



Since retiring from international cricket, Michael Vaughan, the former England captain who clinched the Ashes in 2005, has rediscovered a passion for skiing and golf – which has led him to buy a hotel room in French ski resort, and to pitch for a golf pad in Portugal...

WORDS **VERITY WILLCOCKS** PICTURES **ISTOCK**

You've just bought a hotel room with leaseback at Esprit's Hotel des Deux Domaines (www.hoteldeuxdomaines.com), in Belle Plagne in France.

What attracted you to this?

It's a great hotel; it's brand new, it's modern, it's fresh, and you can just ski in and ski out. The investment's pretty simple; it's easy to manage, you know what you're going to get, and it's got longevity. I love skiing, and it gives you four weeks' usage – I probably won't get to use it for four weeks but just one or two weeks in the winter. We first went there two years ago – my wife picked up a brochure and saw that they looked after kids, so we thought we'd try it. We arrived and everything was looked after, including the kids, which is the most important thing – seeing their faces when you pick them up at four o'clock, knowing they've had a good

Opposite Michael and his wife Nichola enjoying a taste of the Caribbean in Margarita
Above At work on the pitch during his playing days
Right Michael and his family like to visit his place in Barbados every January to lift the winter blues

time. I think skiing's the best holiday of the lot. I skied when I was a kid from the ages of 12 to 14, and then I wasn't allowed to ski. Just recently, with me retiring, I've been able to get my skis back on and I've realised what a great holiday it is. Nichola's [Mike's wife's] sister and her little boy and boyfriend came last year, and it's going to be an annual meet-up for us all to go and have a skiing holiday.

How good were you on the slopes after years not skiing?

I actually skied a little bit last year; I shouldn't have done it – it was a bit hush-hush, but I don't mind admitting it now. I thought, "God, I'm just going to have a go," and it all came back, going down the blue runs – I wouldn't have taken anything more dangerous on, but I felt comfortable. Next time, I'll be out there all day, every day. I'll be first through the door! We were lucky that we went in January and it wasn't holiday time and the slopes were very quiet, so it was very, very relaxing. The après-ski's also very nice!

What do you like to do in the evenings when you're skiing?

Well, at the hotel everything's laid on. But the day pans out very similarly every single day – it's perfect. You get up, you have your breakfast, the kids go to the kids' club, you go skiing, you have an hour's lunch with a few hot toddies and a bit of stew overlooking the slopes, with the sun bearing down, we ski a bit more and then we pick the kids up. They have their tea and then we go up to the suite – there's a Jacuzzi on the balcony, so we all jump in there. They go to bed, and we leave them with the babysitters and go downstairs and have a four-course meal and a few glasses of wine. You're in bed at half-nine/ten o'clock every day – it's a very relaxing trip.

Was it a lifestyle purchase or an investment – do you get money back?

Yes, you get a five per cent yield for the first five years and it increases by three per cent after that, so it's a nice investment. It's secure and it also

gives us a great chance to go out to the Alps every year. The association with Esprit was a big plus because of the way that they look after the kids.

You also have other properties around the world – tell us about those.

Yes, I'm lucky to have a place in Barbados. It's kind of two extremes – we go for the beach holiday, the rum, and a bit of golf in Barbados around January time, and then go and spend a couple of weeks in the French Alps with our woolly hats on drinking hot toddies. Skiing and golf – they're my two passions now, as well as all the other sports that I follow.

How long have you owned your place in Barbados?

I've had it for about five years now. Again, it's an investment, it's long term, and hopefully I'll get some nice rewards in 10 to 15 years' time. I love the island and the character of the local people; I think what makes a place is the local people and their warmth and the fun they generate once all the tourists arrive. That's what I loved about the skiing holiday – the whole week was fun; everyone was getting on, whether English, German or Irish.

And you own property in the US, too?

I have land in the US. I had a place in Margarita Island, just off the island of Venezuela, but it's now been changed to a place in Tenerife. It got swapped, it was an endorsement package, and I took the place in Tenerife because I thought, "Margarita? I can't ever see myself going over there." But Tenerife



MICHAEL VAUGHAN

STILL ON THE

BALL

 Michael Vaughan



is great. The property is on a golf complex and I love golf. Portugal's my next port of call. I've just spent three days in Portugal looking at a place on the Algarve – there's about 30 golf courses in a 15-mile radius. I'm going to buy a place outright for three or four days' golfing, and the kids will probably spend a lot of time there in summer.

