

A COMPILATION OF GREATNESS

The finest, according to 12 of
the world's finest golf writers.

FOREWORD BY BENNY TEO

We consider ourselves the world really. Over more than 30 years, Golf Vacations has travelled far and wide in search of golf, golf and more golf. Here in this tome are 113 of the world's finest golf courses.

Familiar names like Augusta National and Pebble Beach should not surprise but then there are some amazing sites from far flung places around the world that many will not have visited, let alone played golf.

This is the true quality of Golf Vacations magazine; that in our expansive reach and desire for diversity, we have assembled a team of golf writers from all four corners of the globe, each one offering his or her own unique point of view and style but all sharing a common love for this most ancient of games.

Each of them has been asked one question: "Can you name me your favourite courses in the world?"

They immediately took to the task like a child in a candy shop. Amazingly, this compilation was quicker than we had thought to receive but it does reflect the individual nuance and particular taste; this really is a favourite 100 (or so), and not a top 100, as many would have been used to seeing.

It is absolutely subjective and while you may agree with some, for others, you may blink a questionable eye. However, each mention comes with a very personal explanation, a chance encounter or a memorable experience that ensures longevity, and often fondness, at each recall.

So sit back, flip on, and savour the beauty of golf's finest courses, according to the writers of Golf Vacations magazine.





BY ANDREW CROCKETT

**MOONAH LINKS, THE LEGEND'S COURSE
MORNINGTON PENINSULA, AUSTRALIA**

The second of two courses at the famed Moonah Links complex was, from the outset, designed to cater for the average golfer in contrast to The Open Course, which was purpose-built to challenge the professional golfer and host The Australian Open tournament.

Of all the courses I have been privileged to play, The Legends is the most fun course I have ever experienced. The opening hole welcomes you in as a beautiful (and reachable) par 5. The short par 4 second continues to ease you into your round, but you best make the most of the early scoring opportunities as the course toughens up before giving you some respite towards the closing holes.

Standing on the par 3 third hole, which looks a lot like a piece of contemporary art right in front of your eyes, The Legends course is clearly designed by an artist (Ross Perrett) who is quoted as saying, 'I am working with the largest canvas known to man.'

The organic and impressive bunkering style was developed over decades from the erosions that the cattle livestock made while grazing on what was once farmland. This creates natural bunkering much like the archetype in links golf, St Andrews.

The natural vegetation and native species were encouraged to craft what is a truly unique Australian golfing experience like no other.

**ROYAL MELBOURNE GOLF CLUB
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA**

Perhaps the most iconic and well-known golf course in Australia, and for good reason, Royal Melbourne is routinely voted one of the top courses in the world.

With a rich history dating back to the 1800s and with the design fingerprints of the famed American architect Dr Alister Mackenzie (Augusta National, Cypress Point), Royal Melbourne forms the jewel in the crown of the much praised 'Melbourne Sandbelt'; a collection of nearly a dozen world-class golf courses located within the city of Melbourne.

Royal Melbourne is one of the most prestigious clubs to be a member of in Australia and has hosted some of the largest golfing events in the world including the World Cup, Presidents Cup and Australian Open.

Consisting of two courses, East and West, it is hard to pick which layout is the best. For keen observers of the 2019 President's Cup in December, the tournament layout is a composite 18-holes from both courses.

Melbourne is the golfing capital of Australia and often attracts the best golfers in the world to hone their skills. Royal Melbourne is a must play for any golfing enthusiast, if you can find a friend or colleague to get you a coveted pass to this unique links golf experience.

**CAPE WICKHAM LINKS
KING ISLAND, AUSTRALIA**

A relatively new golf course, Cape Wickham burst onto the international radar in October 2015 when it opened to the public and instantly was voted one of the best golf courses in Australia and top 25 in the world.

Located in the Bass Strait and only accessible by light aircraft from smaller regional airports, Cape Wickham is a bit like discovering treasure from a deep diving expedition - you simply know that not many golfers are prepared to dive down this deep to chase their fantasies.

I found myself wondering what this area was like before American architect Mike Devries weaved his magic through this terrain. It felt to me like perhaps no human being had even walked this land aside from, perhaps, the local lighthouse keeper.

The lighthouse serves as the only identification that it is inhabited and what a lighthouse it is, the tallest in the Southern Hemisphere and a vital safeguard for any passing ships, as the torrid waters surrounding King Island have claimed dozens of vessels over the centuries. Shipwrecks are a major part of the history of King Island.

The golf course is simply top notch. Much like other coastal courses, if you get a day without wind, it plays entirely differently to when the weather marks the score. King Island is home to wind that would make you put away your pitching wedge and grab a five iron. In fact, the area gets such strong winds that it is closed for two months a year (July/August) in the coldest season.

**NATADOLA BAY
FIJI**

Standing at the summit of Natadola Bay golf course on a perfect winter's day and taking in the delightful hues of the Coral Coast off Fiji's main island, Viti Levu, you would be misplaced if you didn't stop to count your blessings.

The golf course looks stunning, a tropical green that is well watered in an otherwise barren and dry landscape makes the course oasis-like. The backdrop with coral reefs and the expansiveness of the Pacific Ocean seems to make you breathe deeper.

Scoring Natadola on a day with only a light zephyr off the ocean definitely raises one's appreciation of the nuances in the design. This is a fantastic layout. Augusta-like with the elevation changes and undulating greens, something not lost on its designer, former world number one and native Fijian, Vijay Singh.

You get a good draw with the weather and Natadola is like heaven on earth, a tropical paradise; yet much like the great Scottish courses, if you draw wind and rain, it can be punishing.

**HOPE ISLAND
QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA**

The Hope Island golf course is the centrepiece of a major residential development abutting the Coomera River on the Gold Coast.

