

Pine Cliffs Tennis Academy



Fifteen minutes of 'X Factor' under a warm January sun and all I was good for was a fluffy white robe and the hotel jacuzzi

You may recognise the name Pine Cliffs from our first edition of 2014. Now, Lee Goodall travels to the Algarve to sample the 'X Factor' resort for himself

Any of you who enjoyed our [first print issue of 2014](#) might recognise the name Pine Cliffs, the luxury resort around half an hour from Faro, in Portugal's Algarve region, that featured in the travel pages of our first offering of the new season. Once a tennis destination has found its way into our print product, it's rare that we'll dwell on it for much longer, but in February came an invitation to experience Pine Cliffs and its tennis set-up first hand. I didn't take long to reply.

From the moment I stepped on court with head pro Paulo Machado it was clear I was in safe hands. While stories from training with former world No.1s Ivan Lendl and Yevgeny Kafelnikov during his playing days perhaps weren't exactly what I needed to hear while I was scraping the rust off my 41-year-old backhand, it was clear this likeable Portuguese former pro knew the game inside out. Years spent playing the tour mean his game is up to scratch (trust me, this guy's a human ball machine) and recent years spent working with Poland's top national juniors has honed his understanding of how young players improve. And if performance tennis isn't your thing, heck, he's just a really lovely guy who'll keep you smiling on court. We talked for hours. His philosophy for tennis is more a philosophy for life.

Paulo heads up the resort's relatively new Annabel Croft Tennis Academy, the second of the former British No.1's international portfolio [having launched her first in Cyprus](#). Croft, and business partner Steve Cockell, have created a tennis centre that can cater for any age and standard of player. The academy's small and friendly team will whip your game into shape on the two clay and three cement courts using techniques such as the 'X Factor' and 'Death Drill'. Steve, an English pro with years of on-court experience himself, and a menacing Portuguese supermarket trolley full of balls gave me a taste of 'X Factor'. Fifteen minutes of that under a warm Portuguese sun and all I was good for was a fluffy white robe and the hotel jacuzzi.

Which brings me nicely on to the resort's other first-rate facilities. Eating and drinking can be taken in any one of the 12 restaurants and bars, and accommodation is a choice between the five-star 215-room Sheraton Algarve Hotel, or one of a number of apartment or townhouse options scattered throughout the immaculate, wonderfully serene grounds. The Pine Cliffs Vacation Club Golf Suites comprise 78 two and three-bedroom apartments overlooking the resort's nine-hole golf course, there's Pine Cliffs Village - 45 townhouses and three villas which have their own private gardens and pool - and Pine Cliffs Residence, 154 two and three-bedroom luxury apartments. The resort's name, as you may have guessed, is derived from its location, perched high up on the dramatic orange cliff tops that overlook Falesia beach, accessed from the picturesque pine tree-themed gardens by a brilliantly simple but effective panoramic elevator. An elevator to a beach? Why doesn't the world have more of those?

As well as the golf, tennis, beach and Atlantic Ocean, there's a huge focus on children's activities with the kind of facilities that helped Pine Cliffs be named Portugal's Leading Family Resort in the World Travel Awards four years running from 2009-2012. The 7,000-metre-square children's village (with two life-size wooden pirate ships and its own swimming pool) has to be seen to be believed, and this safe and spotless designated kids' area also features an 18-hole mini golf course.

Running alongside the nine-hole course that brings in the golfing crowd, there's a first-rate academy featuring driving range, putting green and chipping green, a 4km jogging track, luxury spa, five outdoor swimming pools to choose between, and a health and fitness club within the hotel that boasts an indoor pool, sauna and jacuzzi.

Thank God for the jacuzzi.

Where

Pine Cliffs Resort, Albufeira, Algarve, Portugal

Travel

Pine Cliffs is 30 minutes from Faro International Airport

Contact

Web: www.luxurycollection.com/algarve and www.annabelcrofttennis.com

Email: pinecliffs.reservations@luxurycollection.com

Words: Lee Goodall



Pine Cliffs is 30 minutes from Faro Airport



Coach Paulo Machado is 'a human ball machine'