Do they like golf?

Yes, my little boy loves it. My little girl doesn't but she soon will! She's very into her skiing. My little boy was a little bit young last time we went skiing but he'll be four next time and he's got good balance.

Is buying property part of your plan to invest for the future?

I think property investments are good because hopefully they'll gain growth, you'll get returns, and the yields are great. And also it gives you a way of travelling the world and seeing different places. I've been very fortunate to play cricket for 18 years and earn a decent amount of money to be able to invest in these kinds of schemes. There's many different ways to invest your money and the property market has taken a dip in recent times but there's nothing for sure as bricks and mortar, every time.

Do you speak any languages?

I'd love to. I wish I'd taken school more seriously, particularly in the language department. School for me was sport; I just wanted to play sport and be a



sportsman. I did German GCSE and I think I got a D or something, but I wish I'd done Spanish or French. But everybody understands the English language, you know: "Beer!"

What do you like about being abroad?

I like the fact that you're away from England. I still get a little bit recognised but that's life. It's the fact that you don't pick up a paper in the morning. When you're in England you always feel that you have to read the papers in the morning to find out what's happening, and that can clog your mind. I like being abroad and coming home and asking people what's gone on in the last week. I just like the freedom of being able to spend family time and meet new people and relax.

What do you do together as a family when you're on holiday?

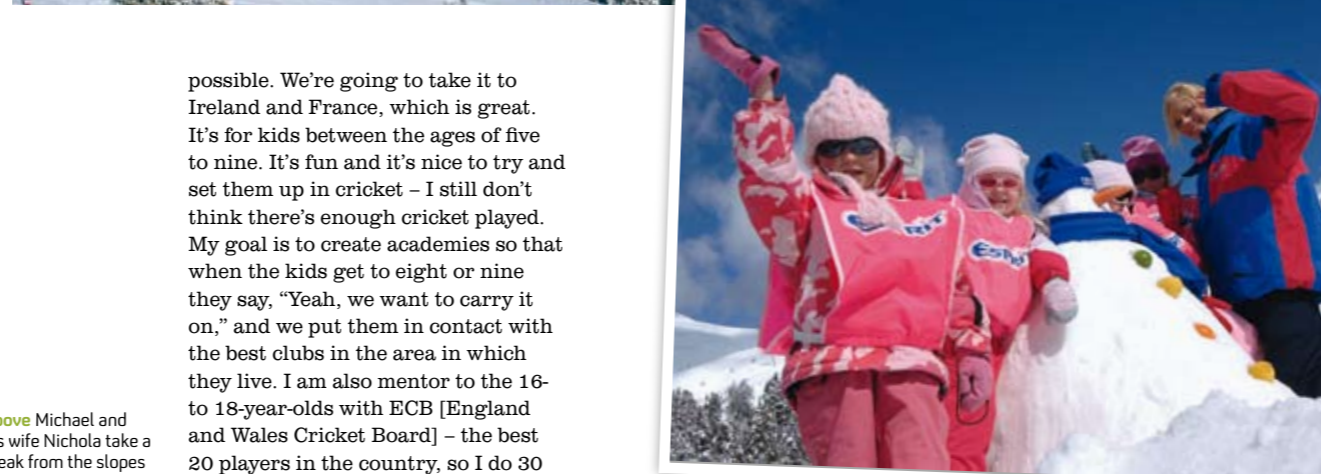
Everything that normal families do: go on the beach, get pestered by the kids, get in the sea and the pool, we have a bit of lunch, my little boy will play golf and my little girl will go swimming all day. Normal things.

Apart from Portugal are there any other places in the world where you'd like to own a property or visit?

I've never been to America. They tell me LA's very good so I guess a holiday in LA one day.

What do you plan to do now that you've retired?