It was designed by Thomson Wolveridge in 1988 and has stood the test of time and remains very popular today. Two loops



Moonah Links, The Legend's Course



Natadola Bay



Hope Island



Royal Melbourne Golf Club



Cape Wickham Links



Royal Sydney

of nine radiate from the clubhouse and central driving range.

The course is built on low land spanning between the Coomera River and Saltwater Creek which both flood but from different catchments.

By incorporating a continuous ridge through the course, the catchments are permanently separated which has solved downstream flooding effects.

The course design features many traditional features found on the links courses of Scotland - pot bunkers, grassy hollows, gentle mounding and fast greens and aprons.

It was the first course in Australia to use wetlands as nutrient-stripping ponds, which are very effective at keeping the lakes healthy.

Hope Island is a fantastic facility and has a very astute neighbour in Sanctuary Cove, making this part of the Gold Coast a must-visit for golfers who love tradition and high end luxury.

MOUNT MERAPI
JOGJAKARTA, INDONESIA

Mount Merapi is Indonesia's most active volcano, so it is perhaps surprising that it became the site for a golf course. It was the brainchild of prominent engineer Dr Ywono Kolapaking, designed by Australian golf course architects TWP and built by Balinese contractor Wayan Tunas and his talented Indonesian team.

Every bit of the rocky site was sifted (by hand) using 750 village workers and that created a rich volcanic sand/seed bed which is ideal for sustaining high quality turfgrass.

The course is irrigated by gravity fed water storage further up the mountain, therefore not requiring electricity to run the system - quite innovative for 1995. The golf holes are cleverly routed like a gentle staircase so that the course seamlessly rises up the slopes of the ever present volcano.

An occasional big eruption has taken place with the volcano, but the course recovers beautifully after a topdressing of volcanic ash.

There is something powerful and obviously photogenic about Mt Merapi Golf Course and the feeling that the local community had such a firm hand in building the course really creates a wonderful feeling that golf, as an industry, is a fantastic vehicle for bridging cross-cultural divides.

Play Mt Merapi for a postcard moment you will talk about for the rest of your life.

HAMILTON ISLAND
WHITSUNDAYS, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Built on Dent island adjacent to the tourist hotspot of Hamilton Island, golfers can fly in to this tropical location and instantly feel like they are on holiday.

With the surrounding islands and the aquatic allure of the Great Barrier Reef and all that it offers, Hamilton Island Golf Course's by-line says, "designed by mother nature". This course is utterly unique and the reason it is on this list.

Built on a highly sloping terrain, the course (much like

Natadola, Fiji) offers incredible ocean views towards the Whitsunday Islands and Coral Sea at just about every hole.

The sloping terrain must have been a challenge for the designers, but in the capable hands of one of the most prolific golf course architects in the world, the late Peter Thomson, there was never a whisper of any challenges during the build.

Access to the course is usually by ferry from Hamilton Island, further adding to this unique experience. Thomson rose to the summit of world golf in the 1950s and 60s and you get the sense that Hamilton Island is one feather in his cap that will live on as a true testament to his imagination and futuristic vision.

ROYAL SYDNEY
ROSE BAY, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Dating back to the 1800's and housing some of the oldest of Australian golfing history, with lineage right back to the earliest Scottish golfing settlers, membership at Royal Sydney is one of the most coveted club memberships in Australia.

The golf course is but one of a gamut of membership benefits that include impeccable grass tennis courts, croquet, gymnasium and the clubhouse features world class bars, restaurants, function rooms, billiards rooms, reading lounges and accommodation.

Located on the Eastern coastal side of Sydney city, the course has a beautiful backdrop in the coveted Rose Bay, one of the most sought after pieces of real estate in Australia.

The golf course itself feels like it is from another time, a bygone era where golf courses were designed around the terrain. What fine terrain it is.

Housing 27 holes, lets talk about the Championship Course. Having hosted 15 Australian Opens dating all the way back to 1906, the championship course has a historical pedigree that you can feel.

Many of Golf's finest have walked these grounds, from Carnegie Clark, Gary Player, to Jordan Spieth and Rory McIlroy, have all have won at this historic location.

A plethora of traditional bunkering, the occasional disguised burn and golf holes that encourage you to run the ball onto the green, Royal Sydney can play like a links course when firm underfoot, but also encourages the shooting of darts right onto the green.

The prestigious Royal Sydney is on the upper echelon of sophistication, with firm dress codes and a code of manner that you would expect for a club that regularly host international dignitaries.

Leave your mobile phone behind and experience golf in true tradition. Enjoy a plush clubhouse experience post round and soak in the historical reverence that is housed in trophy cabinets and honour boards throughout the stylish facility.

KOORALBYN VALLEY
QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

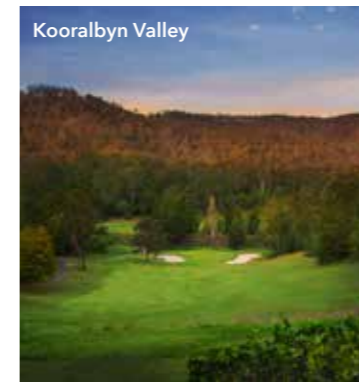
The 18-hole championship golf course was originally built in



Twin Waters Golf Club



Hamilton Island



Kooralbyn Valley



Mount Merapi

1979 with a vision to attract golfers from Asia to experience Australia on an exceptional golfing layout.

With Scottish designer Desmond Muirhead at the helm and an exceptional piece of land, and with the support of then world number one golfer Greg Norman, Kooralbyn was off to a flying start in the 1980s.

Golfers talk about Kooralbyn. It is a course that stimulates conversation unlike any other. Accessible to the public, the location of the course makes it one for an adventurer.

Anyone who has made the journey to experience Kooralbyn talks highly about the course, usually with the phrase, "what an incredible design."

