



## San Lorenzo: A not to be missed treat on The Algarve Coast

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In many ways Portugal is a Cinderella among European countries, at least when it comes to American visitors.



San Lorenzo's spectacular setting borders The Atlantic Ocean and a National Park.



Presenting a serious test for serious golfers, San Lorenzo ranks among Europe's best.



Good looks accompany San Lorenzo's challengers from start to finish.



Water is plentiful and there's no shortage of shrewd bunkering.



Mature trees can add complications.



San Lorenzo belongs at the top of everyone's must-play list.

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Beautiful, charming and possessing all of the attributes visitors are looking for in a vacation destination, this is a country with remarkably strong visitor appeal, yet it remains very much undiscovered for many Americans. A rich and intriguing history, fascinating culture, spectacularly handsome scenery, excellent food and wines, shopping, nightlife and a pleasant year round climate, only add to the many reasons why Portugal deserves to be better known.

Add to this the extremely friendly Portuguese people, perhaps the most welcoming on the entire continent, plus one of Europe's best values for money (and never more so than during recent months, with the re-vitalized strength of the US Dollar) and the mystery only deepens. Why this utterly enchanting country has not yet captured the attention and imagination of Americans, is one of the travel-world's great, unsolved conundrums.

But just like Cinderella, Portugal has a glass slipper and in this story, the glass slipper comes in the form of golf. There are more than 60 golf courses located throughout the country, the vast majority of excellent quality and many of the very best are concentrated along a 90 mile length of glorious southern coastline called, The Algarve.

Long popular with Northern Europeans for summer beach and winter sunshine vacations, it's Portugal's golf, which has started to attract our Yankee curiosity and The Algarve is proving to be the center of attention, as well it should. The Algarve is over-flowing with more than half of the country's entire golf inventory.

You don't come here with your sites set on playing one special course, so many are special -- instead you come here to play The Algarve Collection of Courses -- almost a dozen of Europe's highest ranked layouts, and if you have time enough, squeeze in as many of the rest as time will allow. On The Algarve there are no poor or mediocre courses, not even just good courses, they range from very good to excellent, with a few that are simply, out-of-this-world.

Among the cream of the crop is the fantastic course at San Lorenzo, consistently ranked among the top 5 courses in Europe, it's an amazing experience and nothing less than a showpiece of all that makes The Algarve one of the world's premiere golfing destinations.

Back in 1986, American designer Joseph Lee was presented with a piece of pristine Algarve real estate, which formed part of the Ria Formosa Natural Park -- he was told to design the best course in the country. Joe delivered and in 1988 San Lorenzo opened to universal acclaim.

The 20 years, which have elapsed since, have seen this child star mature into an even better course and achieve the prestige and position of one of the best in The Algarve, Portugal and indeed, all of Europe.

San Lorenzo is not a course for the novice or inexperienced and at 6,240 meters with a par of 72, presents a stern challenge for even the most accomplished. Immaculately maintained and offering the opportunities to not only use every club in the bag, but to use each in different ways, San Lorenzo is a memorable test for anyone.

The course opens with an enticing but almost unachievable par 5, seemingly designed to set the standard for all that lies in store. The next three holes act as confidence re-builders with generous fairways, fringed

with pine, setting the unsuspecting player up for the surprises ahead.

The true adventure starts on the fifth and the most extraordinary part begins offering challenge after challenge and as a consolation prize, some amazing vistas over the Atlantic Ocean.

At the eighth, the course turns inland, presenting the larger of its two lakes as a formidable hazard. Then it's back toward the Ocean again, with the most technical stretch of holes on the back nine, culminating with an ominous par 4 and a green surrounded by the waters of the second lake. It's a remarkable finish to a remarkable course.

Few courses offer as much variety and as sustained a level of challenge, each one different from the last. San Lorenzo is a true golfer's golf course and one that deserves and demands to be played more than once, whatever you do, don't miss it.

Combine San Lorenzo with a few of its nearby neighbors such as Quinta do Lago and at least a couple of Vilamoura's 5 superb courses, but don't miss the pair of ocean-front jewels at Vale do Lobo either. The great [Henry Cotton](#) design at Penina has a unique allure and the personable, handsome layout at Palmares is a gem guaranteed to deliver memories enough to last a lifetime. Seldom will you ever find so many top-of-the-line, championship courses, all located in such close proximity - and without having to waste valuable vacation time driving all over the country, in search of the best, checking into and out of an endless stream of different hotels, you'll have more time to play more of them. Just make sure San Lorenzo is at the top of your list.

Whatever you do, spend at least a week experiencing The Algarve's golf and the banquet of other off the course distractions the region has in such bountiful supply. It's a guarantee that you too will fall in love with Cinderella.

For more ideas on how to get the most out of a trip to the sun-blessed Heaven they call The Algarve, click [here](#).

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