Looking to the future, I've signed for the BBC, which will be long term, and I do *Telegraph* work. I'm involved with an international sport management company now; we look after a few cricketers but mainly golfers, which again is something I'm really keen on getting more involved in. There are many, many different business pipelines popping up. Also, I'll be getting involved in my academy. I have about 1,200 kids that are part of my academies around the country; I think there's 20 venues next year and I want to try and make it grow to 2,000 by the end of 2011, which I think is very



Above Michael and his wife Nichola take a break from the slopes **Left** Indulging his passion for another ball game – golf – is higher up Michael's agenda now he's retired **Opposite, top** The Belle Plagne, France, location of Hotel des Deux Domaines, where Michael has recently invested **Opposite, bottom** The Esprit staff's skill in entertaining the kids is one of the things the Vaughans love about the Hotel des Deux Domaines

possible. We're going to take it to Ireland and France, which is great. It's for kids between the ages of five to nine. It's fun and it's nice to try and set them up in cricket – I still don't think there's enough cricket played. My goal is to create academies so that when the kids get to eight or nine they say, "Yeah, we want to carry it on," and we put them in contact with the best clubs in the area in which they live. I am also mentor to the 16- to 18-year-olds with ECB [England and Wales Cricket Board] – the best 20 players in the country, so I do 30 days a year with them.

Will you still play cricket for leisure?

I'll play charity [matches] and there's a few Masters tournaments around the world which I haven't put my name in for this year, but I may do next year. I'm not one of those people who's retired and said "I'll never play again," because I love the game.

Are you still in touch with your team mates?

Yes, I do keep in contact with them,

especially two or three; Straussy [Andrew Strauss], [Paul] Collingwood, [Marcus] Trescothick, who's unfortunately just got back from India. Those guys I'm very, very close to – and Freddie Flintoff. Once you leave the team you only ever stay close to two or three of them who have become real mates. Sport's funny like that.

When you're on the BBC you're going to be moving to the 'other side'. How do you feel about that?

It's easy because as I said there's only three or four that you'd ring up and have a casual chat with. The rest are just team mates. I'll give an honest assessment. I know every single one of them inside out, so they know they can't kid me! I do miss the dressing-room banter. I missed it in the summer when they won at Lords and at the Oval. You think, "God, I wouldn't mind being involved in the party," but I actually don't miss the aspect of getting on the pitch. That takes some serious hard work, getting yourself ready to get on the pitch. For 18 years I gave it everything and enough was enough. Time to move on, time to get the handicap down!

Who do you think is the world's best cricket player at the moment?

It's hard. I think Ricky Ponting's very good, and the Indian captain, Dhoni's very good. It's hard to put a finger on one, but I like the way Straussy's going about his business. I think he's controlling the team in a good fashion and he's playing well. I think we've got a lot of very good young players; it's just a matter of gelling them together and pushing them in the right direction.

Your autobiography, *Time to Declare*, has just come out – are there any revelations?

It's a very, very honest book. I've done two books to date, which have been more cricket-related and not so much about me. I think once you've read this book you'll get a real feel of what I am. I've tried to be as honest as I can about

the game, about me, about the players I've played with and against. It's fascinating, and people will probably be a little surprised at some things.

In 30 years' time, do you think you might retire abroad?

I wouldn't rule it out. I'd certainly consider somewhere in Europe – you can get back in two hours now. It's a different way of life; a relaxing life. I love the aspect of being outdoors with the kids. I like the fact that they'll be in the pool in the day and not indoors playing computers. And every time you wake up it's bright and you just want to get out of bed and do something. I enjoy activities and being outside and I want my kids to be like that. But I don't think anyone ever retires, especially in the modern world; there's few that just hang their boots up and say, "I'm going to do nothing." My dad's 65/66 and he's still ploughing away with his work and I don't think he wants to stop because he enjoys it, and I'm going to be exactly the same. I'm always going to be doing something. But it would be nice to have a place somewhere like Portugal where we can just go and spend time if we need to be out of the country. I've just been out there – it was 26 degrees in mid October!

Would you still keep a place in the UK?

Absolutely. England's home; I love England. I love being abroad and I love the weather, but I also like the cold in the winter sometimes and getting the fire on. And Christmas in England's the best. ☀



Michael Vaughan's autobiography, *Time to Declare*, published by Hodder & Stoughton, is out now, priced £19.99.