It would have been very difficult for the designers to name a 'signature hole' at this wonderful layout. So many of the holes are memorable.

Most cite the par 3 fifth hole as favourite. With a vertical drop of some 100 feet from tee to the green, this hole has a 'wow' factor about it.

The 17th hole, also a par 3 is all water carry from several tee blocks. A very difficult hole to dial in the club selection, the 17th must have ruined many a round with only one left to play.

Kooralbyn has hundreds of kangaroos and native birdlife that thrive amongst the dozens of lakes and rivers. This is real wild Australia, with an exceptionally well thought out golf course design.

TWIN WATERS GOLF CLUB
SUNSHINE COAST, AUSTRALIA

The Sunshine Coast is a fantastic lifestyle destination and this championship par 72 course, close to the beach, is a beautiful illustration of coastal links golf just the way it was intended.

Built in 1991, the course offers generous fairways and large greens that can ensure great scoring if you are hitting the ball straight, but if you start missing left or right, you will be swallowed up in punishing rough or one of the many strategically placed traditional pot bunkers.

The designers had a clear reverence for the traditional links in Scotland and many of the greens offer a bump-and-run style approach shot.

Some pundits have compared the par 4 eighth hole to the "Road Hole" at St Andrews and visitors should perhaps heed the ancient learnings and view the 8th at Twin Waters as a bogey 5, rather than a straight par 4.

The presentation of Twin Waters is always a highlight. The greens are exceptionally well-manicured thanks to some of the best greenkeepers in the business.

Several holes have water hazards that need to be negotiated and the grounds are often littered with grazing kangaroos and an abundance of birdlife. The home course to 1991 British Open champion Ian Baker-Finch, the practice facilities and nearby accommodation are world class. 🏌️



BY ANDY MARSHALL

FORMBY GOLF CLUB LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

Situated on the Lancashire coast among sand hills and pinewoods some 14 miles north of Liverpool and five miles south of Southport, this classic links (founded in 1884) is unique in Britain, for within its boundaries lies the completely independent Formby Ladies Golf Club, founded 12 years later in 1896.

Formby is a course of contrasts. The opening heathland-style holes running beside the railway differ markedly from the subsequent holes built among the sand dunes.

They stretch out to the far end, close to the National Trust property and are particularly attractive and tranquil, not least at the par 4 ninth - its elevated tee is the perfect spot to crack open a flask of coffee and sandwiches, while taking in the view of the rumpled fairway extending to a distant green backed by pines and the sea beyond.

Other highlights include the memorable par 3s, the tough tee shot on the par 5 eighth played to a table top fairway with sharp ledges on either side, the secluded green setting of the par 4 eleventh, and finishing your round under the iconic clubhouse and clock tower.

Formby Golf Club might well be the most aesthetically pleasing links on England's Golf Coast. It will linger long in the memory after playing and become a benchmark to which you compare others with.

WOLF CREEK MESQUITE, NEVADA, USA

Located in Nevada, 77 miles north of Las Vegas at Mesquite, this is 18 holes of fantasy golf at its ultimate best. Opened in 2000, Wolf Creek's captivating desert design immediately drew rave reviews and is now firmly established as one of America's top public courses.

There are precious few courses that can generate a genuine sense of awe for several holes at a stretch, and exceedingly rare is the layout that can sustain the feeling for an entire round. Wolf Creek is such a place.

Set high above the desert floor among red-rock canyons, teeming waterfalls and glistening creeks, it looks like strips of green velvet have been laid out on a Mars-like landscape. After teeing off at the par 5 opening hole it is a roller-coaster golfing adventure among sculpted hills and canyons with several elevation changes and forced carries over streams and ravines.

Developer Doug Clemetson was determined to leave the distinctive natural landscape in place, accepting that a number of non-traditional golf holes would result. On the 2nd tee box, for example, 90 granite steps lead up to the driving area, which is located some 11 storeys high.

The 3rd hole plays uphill to one of the highest points on the course with 70-mile views, and the green of the par 3 eleventh is an island in a sea of red rock and typical of Wolf Creek's dazzling visual appeal.

BALLYLIFFIN GOLF CLUB COUNTY DONEGAL, IRELAND

Situated close to Cardonagh and Malin Head on Donegal's Inishowen Peninsula, Ireland's most northerly golf club comprises a remarkable 36 holes that meander through the most beguiling of links land, with rocky outcrops, perfect greens and enchanting views.

Principally designed by Mother Nature (with upgrades by Sir Nick Faldo including new bunkering, tees and enlarged greens), the natural terrain and gently rippling fairways give the classic Old Links a unique character, and it is the type of place where you can easily imagine the golfing forefathers striding along the sheep-cropped turf with their hickory clubs.

The more recent Glashedy Links (designed by Pat Ruddy and Tom Craddock) is fashioned around the incredible dunes on higher ground beyond the Old Links offering stunning coastal views as you play. Home to the 2018 Irish Open, the Glashedy Links starts with three long par 4s, and from there the challenges never let up - negotiating cavernous peat-riveted bunkers, large contoured greens, fairways that twist and tumble between towering dunes and a collection of exciting par 3s.

ANFI TAURO GOLF LAS PALMAS, SPAIN

Designed by Robert Von Hagge, this Arizona-style impeccably maintained PGA Championship course on Gran Canaria is located among rocky canyons and gorges, native vegetation, teeming waterfalls and glistening lakes.

It offers a perfect contrast to the surrounding volcanic mountains. Anfi Tauro is one of those rare courses that generate a genuine sense of awe from one hole to the next for an entire eighteen holes, creating an unforgettable round of golf.

The course is a dream for the golf photographer and even the most inexperienced snapper can't fail to bag a good image here. One of the most photogenic holes is the classic 209-metre par 3 sixth framed on either side with swaying palms and a pyramid-shaped rock as a backdrop.

