



# R I D I N G H I G H



THE WORLDS OF HORSE RIDING AND GOLFING  
DESTINATIONS ARE MARRYING ALL OVER THE WORLD -  
FROM SCOTLAND TO SAUDI ARABIA

*By Angelina Villa-Clarke*

**G**olf courses and horses might not seem like natural bedfellows, but some of the world's leading championship golf courses now offer top-tier equestrian facilities for their guests, as well as luxury residences. Angelina Villa-Clarke discovers how the two sports are trotting along nicely together.

In a remote corner of Scotland's Northern Highlands, the Carnegie Links, on the shores of the breathtaking Dornoch Firth, is regarded as one of the world's finest golf courses. Part of Skibo Castle's 8,000-acre estate, the celebrated private members' the Carnegie Club not only offers world-class golf on its 18-hole championship course, but it also boasts an elite equestrian centre for members of all abilities – whether it is for beginners to enjoy riding lessons or for pros to feel the adrenalin pumping with a gallop across the estate. —





“Formerly the summer home of philanthropist and steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie, Skibo offers its members and their guests the ultimate escape,” says Gary Gruber, managing director at the Carnegie Club at Skibo Castle. “Integral to that is the Carnegie Club at Skibo Castle – one of the world’s most prestigious private members’ clubs.”

Skibo Castle’s original stable block dates back to 1877 and, despite modifications and renovations over the years, it still boasts many original features, including the crow-stepped gables and arcade of sandstone pillars. Now reimagined as a slick equestrian centre, it offers a modern tack room, stocked with saddles, hats and Ariat boots, as well as 11 horse stalls.

“Since the Club’s inception almost 30 years ago, golf and horse-riding have been an important part of life at Skibo,” continues Gruber. “These pursuits, along with our extensive selection of other outdoor activities, offer our members the opportunity to experience and explore the varied landscape of our 8,000-acre estate, from the tranquil shores of the Dornoch Firth to the majestic moors and forests of Overskibo.”

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# GOLF AND HORSE-RIDING HAVE BEEN AN IMPORTANT PART OF LIFE AT SKIBO.



Located at Myakka City, a short drive from Sarasota, TerraNova is one of Florida’s premier equestrian destinations with state-of-the-art facilities, including permanent stabling, all-weather arenas and a picturesque cross-country course. Opened in 2021, owner, Steve Herrig, built the 225-acre centre to exacting standards, sparing no expense, he says, to ensure that it would be a best-in-class facility on par with the finest in the world.

“Ever since we opened, equestrians from around the world have taken notice of our attention to detail and horse-friendly atmosphere,” comments Steve’s daughter and co-owner, Hannah Herrig Ketelboeter. “Everything, from the competition stables, show office, spectator pavilion and grounds, has been custom-designed and built with quality and comfort as a priority.”

Having created TerraNova with his daughter, Hannah, in mind, Steve is now turning his attention to constructing an elite by-invitation-only golf course, which is being built with the same exacting attention to detail.

Found two miles from TerraNova, Miakka Golf Club is slated to open in 2025 and will stretch to over 1,000 acres. It has been designed by renowned architects Dana Fry and Jason Straka of Fry/Straka Global Golf Design with co-designer, PGA professional and former Ryder Cup Captain, Paul Azinger. The 1,110 acre property will include

an 18-hole golf course, with several holes that play along the Myakka River, a 12-hole par-three course, a 360-degree driving range, and a clubhouse that overlooks the entire course.

“The setting is just incredible,” says Steve. “When you couple this with the type of thoughtful amenities and services we envision, and a close-knit membership, I just can’t imagine a better golf experience anywhere in the country.”

With conservation at its heart, the course will feature Zoysia grasses, common to Southeast Asia, which require less water than most North American strains. Water conservation is only one of many environmental concerns the team has considered on the project. Native vegetation will be preserved, as will the many species of animals in the area, including the omnipresent cracker cow, which lends itself to the golf course’s logo.

Furthermore, adding another dimension to the whole offering, is The Estates at TerraNova, with prospective homeowners – who might well be horse or golf lovers – able to buy a slice of real estate, ranging from five to 20 acres, and immediate access to the luxury residential equestrian community.

