



GOLFPUNK
on tour

Zimbali

If it's good enough for Polly, it's good enough for us. For a man-eating golf course and frighteningly dedicated servants, look no further than Zimbali on the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast. **Words: Richard Asher**

Good evening Sir, my name is Madodana and I'll be your butler." He looked at me expectantly. I looked back at him. I don't know what one says to a butler. I've never had a butler. I thought they only existed in murder mysteries.

Now I was faced with a real one. Not dressed in black and white, granted, but a real butler all the same. And he's probably used to dealing with people who are used to dealing with butlers. I think I'm supposed to say something.

"Um. Okay, grand. Well... thanks." He waited. Eek!

"And... I'm okay at the moment."

"If you need anything, just call," he said. I nodded, and he was on his way. I shut the door – and bolted it for good measure. What's the word for "fear of dedicated personal servants" again?

Fortunately, barricading myself into this butler-besieged room is no bad thing. I could live here. It's beautiful. The balcony looks straight into the thick of Zimbali's

green, green forest. There's an obscenely large bird of prey on a nearby branch. The neighbours are quiet – they're not even trying to coax a reluctant diesel engine into life, which is what I'm used to hearing first thing in the morning back in Cape Town. This most certainly isn't home.

But the trouble with all these tranquil golf resorts is that everything's perfect until you get to the first tee. There's a little fella waiting to take you to the clubhouse. Your name's on your golf cart. Everything works. And the course: magnificent, naturally.

When you're surrounded by perfection, though, you feel extra pressure to live up to it. It was only when I "teed off" at the first that I was jerked back into reality, suddenly remembering that I am indeed a child of the outside world. A world without butlers, a world in which you have to double-check what's in your chicken pie – a world in which every other shot is a revolting shank or pootles along the ground in front of you.

See, the nasty golf is the one imperfection they do allow in here.



**CONTACT
DETAILS**

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As if the ocean
isn't big enough

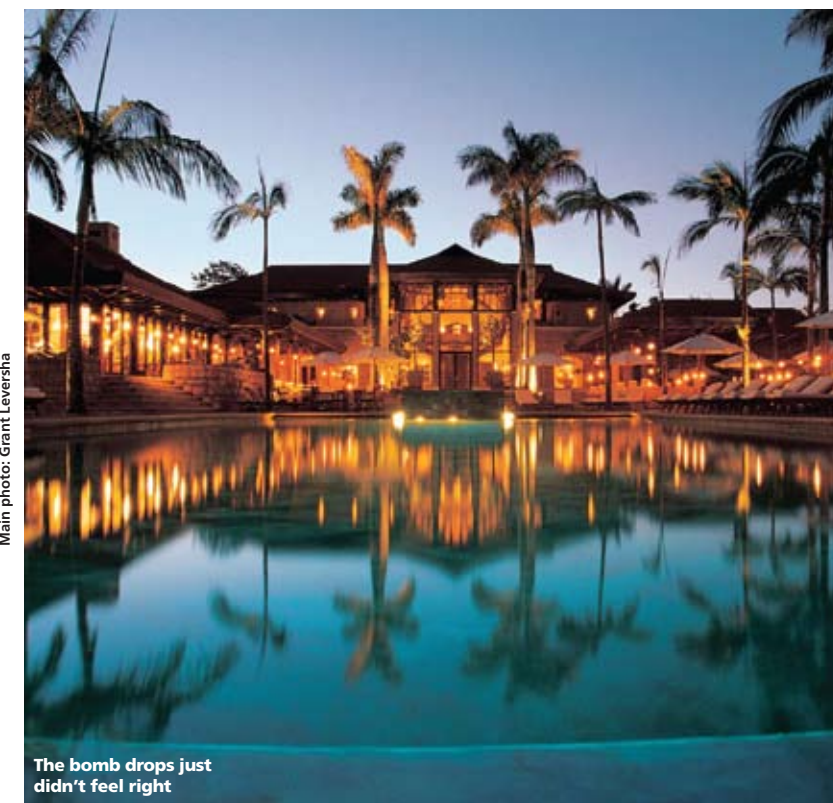
Most of the Zimbali postcard pictures you'll see come from the back nine, which really gets stuck into the resort's dune forest area. Tree-swinging monkeys and wild-sounding birds love this terrain – all the more spectators to howl and cackle as golfers try to negotiate the particularly stunning 13th and 14th holes.

Further up the hillside, though, you'll find the quite different front nine. Zimbali is a vast, vast property (700 hectares, to be precise) and it's up here that you really get a feeling of the grandeur of it all. The front nine's land used to be covered in sugar cane, so until the forest is regenerated up here it won't have all the greenery of the second loop.

Instead, it has a much more open feel, and – whichever way you look – a great many reminders that you're playing in the middle of a booming housing estate.

Building a house here is getting very fashionable – in part thanks to the estate's near-obsessive policy of keeping the houses and the nature in harmony. Patricia Lewis already has a place here, and Shaun Pollock's working on one too. It's probably safe to say, though, that even they aren't eyeing up one of the top-tagged places on the nearest ridge to the ocean: we hear there's one going for an ice-blue R35 million. Yes, that's in South African Rand.

You could pay quite a few butlers with that... **L**



The bomb drops just
didn't feel right

Duffers not
welcome



**What's
next?**

Zimbali has a great deal going for it – except the fact that it's been around just a tad longer than some of the infant golf estates dotted around the country.

But now it's probably getting a new sister – and one which might actually start nicking a few toys off its established sibling.

IFA Hotels & Resorts and Tongaat Hulett Developments (the joint developers of Zimbali Coastal Resort) have acquired another equally vast property just across the M4 highway – further from the sea but on higher ground – and they're planning to build a second championship course up here. Gary Player's been seen trudging around the land as he plans his design, but at the moment the Zimbali Lakes course is all subject to planning permission. Expect news on this one any time though.

What's not in doubt is the new hotel on the main Zimbali estate. Construction of the Fairmont Zimbali – a couple of booming drives away from the original Lodge – is already under way. Expect some fierce luxury from this complex including tennis, squash and bowls facilities – plus a bigger and better spa than the one at the Lodge. Of course, there will be more housing opportunities attached – so start breaking those piggy banks.