ROYAL ST. DAVID'S GOLF CLUB GYNEDD, HARLECH, WALES

Situated on the outskirts of Harlech on the North Wales

coast is Royal St. David's Golf Club established in 1894.

"Small wonder if the visitor falls in love with Harlech at first sight," wrote Bernard Darwin in *The Golf Courses of the British Isles*, "for no golf course in the world has a more splendid background than the old castle, which stands at the top of a sheer precipice of rock looking down over the links."

As you play, there are splendid views of the brooding presence of 13th-century Harlech Castle and a backdrop of the Snowdon Mountains beyond. Royal St. David's is known for its series of long demanding par-4 holes (seven are over 400 yards) and five short holes, which vary in length and direction, and it is fair to say that your score has to be made on the outward nine as the course just gets stronger and tougher on the inward half.

Notable holes include the gorgeous par 3 eleventh played through a gap in the dunes to a blind green, and the stern signature par 4 fifteenth where two precise shots are called for to reach the green hidden in a hollow.

BRO HOF SLOTT BRO, SWEDEN

The top pick of Stockholm's golf courses is arguably Bro Hof Slott. From the moment you drive through the gates and glimpse the white hilltop castle, manicured fairways and glistening Lake Mälaren, you know you have arrived at a special place.

"Everything is big at Bro Hof. The holes are longer, the greens are bigger, the course has more water and the bunkers are larger and well-placed," said Robert Trent Jones Jr. who designed this superb lakeside layout with state-of-the-art facilities.

Open for play since 2007, Bro Hof Slott's Stadium Course is now one of the world's best layouts and has previously been home to the Nordea Masters European Tour event.

Bro Hof Slott's other layout, the equally well-conditioned Castle Course is a mix of forest and open country with a distinctive heathland feel.



PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL MARSHALL



PHOTO CREDIT: WOLF CREEK



PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL MARSHALL



Anfi Tauro Golf

PHOTO CREDIT: GRAN CANARIA GOLF



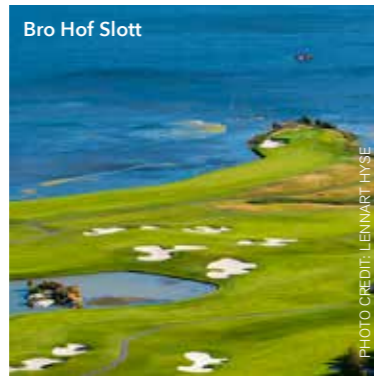
Castle Stuart Golf Links

PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL MARSHALL



Royal St. David's Golf Club

PHOTO CREDIT: ROYAL ST DAVID S



Bro Hof Slott

PHOTO CREDIT: LENNART HYSE



Palmer Sea Reef

PHOTO CREDIT: PALMER SEA REEF



Casa de Campo

PHOTO CREDIT: CASA DE CAMPO



Enniscrone Golf Club

PHOTO CREDIT: MOUNT FALCON

**CASTLE STUART GOLF LINKS
INVERNESS, SCOTLAND**

The brainchild of Mark Parsinen, the American who gifted the world Kingsbarns, this classic championship links course overlooks the Moray Firth and well-known landmarks that are synonymous with Inverness.

The Kessock Bridge, Chanonry Lighthouse, Fort George and Castle Stuart itself are views to be enjoyed with topography similar to Royal Dornoch further north - an old sea cliff creating two-tiered plateaus with six holes running alongside the inner Moray Firth.

The course has been designed with wide fairways to offer plenty of lines of play on ground that is perfect for links golf. You will be reaching for the camera rather than a club at the 191-yard 4th, played towards beautiful Castle Stuart.

It is a really super par 3 whose glorious location just gets better as you approach the green. The great thing about Castle Stuart is that you get a real sense of seclusion and most of the time you are not aware of other golfers out on the course.

The views all around are fabulous, and from some tees and greens, the white 1930s Art Deco style clubhouse can be seen sitting prominently atop its viewing perch.

**PALMER SEA REEF
PORT DOUGLAS, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA**

When you first glimpse the Palmer Sea Reef Golf Club in Port Douglas in tropical Far North Queensland, it provides an unforgettable sight with emerald green fairways divided in two by a brilliant segment of pristine rainforest.

This is one of the few tropical links in the world, and without the lush vegetation, you could be excused for thinking you're on a seaside course in Ireland or Scotland. Renowned designers Thomson, Wolveridge and Perrett have incorporated classic links ingredients - rolling fairways, humps, hollows, small pot bunkers and undulating greens into the design.

Add in the unpredictable nature of coastal winds and you have a demanding test of golf. The 310-metre 9th, named "Ulysses", is one of its signature holes - a marvellous showpiece of golf in the tropics, with the short par 4 culminating in an undulating green framed to perfection by tropical rainforest.

It is around here that the iridescent blue butterfly of the same name can be seen fluttering in and out of the canopy. After your round, recount every moment over a frosty beer or two on the verandah of the beautiful Queenslander-style clubhouse overlooking the course.

**CASA DE CAMPO
HIGUEY, LA ROMANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

A tempting-trio of Pete Dye designed courses awaits at the Dominican Republic's Casa de Campo - one of the Caribbean's most luxurious golf resorts. In the world's top 100 courses, Dye's masterpiece "The Teeth of the Dog" skirts a jagged, rocky coastline so close you can feel the salt spray.

Dye is quoted as saying that he actually only created 11 holes on the course, God created the seven running by the side of the ocean. The 157-yard 5th is a par 3 to remember and one scary looking hole.

The only option is to hit the green, because short, left or long is definite shark food. The signature holes on the back nine are numbers 15 and 16, a medium length par 4 and long par 3.

