. And hey, why not venture even deeper into fantasy and consider yourself the proud owner of

a permanent badge to enter the sacred grounds of Augusta National?

Nothing is impossible, of course. Phone up any of Australia's luxury golf tour companies and you could be unfurling your little chair greenside at the 18th come Masters Sunday. More fanciful is the idea of following the professional golf circus all year long, clubs in tow, work a distant memory.

But let's just say you could do it: A whole year travelling the world, watching every must-watch golf tournament there is. And when not watching the pros, taking in some of planet Earth's greatest courses and destinations along the way.

Here's our proposed itinerary...

01 JANUARY



The PGA Tour is getting underway in Hawaii, but you'll get to America soon enough. Instead, head for South Africa, where the European Tour spends early January. The **Volvo Golf Champions (10-13 January)** moves to Durban Country Club, and should attract a strong field once again.

Warm weather is virtually guaranteed, and if the golf bores you then the beach is right across the road from the course (above).

TRY PLAYING:
Sun City, Fancourt Links, Pezula, Clovelly

AND DO THIS:
Enjoy a luxury safari at the exclusive Leopard Hills Private Game Reserve

02 FEBRUARY



The European Tour's Desert Swing winds up with its oldest event, the **Dubai Desert Classic (31 January-3 February)**. Dubai (above) is a good option while Europe and the States are shrouded in snow and sleet.

Later in the month, journey to Arizona to see the rare but thrilling beast that is match play. It's the **WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship** at the Ritz-Carlton Golf Club. Catch it from **22-26 February**.

TRY PLAYING:
Jumeirah Golf Estates, where the **Race to Dubai** will culminate later in the year

AND DO THIS:
Take a five-star holiday in the Caribbean before the Arizona outing

03 MARCH



The PGA TOUR circus heads to Florida, where the mammoth event is the **WGC-Cadillac Championship (7-10 March)** at Doral (above). The par 4 18th is statistically one of the Tour's toughest holes every year.

If you want to hang around this part of the world all month, then the **Honda Classic**, **Transitions Championship** and **Arnold Palmer Invitational** all tend to attract high-quality fields in the build-up to the Masters.

TRY PLAYING:
TPC Sawgrass, home of the **Players Championship**

AND DO THIS:
Visit the **World Golf Hall of Fame**, which is not far from Sawgrass

04 APRIL



April means only one thing to golf fans: **The Masters** (above). It's the centrepiece of your year, so do it right! Get there early to enjoy the practice rounds and par 3 contest, then hunker down for four days (**11-14 April**) of majestic Major golf.

Why not follow the Masters champion to New York City? The Green Jacket PR stunt is as good an excuse as any to check out NYC just as it's warming up.

TRY PLAYING:
East Lake in Georgia – home of the annual **TOUR Championship**

AND DO THIS:
Take road trip through the lovely **New England** region

05 MAY



It's back to Florida for the **Players Championship** at TPC Sawgrass. The iconic 17th (above), is the spectator spot of choice.

Then it's time to hit the Old World! The European Tour is likely to be milling around Spain and Portugal at this time of year. That's a great excuse for some prolonged exposure to port and paella. The month ends with one of the Tour's biggest events, the **BMW PGA Championship** at Wentworth in London.

TRY PLAYING: Valderrama Golf Club, where Seve captained Europe to Ryder Cup victory in 1997

AND DO THIS: Watch the Champions League final at Wembley, or the Monaco Grand Prix

06 JUNE



June is the month for the **US Open**: the Pro golfer's *Dracula* nightmare. Hellish rough, skinny fairways and greens like glass.

Unlike The Masters, anyone can buy a ringside ticket for this bloody battle of Man versus Golf Course. The punch-up takes place from **13-16 June** at the esteemed Merion Golf Club (above) in Pennsylvania.

Then head over to the UK right away to get a head start on a golf-packed July.

TRY PLAYING: Congressional Country Club, where Rory ripped 'em to shreds at the 2011 US Open

AND DO THIS: See Pennsylvania's Amish country, and the stately sights of Washington

09 SEPTEMBER



The USA is still the place to be this month, as the PGA TOUR Playoffs reach a head. The climax is the TOUR Championship (above) at **East Lake Golf Club** in Georgia, where American Brandt Snedeker will be your defending champion. The tournament goes ahead from **19-22 September**.

Look out for East Lake's unique par 3 finishing hole, which has provided its fair share of drama in recent time.

TRY PLAYING: Atlanta Athletic Club, where Keegan Bradley won the 2011 PGA Championship

AND DO THIS: Watch some raucous US Open tennis at Flushing Meadow in NYC

10 OCTOBER



Your chance to support an Aussie team (sort of) is here. It's the **Presidents Cup** (above), where the USA take on the Rest of the World (barring Europe), which usually means some Australian representation.

This match at Muirfield Village, Ohio (**30 September-6 October**) is a fine time to strike back at the Yanks, who've dominated recent contests. But beware: this is a course where Tiger thrives and Jack Nicklaus is boss!

TRY PLAYING: Pebble Beach. Yeah, it's in California, but you've plenty of time this month

AND DO THIS: Enjoy spectacular autumn colours as Amercia's leaves change colour

07 JULY



The build-up to The Open usually features the fantastic Irish and Scottish Opens. The Irish moves to Carton House, while the Scottish enjoys its final year at Castle Stuart.

Then it's the **142nd Open Championship** at venerable and pompous Muirfield (above) near Edinburgh. Interestingly, Adam Scott's 2012 Open nemesis Ernie Els was the winner of the last Open over these links, held in 2002. Catch the action from **18-21 July**.

TRY PLAYING:
The Old Course at St Andrews, Royal Troon, Carnoustie, Prestwick, Turnberry, Lahinch, Ballybunion...

AND DO THIS:
Watch the Ashes, Wimbledon or the Tour de France

08 AUGUST



Will Australia still be waiting for its next Major winner when the final big one of the year rolls around at Oak Hill Country Club (above), New York State? We hope not, but the **US PGA Championship (8-11 August)** promises much either way.

The PGA has also served up some exciting golf in recent times, and you can't sniff at a tournament with Rory McIlroy as its defending champion.

TRY PLAYING:
Bethpage Black and (if you're connected) Shinnecock Hills

AND DO THIS:
See Niagara Falls, then take a Canada road trip to Toronto, Montreal and Quebec

11 NOVEMBER



It's back to the Gulf for the European Tour's end-of-season bonanza at Jumeirah Golf Estates (above), known these days as the **World Tour Championship**.

Heading homewards, a rare chance to cheer on Australia in a team golf event presents itself at the **Mission Hills World Cup** two-man team event in China. It's a good opportunity to see the multi-course paradise that is Mission Hills for yourself.

TRY PLAYING:
Emirates Golf Club, which was in use last time you were in Dubai!

AND DO THIS:
Try your luck in Macau's casinos, and check out the manic Macau Grand Prix

12 DECEMBER



It's been an exhausting year: the flight back to Australia is a welcome one. You may spot familiar faces on board – big Aussie names will be on homeward-bound planes to take in the big PGA Tour of Australasia events.

Don't miss the **Australian PGA Championship Presented by Coca-Cola** and the **Australian Open** (above). After that, it's time to dig in for Christmas and think about whether you want to do it all over again!

TRY PLAYING:
Your home course – it's missed you!

AND DO THIS:
Boxing Day cricket at the MCG and New Year's Eve in Sydney!