TERRANOVAEQUESTRIAN.COM  
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Indeed, golf real estate is a sector that is currently booming, with demand on the rise for homes with access to green spaces, sports facilities and exclusive amenities. “The golf real estate component is certainly on fire, and I don’t see any signs of that stopping or slowing down,” Jason Becker recently told Golf Week. The PGA of America professional is also CEO of Golf Life Navigators, established to help prospective buyers find the best combinations of homes and golf clubs.

Factor in equestrian facilities and the offering is immediately elevated to something unique. Les Bordes Estate in the Loire Valley, France, for example, is leading the way with its lifestyle community, which encompasses high-end homes, golf and horse-riding. Cour du Baron are its just-launched residences. Designed by renowned architect Michaelis Boyd, best known for his Soho House designs, the 21 high-end properties (which will expand to 60 more in future phases) place homeowners within the desirable private estate.

Spanning some 1,400 acres, it includes Les Bordes Country Club, which features world-class sports facilities, including exclusive equestrian services, for guests to truly embrace the nature found throughout the private sanctuary. Les Bordes Estate is also gearing up to open the first Six Senses Residences Loire Valley – slated to open in 2026 – which will eventually see 52 homes and a luxury hotel open in the estate’s historic grounds.

One major advantage that residents will have is the ability to apply for coveted membership to Les Bordes Golf Club, which includes an 18-hole course designed by celebrated golf architect, Gil Hanse, as well as the 72-par Old Course, widely considered to be the late Robert von Hagge’s masterpiece. Through homeownership, residents will have the ability to play golf on the whimsical Wild Piglet course, another Gil Hanse creation, which consists of 10 par-three holes that pay homage to some of the most iconic holes in the world.

LESBORDESESTATE.COM



CostaTerra Golf & Ocean Club, a members-only community in Portugal, owned by the Discovery Land Company, is another example of the rise in golfing community-focused projects. It is home to some 300 residences across 722 acres, as well as a Tom Fazio-designed golf course and equestrian centre, among other facilities. The golf course invites golfers to play through dunes, forests and heathlands with sweeping ocean views, while the equestrian centre has private stables and club-owned horses for lessons and trail rides through the pines and along the coast.

“We preserve over 30 per cent of our land, fostering an intimate, low-density community where like-minded families can build a lasting legacy,” says CostaTerra. “As well as the golf and horse-riding, there is a beach club, an organic farm and a wellness centre so that our residents can adopt a new sense of adventure and exploration.”

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LES BORDES  
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Meanwhile, Sotogrande SA in Andalusia, Spain, which was founded in 1962, is iconic for fusing real estate, golf and horse-riding activities. As well as being home to numerous residential areas, including the new AQUA (a remarkable home inspired by water and light designed by ARK Architects), there are also four championship golf courses. Sotogrande is also renowned for its embedded horse culture, with its Santa Maria Polo Club. Famous worldwide, it regularly hosts international tournaments as well as dressage, show jumping and eventing on its sporting calendar.

"In my view, golf estates like Sotogrande SA are evolving into comprehensive lifestyle destinations. Sotogrande's founder, who pioneered the introduction of polo in Spain, laid the groundwork for a community that embraces golf, equestrian activities, and other sporting and social events," says Rita Jordao, director of sales & marketing at Sotogrande SA.

"Polo and equestrian sports are vital to Sotogrande's community, as they promote an active and social lifestyle, attract international visitors, and enhance the estate's prestige. By integrating polo fields, golf courses,

and diverse real estate options, these developments are fostering vibrant, active communities that cater to a wide range of interests and create a truly unique living experience."

Also embracing the trend is Trump Turnberry in Scotland which has just opened its new Turnberry Stables facility after a £265k upgrade. Now offering 22 high-end stables with a full livery service by a dedicated equestrian team, the facility is found next to Turnberry Beach and within reach of Culzean Country Park's off-road hacking trails, not to mention giving riders access to the bucket-list golf on offer. Turnberry, of course, is world famous for its 18-hole Ailsa course, host of four Open Championships, the 18-hole King Robert the Bruce course and a nine-hole course, The Arran.

"Trump Turnberry continues to evolve," says Ralph Porciani, general manager at Trump Turnberry. "Our vision was to harmonise the equestrian facility with the ethos of Turnberry's luxury status to provide an exceptional environment for horses and riders – and golfers – alike."