In direct contrast to the front nine, these holes are lined along the entire right side by the Caribbean and are elevated above a coral cliff. Inland lies Dye's lake-studded Links Course, and his third track, Dye Fore, is a 7,714-yard monster that marches along a plateau perched 500 feet above the mesmerising Chavron River.

If the river snaking its way through this dramatic landscape looks familiar, it is because director Francis Ford Coppola when filming his epic movie "Apocalypse Now" used it as a location.

**ENNISCRONE GOLF CLUB
COUNTY SLIGO, IRELAND**

Enniscrone Golf Club in County Sligo on the Emerald Isle's west coast, started life as a modest 9-hole course in 1918, but it was the prolific Irish designer, Eddie Hackett, who put the place on the map when he extended the layout to 18 in the mid-1970s.

Then, a few years back, Donald Steel visualised another six holes in the dune range and built three others, enabling the club to spread its wings to 27 holes. The scenery of the main championship course, appropriately called "The Dunes" is second to none.

Twelve of the holes wind and twist their way through a maze of the tallest and shaggiest dunes on the coast, where a sense of isolation and tranquility surrounds you, with only wild Atlantic views and the uplifting sounds of skylarks for company.

One hole that will etch itself in the memory is the mountainous 349-yard par 4 thirteenth, called "The Burrows", which is akin to teeing off the summit of Everest with the green nestled down at base camp below.

Another classic hole is the 538-yard par 5 sixteenth called "Long Bank". Curving between the dunes and the ocean, this stroke index-6 hole sums up best what Enniscrone Golf Club is all about. 🍷



BY CHRIS FOLLEY

KAURI CLIFFS
MATAURI BAY, NEW ZEALAND

Along with Cape Kidnappers, Kauri Cliffs is arguably the most spectacular course in New Zealand. This par 72, 7,119-yard course is just north of Pahia, tourist hub for the Bay of Islands, four hours north of Auckland.

Apart from having epic holes such as the par 3 seventh, which plays high atop the ridge line with the Cavalli Islands in the background, the views are spectacular – you can see the ocean from 15 of the holes.

Allied to this is a sumptuous pavilion and Relais & Chateaux hotel with 22 suites and a two-bedroom Owner's Cottage built in Kiwi weatherboard style. Don't be surprised to see your round interrupted by helicopters dropping wealthy golfers onto the first tee, mainly from Malaysia and Singapore.

TITIRANGI
AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

As host of the New Zealand Open on numerous occasions, Titirangi is arguably Auckland's most prestigious golf course and one of its oldest – it was founded in 1909, and is the only course to have been designed by Dr Alister MacKenzie, of Augusta National fame.

Located in the west of New Zealand's biggest city, it backs onto lush bush in a beautiful setting between the lower slopes of the Waitakere Ranges and Manukau Harbour. It is not particularly long – just 6,000 metres off the men's black tees – but the layout is clever.

The signature hole is arguably the 13th, perhaps appropriately called "The Wrecker", and the par 3 fourteenth, where you must drive over a huge area of ferns and bush to land on a tricky multi-tiered green.

There are plenty of long par 3s and only two par 5s, which may disappoint long hitters. A warm welcome awaits in the old-style clubhouse.

OITAVOS DUNES
ALDEIA DE JUZO, PORTUGAL

Lisbon remains my favourite European golfing destination, in terms of variety, atmosphere and apres-golf, and Oitavos is the jewel in its crown. This 6,303-metre course off the championship tees starts off in woodland and by the fifth, a 405-metre par 4, you've moved up to a plateau with views over the Sintra Mountains and long, wide open fairways.

Signature holes include the par 5 eighth, where you drive uphill and then go down a very narrow long fairway before you hit the green, and the par 3 fourteenth, where you must drive over a small gorge to reach the green, which is set



Kauri Cliffs



Titirangi



Oitavos Dunes



Portstewart



Yas Links



Terre Blanche



Son Gual

against the backdrop of Europe's most westerly point.

Comfort comes in the form of the modernist Oitavos hotel, where the 142 rooms and suites are spacious and stylish, and the glass clubhouse, with its sweeping verandah.

You are also five minutes drive from the pretty harbourside town of Cascais, from where you can also get the train into Lisbon.

SAUNTON DEVON, ENGLAND

While St Enodoc in Cornwall is a big favourite in England's South West, Saunton in North Devon is not far behind. Saunton is in a fabulous location on a long sandy beach, with the surfing mecca of Croyde just 10 minutes' drive away.

There are actually two courses here – East and West – and both of championship standard. Indeed, some say the East is the best course in England never to host an Open.

It is pure links, started by a spectacular opening hole. Eight of the par 4s here are more than 400 metres long, and there are only two par 5s. A true sign of a great golf course for me is to have memorable closing holes and Saunton East does the trick here.

The 17th is a difficult par 3, 188 yards off the whites and

you're more often than not playing into the wind while the 18th is a par 4 dog-leg where you finish on a tricky green protected by pot bunkers either side and right in front of the clubhouse.

SON GUAL PALMA, MALLORCA, SPAIN

The best course in Mallorca is just 10 minutes drive from Palma's busy airport – indeed, you'll see planes taking off and landing over as you play the opening holes. Apart from being in beautiful condition this is a cleverly laid out track.

Many holes require shorter irons and have challenging do- legs. Standout holes include the par 3 fifteenth, which invites you to drive over a huge area of sand, and the par 5 eighteenth, where you must negotiate a winding stream that cuts across the course at two different points.

TERRE BLANCHE BAGNOLS-EN-FORÊT, FRANCE

This luxurious resort, with two championship courses, is the best in Southern France and a big favourite with golf tourists. It is just a 40-minute drive from Nice airport

and is built in traditional stone and offering views of the Luberon escarpment and the hilltop villages of Fayence and Soulliac. Terre Blanche was opened in 2004 and has two internationally renowned golf courses - Le Château and Le Riou, both designed by Dave Thomas - as well as the only training centre of its kind in Europe.

