



Clive is our undercover roving reporter, who tells it like it is. NCG's bon viveur plays off 13, always finds the best places and is an expert in enjoying himself, on and off the course

One place that is an absolute pleasure to fly from, being entirely free from the baying hordes, is London City Airport. Baggage, especially golf clubs, whizzes on and off the aircraft with seamless precision so we were delighted to be flying direct to Zurich from there. On arrival, both in Switzerland and coming back home, luggage was off in a matter of minutes unlike the ghastly scrum and interminable wait one can get at Gatwick and, God save us, the Stansted concourse which is often more like a crowd scene from Ben Hur.

*Clive's  
Cigarometer*

Switzerland scores...



# SWITZERLAND

Our man pays a visit to Lake Maggiore, where the holiday flew by but the same could sadly not be said for the golf





**Waterside**  
Lake  
Maggiore  
from above

**B**LITZKRIEG is a highly mobile combination of infantry and armour devised by the Germans to zero in on a military target with devastating accuracy. As I stood waiting yet again on a tee box by the sun-splashed shores on the Swiss side of Lake Maggiore it occurred to me that none of the Germans involved in a blitzkrieg could possibly have been golfers, as the manoeuvre would have been far too fast for them.

My pals and I had decided to enjoy a short luxury break in the charming small town of Ascona which involved a flight to Zurich and a wonderful train journey through the Swiss mountains with music box houses, mirror lakes and the feeling that any second now someone would come crashing through the pine forests singing about a lonely goat herd.

**“Eden Roc is rightly recognised as one of the great hotels of the world”**

We had checked into the splendid Hotel Eden Roc which sits bang on the shores of Lake Maggiore. While its exterior may not be to everyone's taste the standard of service and accommodation inside are, quite simply, beyond reproach. It is rightly recognised as one of the great hotels of the world.

After an excellent breakfast and back massage in the spa there was plenty of time for a gentle stroll into town and a wander through the spotlessly clean cobbled streets of Ascona.

With an afternoon round ahead we enjoyed a light lunch of home-made pasta and fish sitting out on the hotel terrace as the late autumn sunshine danced on the lake fully convincing us that we were getting the charm and friendliness of the Italians



**Variety**  
Gerre  
Lessone is  
charming



coupled with the Teutonic precision inbred into generations of Swiss. And some fine German beer for good measure.

Sadly that combination of charm and precision vanished when we got to the golf club.

Now let's get this straight, there is absolutely nothing wrong with Patriziale Ascona. It was founded in 1928 and has the same tight, tree-lined feel that many of London's suburban courses have: Muswell Hill springs to mind.

We turned up at the 1st tee in plenty of time for our slot only to see a large number of fourballs, mostly German husband-and-wife combinations, setting off. We hoped that the starter would wave us through

but he ignored us. And so our round began and continued for over four-and-a-half hours, which is an unpalatably long time to be stuck on a course of just over 6,000 yards.

As the fourball darted hither and yon in the woods resolutely ignoring us leaning on our clubs awaiting an opportunity to play we were all slowly starting to get in much closer contact with our inner homicidal maniac.

As for the course, the 8th is truly outstanding, only a fraction over 300 yards but proving conclusively that holes do not have to be long to be difficult.

A steeply raised green played to over a small lake demanding a precision-hit tee shot is a little beauty. I would have liked to

have seen more use made of water elsewhere but most of all I would have liked the four in front to let us play through.

With barely time to grab a cleansing bottle of Hofbrau wheat beer, we at least had the award-winning, barman, Maurizio Cassaro, to look forward to back at the Eden Roc to stun us with one of his fabulous creations to revive our jaded spirits as we raged about slow play. Maurizio is the Phil Mickelson of cocktail makers – at times you simply don't know how he does it.

The following morning we headed off to Gerre Losone, a mere 10-minute drive away. Sunday in Switzerland is as quiet and we had the course to

ourselves. What a beauty it is.

When architect Peter Harradine first saw the site it was nothing more than a pancake-flat valley floor. Now there are rocky outcrops, mounds, ponds and a lake that even includes a fountain. It is fun, fair and most of all fast!

Quaffing my refreshing Erdinger wheat beer gazing back down the 18th with mountains soaring above the course I made a firm mental note to return.

## FACTFILE

Clive was a guest of the Hotel Eden Roc ([en.edenroc.ch](http://en.edenroc.ch)) in Ascona flying Swiss Air ([swiss.com](http://swiss.com)) from London City to Zurich. He played at Patriziale Ascona ([golfascona.ch](http://golfascona.ch)) & Golf Gerre Losone ([golflosone.ch](http://golflosone.ch))