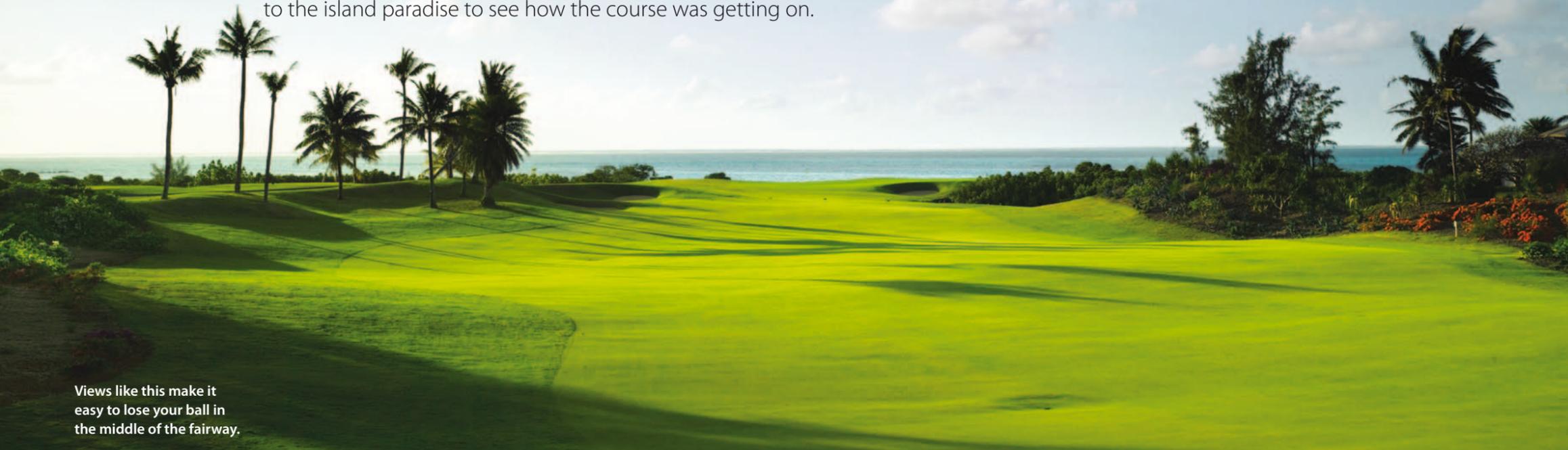
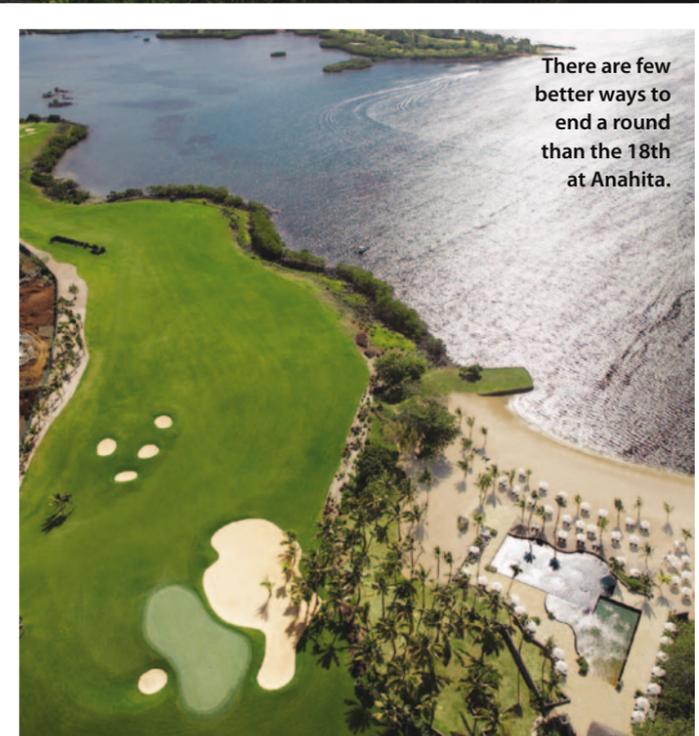


Anaheaven

Three years after *CG* first visited the Anahita World Class Sanctuary in Mauritius for the launch of its golf course, **Nick Krige** returned to the island paradise to see how the course was getting on.