The Chateau is 6,616 metres long, and is known for its spectacular water features, while Le Riou is shorter, just 6,005 metres, but offering great views of the hilltop villages and featuring steep fairways and elaborate greens. There's also one of the best spa centres in Europe and a luxurious feel to the accommodation.

PORTSTEWART PORTSTEWART, NORTHERN IRELAND

Neighbouring Portrush not surprisingly takes all the plaudits but Portstewart, hugging the sands of the Antrim coast, is equally thrilling. The front six holes are pure links, winding through caverns of long grass, before you come out into the open later on.

The downhill, dog-leg first, with the sands of the Strand taking in views all the way to Donegal to your right, is as thrilling an opening hole as you'll find anywhere.

HANKLEY COMMON FARNHAM, ENGLAND

Wentworth and St Georges Hill may dominate commuter belt Surrey golf but this lovely heathland course, first built as a nine-holer in 1897, south of Farnham is a gem.

James Braid was involved in the design of the back nine in 1927. Heather and pines feature heavily, and indeed many say it reminds them of that other great heathland course, Walton Heath.

While on the raised holes, expect the wind to be a big factor. The 7th hole is seen by many as one of the finest par 3s in the country and the magnificent 18th a superb and challenging finishing hole.

ROYAL CINQUE PORTS DEAL, ENGLAND

Another 'shadow' course, this time in Kent where Royal St George's is clearly the lead course hosting numerous Opens. But Royal Cinque Ports in Deal is a great course too, linky and tough on the seaside holes and in great condition.

The back nine, and in particular 15, 16 and 17, really test your mettle. Added to the experience is the wonderful clubhouse, friendly and laid-back yet still providing quirkiness and tradition.

As you head out to the balcony overlooking the opening part of the course, you will find a huge telescope where you can peer out over the sea and observe the English Channel.

YAS LINKS ABU DHABI, UAE

It seems incredible to think that in the desert of the United Arab Emirates, you would find a course being compared to a Scottish links but here it is. That's thanks largely to top-class irrigation and deep pockets.

Yas Links is 7,540 yards long, the brainchild of Kyle Phillips and opened in 2010. Holes such as the 9th run alongside big stretches of water, amazingly, while others are within range of the roar of Ferrari World nearby.

Most greens are fast, as you'd imagine in the Middle East, and are full of contours so you really need to be sharp with your putter. Fairways are in pristine condition too, and you also get a fabulous par 5 to finish, with the water that's on the right for the 9th being on the left for your final hole.

The Abu Dhabi Golf Club gets a high profile thanks to its yearly association every January with the HSBC Open on the European Tour but Yas, to my mind, is a better course. 🏌️



BY DARRYL WEE

CYPRESS POINT MONTEREY PENINSULA, CALIFORNIA, USA

This was the number one course on my bucket list. My desire to play on this course was ignited when I read the book "The Match" by Mark Frost that describes an epic back and forth battle between Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson against Ken Venturi and Harvie Ward.

A highly private club, guests are required to be signed in by a member. When I got to the club, I was surprised to find how welcoming and understated everything was. At the car park, I was met by our caddy who grabbed our clubs and introduced us to the starter. To this day, I wonder how he figured out who I was.

The changing rooms and a proshop, small by American standards, were set apart from the clubhouse. Located next to the first tee, this was the hub of activity at the club. One thing I noticed in common were the excited and happy faces of all the guests who were waiting to tee off. It felt like we had all struck the lottery, and we were finally here to play Cypress.

People think of holes 15, 16 and 17 as representative of the club. However, the course provides three very different types of golfing experiences. The first six holes plays inland, and I was greeted with a parkland style experience.

With towering trees surrounding me, I was quickly transported from the coast into the forest. The transition to a links style dunes course was seamless as you come out of the trees and are welcomed with views of the sea again.

Being able to play in the wind, and out of the sand is critical for the next six holes. The final sextet are the most amazing holes you can find anywhere along the coast and in the world. It is just that good.

KAWANA HOTEL GOLF COURSE, FUJI COURSE SHIZUOKA, JAPAN

Think of Kawana Hotel Golf Course like a Japanese version of Pebble Beach. You only get to play there if you stay at the hotel.

The journey there is actually part of the experience, with a 45-minute shinkansen ride from Tokyo to Atami, followed by a 20-minute train ride from Atami to Kawana, and finally a short 5-minute taxi to the hotel.

The real treat here is the train ride as all the seats are facing the sea with views of the rugged coastline, quaint beachside towns and the blue beyond.

The Fuji Course at Kawana is often voted among the top three courses in Japan, and it is not hard to see why. Cut into the Ito coastline, the course has Sagami Bay and the Pacific Ocean as its backdrop and Mount Fuji is also visible on some holes.

Numerous holes run by the sea with dramatic elevation

changes to add to the drama. Take the first, a 415 yards par 4 that features over 48 yards of elevation from tee to green. Wind billowing every which way, forest to the right and the ocean leftwards, this first hole determines the type of golf to come, here at Fuji.

A warning to those lucky enough to get a spot here - it is a very hilly walking course and carts are only available for those with medical conditions.

SENTOSA GOLF CLUB, SERAPONG COURSE SINGAPORE

Rated the number one course in Singapore, The Serapong Course, which hosts the SMBC Singapore Open, is renowned for having some of the best greens anywhere in the world.

General manager and director of agronomy, Andy Johnston, works hard with his team to ensure that the course is competition ready any time of the year, which is a real treat considering the challenging equatorial weather conditions he has to deal with.

Putting on fast greens with very subtle breaks make three putts a common occurrence. My description may sound frightful, but players here are also rewarded with beautiful scenes of the city, Sentosa island and natural wildlife.