TURNBERRY.CO.UK



With an eye towards the future, it's the turn of the Middle East to capture a slice of the market. Saudi Arabia has a long heritage of horse riding – an integral part of Arabian culture – and it is the latest country linking the sport successfully with leading golf courses. Already well established is Nofa Resorts, set in the sand dunes 100km southwest of Saudi Arabia's capital city of Riyadh. The destination includes King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud Equestrian Centre and stud farm. As well as stabling for more than 200 horses, there are renowned horse attractions, including a famous racetrack, show jumping arena and polo field. Nearby is Nofa Golf Course, one of Saudi Arabia's top 18-hole courses designed by Barrie Gregson – giving activity lovers the chance to try their hand at both sports.

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Finally, the new Red Sea Development, an ambitious sustainable development found along Saudi Arabia's west coast, is set to raise the standard in the region. Not only does it encompass three luxury resorts – the Six Senses Southern Dunes, the St Regis Red Sea Resort and Nujuma a Ritz-Carlton Reserve – but it has just announced a new 18-hole island golf course, the Shura Links, set to open in 2025. With a championship length of 7,500 yards, the par 72 course caters to professional golfers and those looking to improve their game. As the project develops there are plans afoot for a host of activities, such as horse-riding via luxury equestrian centres for visitors to explore the sweeping desert dunes, mountain canyons, dormant volcanoes, and ancient sites that make up the landscape. A second course is also in the works as part of subsequent phases of the destination's development and Saudi's ambition to become the world's next premier golf destination.

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SWEEPING  
DUNES AND  
MOUNTAIN  
CANYONS  
MAKE UP THE  
LANDSCAPE.

# GOLF AND EQUESTRIAN ESCAPES

## THE WESTWOODS' LUXURY TRAVEL PASSION

Lee Westwood, one of golf's most enduring and successful figures, and his wife, Helen, are a power couple whose shared passions extend far beyond the greens. Married in 2014, their relationship is a harmonious blend of professional success and clever lifestyle choices, particularly when it comes to their mutual love for equestrian pursuits.

Lee's affinity for horses began at a young age. "I became interested in horses and equestrian life having watched it on TV with my grandparents and dad," he recalls. His passion only grew as his golf career took off, allowing him to purchase his first racehorse in 1998. "I won a bit of money at golf, and I decided to buy a racehorse," he says with a smile demonstrating the thrill he still feels about that decision.

For Helen, horses have always been a lifelong love. "I didn't want a Barbie or Cindy Doll; I just wanted their horses," she says. "Growing up, I would hop on any free horses at her local livery yard, despite not having formal lessons. This passion has only grown with time, and now I'm lucky enough to be able to explore destinations where I can indulge my equestrian interests while traveling with Lee."

Their lifestyle, characterised by frequent travel, might seem glamorous, but it also comes with its own set of challenges. "Being away from home for long periods can be difficult," Helen admits. "So, to be able to indulge my passion for riding is a bonus.

"I love to ride while traveling, and there are

so many destinations offering both golf and equestrian sports now," she says. "I like to have a choice of loops for hacking; I'm not a fan of riding out somewhere and turning around to come back the same way.

"And indoor arenas, especially in the UK, are always a bonus as bad weather doesn't need to

spoil riding plans."

Lee, while typically taking a break from golf during holidays, is delighted that Helen can indulge her passion while he competes. "Helen chooses our hotels very carefully, and it's fantastic she can ride while I'm competing.

"I do still sometimes play golf for fun, with Helen or our son Sam, or with my mates in Portugal having a few beers on the way around."

Their shared travels have provided them with an appreciation for what makes a truly great hotel. "I've stayed in great hotels all over the world," Lee says. "For me, what makes a good hotel is the staff.

I generally don't require much—a comfy bed, good shower, strong Wi-Fi—but it's the staff who make a hotel great."

As more resorts blend golf and equestrian amenities, couples like the Westwoods find themselves perfectly catered to. "Having equestrian facilities really elevates any trip," Helen enthuses. "I'm always learning, whether on the flat or over jumps, and it's exciting that so many new destinations offering this marriage of golf and equestrian sports are planned to launch soon."



## EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES ELEVATE ANY TRIP