Views like this make it easy to lose your ball in the middle of the fairway.



There are few better ways to end a round than the 18th at Anahita.

The first thing I noticed when I arrived at Anahita was how dark it was; after the flight and drive I arrived at the resort well after 9pm, so I would have to wait until morning to make my first knee-jerk assessment of the place.

In all seriousness though, Mauritius is a holiday destination that is a very comfortable distance away from South Africa. The flight over is about four hours long, which is basically the length of a take-off, a landing and one on-flight movie.

The staff of Air Mauritius go a long way to making the journey as comfortable as humanly possible; when you are hungry they feed you and when you are thirsty they water you, always with a warm smile and a kind word.

It really isn't a wonder why Mauritius is such a popular destination for South African holidaymakers.

Even walking around in the dark of night, I got a decent feel about

how pleasant Anahita is, but it wasn't until morning that I realised how lucky I was to be there.

It has everything you could ever want from a holiday destination on the coast of Mauritius: boat rides, skiing, wake boarding, snorkelling, diving, tennis courts, a gym and, of course, the golf course.

"I ENDED UP PLAYING ONE OF THE BEST ROUNDS OF MY LIFE, BUT DIDN'T EVEN REALISE IT UNTIL WE'D COUNTED UP THE SCORES..."

The development of the villas around the course is now well into its third phase and it's difficult to believe people who talk about a recession when you see how well they are selling. But don't expect a bargain here; at Anahita you get what you pay for and those villas are world-class.

A couple bonuses to purchasing property at Anahita are that they manage and rent the place out for you when you aren't staying there, and the Mauritian government instituted this nifty law a while back that allows foreign land owners permanent residency in Mauritius – so it could be a

nice little escape plan for those of you who are worried about the prospect of South Africa following in the footsteps of some of our northern neighbours.

One of the best things about Anahita is how, when you are staying in one of the villas, the golf course is definitely a feature of the

view, but when you are playing, the villas do not get in the way. The design manages a fine balance of placing the villas around the course without them being an obstruction.

As for the course itself, it is easily the best holiday golf course I have ever played. It was designed by our very own Ernie Els and rumour has it, he was so proud of it, he wants to base future developments around it.

For one thing, the course and the area are beautiful. It's quite easy to forget that you are playing golf while you are enjoying the views, pottering around on your cart.

The fairways are big and wide so you don't ever have to worry about losing your ball, unless you hit a properly dreadful shot. It is stress-free golf the way it is supposed to be on holiday. I ended up playing one of the best rounds of my life, but didn't even realise it until we'd counted up the scores at the end.

It took me back to a time when scores and handicaps didn't matter and I was just playing golf for fun.

Quite often on golf courses, even the good ones, you will find a dull hole, one that doesn't make sense or doesn't offer up any kind of interesting feature or challenge, but Anahita's course does not have this problem.

It nearly did, at its now famous par-four 14th. When Els' team were designing the course they decided the hole was too boring and it lacked character, which is when Marc Amelot, Anahita's director of golf, recommended putting a burn through the middle of the fairway. Wanting to keep with the theme of the course, they instead installed a dry-stone rock wall slanting across the fairway.

Some people might think it is a bit tacky or gimmicky, but I disagree. I think it adds a really fun, strategic element to the hole.

It is difficult to pick a favourite hole on this course when each hole offers something unique and fun, but for me it would probably be a toss-up between the par-five 18th – which is reachable in two, but the green has a huge bunker protecting the front, so it takes a very brave golfer to go for it – or the par-five 4th, which has a breathtaking view of the coast on your walk towards the green.

But none of these compare to my favourite feature of the course – every time you head towards the 1st tee or back from the 9th green, you are offered a complimentary, fresh chocolate-chip biscuit and a glass of ice-cold ice tea. It is, for lack of a better term, glorious.

When you are staying at the resort, you get a free round of golf every day that you are there, but the course is open to people who aren't staying at Anahita as well, which makes it a must-play destination. **CG**

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