I love playing this course, and the real treat is that I always learn something new about my game and the course each time I come. You will never get bored playing here.

THE LINKS AT FANCOURT GEORGE, SOUTH AFRICA

One of my all-time favourites can be found in George, which is smack in the middle of Johannesburg and Capetown along the Garden route in South Africa.

The Fancourt Hotel & Golf boasts of three courses that get regular tournament play. However, it is The Links at the Fancourt Country Club that you truly need to make time for. If you want to play on this course, you either have to be a member of the Country Club or you have to be staying at the resort.

I would highly suggest you book your tee times when you make your reservations for your accommodation as the club limits the number of players they accept from the resort. Believe me when I say that the effort in securing your tee times are well worth it.

The course is designed by Gary Player, and I have been told that he is a regular whenever he is in the area. When I first heard that there was a links course in George, I was a little sceptical of how it would play but all doubts were

thrown into the wind (pun rightly intended) as I stepped up the first tee and took in the view ahead.

The gorse-like rough, the way the holes looped, winded and played, and the impact of the elements on the game were all spot on. It did not feel like it was a course attempting to mimic links style golf; it was a true links course that was beautifully created for the Fancourt Estate.

Not many people think of Hong Kong as a golfing destination, however this club alone should make people reconsider that thought.

Situated just 45mins from Hong Kong island in Sai Kung, the golf club is part of the Clearwater Bay Country Club complex that features a world class 18-hole golf course, a marina and a country club. To be honest, I have not spent much time enjoying the other facilities because I derive

sufficient joy from just playing golf there.

The first time I got there, I was blown away by the vistas that overlooked the South China Sea. Since then, I have always made this my "must play" course whenever I am in Hong Kong. The more I played, the more I have come to really love the views and the course.

Situated on the edge of the Clearwater Bay peninsula, players have to deal with the winds that add that extra dimension to the game. The course itself is no slouch.

You will find on the front nine, a series of three holes from the second to the fourth, are often perceived as the signature stretch of holes. If you think that after playing these, there isn't much left to experience, you would be sadly mistaken. The combination of the course layout, the shots that you have to craft to get around and the views of the ocean and the bay will leave you dreaming about Clearwater Bay long after you walk off the 18th green.



Cypress Point

Kawana Hotel Golf Course,
Fuji CourseSentosa Golf Club,
Serapong Course



The Links at Fancourt



Clearwater Bay Golf Club



Tralee Golf Club



The Royal Aberdeen Golf Club



300 Club



Kingsbarns Golf Links

PHOTO CREDIT: LINKSLAND.COM

**TRALEE GOLF CLUB
ARDFERT, IRELAND**

The morning we played Tralee Golf Club, we were met with pouring rain and howling 30 knot winds. The weather was so bad, even members called in to cancel their tee times. When we arrived at the club, we were asked if we really wanted to play 18 holes.

Despite the wind and rain, what we saw in the short walk from the car park to the clubhouse was a strikingly beautiful course that needed to be played, regardless of condition.

This course was designed by the late Arnold Palmer and sits on a gorgeous piece of land by Barrow Beach.

The clubhouse was recently updated and provides an intimate and homely atmosphere.

Considering the blistering winds and rain, we decided to just enjoy the course and not worry about our score when we played.

To be honest, it took me about three to four holes to stop counting and start playing. The two nines were very distinct, with the outward holes playing closer to the river whilst the inward nine meandered along the coast.

I found both nines equally balanced in terms of playability and beauty. The nice thing is that despite the differences in character, they both flowed very nicely together to provide players with a wonderful experience.

I honestly loved what Arnold Palmer did with the land, he was able to magically create a course that challenges golfers of all levels, whilst enabling us to appreciate the natural surroundings of Barrow Bay. This was really a treat.

**KINGSBARN'S GOLF LINKS
ST ANDREWS, SCOTLAND**

Just minutes outside the town of St Andrews, Kingsbarns is on the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship rota and also recently hosted the Ricoh Women's British Open.

The course is easily the most beautiful links course around St Andrews. It has a mix of tough links and beautiful natural scenery. This is actually quite dangerous as golfers may not take it seriously but it is not a pushover at all.

Take for example Hole 15, a straightforward 151-yard par 3 by the water's edge. The day I played, my caddie asked me to take an iron that would go 180 yards and aim right out to sea for the wind to bring the ball back. If I had been without counsel, I would have just tried to play what I saw and would have suffered seriously.

Apart from the golf, I really loved the clubhouse and the bar. Weather permitting, I would suggest you order some haggis bonbons, sit outside the bar and watch players coming down the 18th hole. It was a great golfing experience and made all so much more enjoyable by the wonderful clubhouse.

**300 CLUB
CHIGASAKEI, JAPAN**

When I asked my Japanese friends to join me for a game at the 300 Club, they were so happy to accept and eagerly took leave from work for the opportunity to play at this very exclusive club.

I was later informed that as its name implies, there are only 300 members in this club, and the membership list reads like the 'who's-who' of Japan.

The day we played, we were told that numerous politicians were regulars there and the Prime Minister had booked a tee time the following day.

The clubhouse feels like it was built in the 1970's and has not been renovated or updated since.

The facilities are all in great shape and everything works well, guests just need to be ready for décor that dates back a few decades.

The course is neither long nor terribly difficult. However, the way the course is maintained and the conditions you play in are second to none.

The tee boxes are beautifully manicured and depending on the season, you can even pick seasonal fruits off the trees to snack on.

With so many mature trees on the property, it sometimes feels like you are walking in a forest, and with it, the challenge in having to contend with narrow towering tree line chutes.

**THE ROYAL ABERDEEN GOLF CLUB
ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND**

The pedigree of the Royal Aberdeen Golf Club, formed in 1815, is easy to see as it was recently selected as the venue for the Scottish Open and the Walker Cup.

