

BY GODFREY ROBERT

# MELBOURNE'S SANDBELT AND BEYOND OFFER YOU A **VARIETY OF CHOICES**

THERE IS BEAST IN THE BEAUTIFUL COURSES AS I LEARNT FROM THE  
HUMBLING EXPERIENCE AT NATIONAL'S OLD COURSE

The 59th edition of the World Cup of Golf, a major event inaugurated in 1953, will return to Australia from Nov 21 to 25. And it is no surprise that the city of Melbourne, which hosted many major Games including the 1956 Olympics, is the host.

The city's Metropolitan Golf Club will play host to 28 two-man teams in the only event that sees the world's best come together and compete for their countries, outside of the Olympics.

Talk golf in Melbourne, and the Sandbelt region comes to every golfer's mind. And lauding the famous region, US PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan said: "Golf in the Sandbelt region speaks for itself, and we appreciate The Metropolitan Golf Club opening its doors for this historic team event."

It will be the third time the popular global event is being staged in Melbourne, the previous ones in 2013 and 2016, and the latter bringing together 17 of the world's top-50 players including Adam Scott, Hideki Matsuyama, Rickie Fowler, Jimmy Walker and An Byeong Hun.

Melbourne's Sandbelt boasts a fabulous collection of golf courses that epitomise the golden age of golf architecture. These highly-ranked layouts are built on land in the southeast suburbs ideal for golf and conveniently located within a short distance of each other.

Championship courses in the region include Royal Melbourne, Kingston Heath, Metropolitan, Huntington, Yara Yarra and Woodlands, the last of which was a test of

nerves for seven SPH Golf Club members, including me, during a recent trip to the land Down Under.

Highly regarded by golfing purists, the Woodlands layout provided a true test of our golf. Noted for its high level of course presentation and friendly club atmosphere, Woodlands provided us a complete golfing experience.

## BEAUTY AND SPLENDOUR

All of us were so caught by the beauty and splendour of the course that we did not bother too much with our scores, which ranged from the high 90s to way past the century-mark for the high handicappers.

Woodlands was our second stop in Melbourne, after two hectic rounds at Tasmania's Barnbougle courses, Lost Farm and The Dunes, which provided us a great experience on the links layouts where accuracy more than distance was the key.

A day before the Woodlands wander, we played at Australia's newest golf course at Eastern Golf Club, located just 45 minutes from Melbourne city.

The Greg-Norman designed layout enjoys the peaceful environment of the Yarra Valley where some of Victoria's best wineries are situated.

The 27-hole championship course is positioned in the stunning setting of the Yering Gorge, where bushland intersects with the Yarra River against the backdrop of the Christmas Hills and Dividing Ranges.

Talk to any golfer visiting Melbourne, and he

would say that the Eastern is a must, for after a round on the challenging course you can enjoy a range of outdoor experiences, fishing and mountain biking being two popular hobbies.

We completed our six-day, five-game experience with a stop at the National Golf Club at Cape Schanck. We had a choice of three great courses, The Moonah (designed by Greg Norman), the Old (Robert Trent Jones Jr) and the Ocean (Thomson, Wolveridge and Perrett), and we opted for the Old course.

The original National course (Old course) was open for play in 1998, and course architect Trent Jones Jr recently visited his creation and discovered how it has improved over time.

The course is generally hilly combining amazing coastal views, challenging ball carries and slick undulating putting surfaces that could inflate your score.

A number of holes offers spectacular views, but the standout for me was the par-three, seventh hole. The relatively short distance of 135 metres from the blue tee looks easy, but you have to play over a cavernous ravine to a large green which runs from left to right.

The backdrop of the coastline to the Mornington Peninsula heading down to Portsea is a sight to behold, but if your ball does not land on the green it could be a ride to trouble.

In this course, errant shots are severely punished, like how – after 16 holes gave me 32 points on stableford – I hit two wayward drives and bungled the finishing two holes with triple-bogeys.

It was truly a humbling experience.

The signature hole at the National's Old Course.



photo courtesy of Timothy Lim