The clubhouse is as traditional as it gets, with wooden panelling everywhere and historical pictures decorating the walls. I especially like going to the bar, where huge floor to ceiling windows point towards the sea, and to the first tee. It is especially nice to have lunch after a morning round, and watch the afternoon players tee off.

Playing the course is like a stroll back in time, as many of the holes have not been renovated since the course was set up. There have been minor adjustments to bunkering but the layout have fundamentally been the same.

This time travel started as early as the second hole as I walked between the dunes, and my host shared with me the history of the course. It was then that I realized I was playing the course the same way the original designers and members had been doing so since 1815. 🏌️



BY DAVID J. WHYTE

CARNOUSTIE GOLF LINKS
ANGUS, SCOTLAND

I live (or at least did until I recently moved to the Portuguese island of Madeira) near Carnoustie in Scotland. My now-former hometown of Dundee was pretty handy for golf, set exactly midway between St Andrews and Carnoustie with only a dozen miles to traverse between each.

And so I started playing golf on Carnoustie's Buddon Course, the junior of the three tracks that inhabit that wide swathe of natural, Scottish sandy links.

Occasionally, we'd get a game on the 'big course' or Carnoustie Championship as it is better known, host to several Open Championships and yet to us locals, a mere municipal that we could get on quite easily and economically - at one time.

That's changed somewhat as the 'old girl' has become so popular with visiting golfers from all around the world.

'Car-nasty' is actually reasonably accommodating to the average player if you know where you're going and don't try to take on its many 'sucker' corners. Beyond that, it is the characteristics of the layout, its amazing condition and sheer majesty of most holes that deliver a superlative experience.

Carnoustie Championship is a spectacular, seasoned links and a pure thrill all the way.

BIG SKY
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Up in Canada's top-left corner, the ski resort of Whistler stands high above Howe Sound, skirted by the Sea-to-Sky highway, a spectacular drive in this part of the world. There are three good golf courses in and around the resort village and I recommend a round on them all.

Half an hour beyond Whistler, the road-trip to the farm town of Pemberton is not so dramatic, crossing a wide, flat plain so you're lulled into a less expectant mood. But as soon as you step onto the first tee at Big Sky Golf Club, you step into a different world.

The track is laid out over a flat valley surrounded by high, glacial mountains, most notably Mount Currie. I think it is the contrast between the verdant, sunlit fairways and dark, brooding, snow-streaked walls that make Big Sky so striking.

Most holes are tree-lined or skirted with lakes as well as a snaky creek that winds throughout the course. As it is flat with large, accommodating greens, from a playing perspective you could accuse Big Sky of being slightly pedestrian but the constant, soul-stirring vision of your ball soaring towards the dark crags of Mount Currie last long in the memory.

ABAMA
TENERIFE, SPAIN

On the Atlantic island of Tenerife, Abama Golf can be a bamboozling experience if you're not on your game. Those narrow fairways catch you out from the very start.

But if you get things going, it is a total delight. As the course rises, you appreciate the nuances of the design and the tremendous variety of golf it throws at you. No two holes are remotely the same and the views back to the island of La Gomera are quite magical. You descend to the turn with some dynamic tests along the way.

The back nine is the more demanding with long holes laced between wide lakes that might catch the unwary. If you screw back and secure the relatively accessible landing areas, you can navigate your way around the trouble.

Alternatively, if you go hammering at it, you will most likely get wet. And that's what I like about Abama. Apart from the great views and wonderful presentation, it's a strong test that gives way to good play.

MUIRFIELD
EAST LOTHIAN, SCOTLAND

I can talk about Scottish golf courses all day long. As Scotland's 'official' golf course photographer, I've had the fortune of visiting every one of them.

When I first started my career, Muirfield or the 'Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers' was the scariest and snobbiest of them all. I'd heard tales of top tour pros being turned away at the gate by rottweiler caddy masters or abusive secretaries - so what hope did a humble little golf course photographer have?

That was in the early 90s and it's all changed now. In the three or four times I've now played it, Muirfield has been one of my best golf days out ever. Once you're through the wrought-iron entrance and hung your tweed jacket up amongst all the others in the ancient, wood-lined changing room, you feel completely at home.

The staff and members could not be friendlier and the clubhouse lunch is, well, something straight from a P. G. Wodehouse novel.

The format at Muirfield is you play as a four-ball in the morning, come back in for a spot of lunch (three hearty courses served with a bottle of claret between two - not to mention one or two stiff club gin and tonics) before going out for a super-swift round of foursomes (alternate shots).

By the time you get back, breathless, windblown and completely sober, you realise this is how everyday of golf should be. And the course itself? One of the very best in the world.

Big Sky



Carnoustie Golf Links



PHOTO CREDIT: LINKSLAND.COM

Abama



PALHEIRO GOLF
MADEIRA, PORTUGAL

This is my new home course so let's start by saying Palheiro Golf on the island of Madeira has some of the best views of any golf course in Europe. The clubhouse sits high above the scimitar-shaped city of Funchal and offers probably its finest viewpoint.

They also serve some of the best clubhouse food I've tasted, apart from almost any clubhouse in France but that's a whole other story.

The organisation of the Palheiro course is interesting. From the start, it rises steeply and packs a series of shorter holes into what was clearly limited available space.

Elevation changes are the stand-out feature throughout this section. The back nine makes up for the earlier lack of length with four Par 5s and more open views across to the Desertas Islands as well as the city.

Set in the wonderful nature park of Palheiro Estate, most of the holes are tree-lined or with colourful shrubbery. So this is where I'm going to play my golf for the foreseeable future and it's not at all a bad prospect, especially the part where you get back to the clubhouse, relax with a post-round pint and most likely a meal accompanied by one of Madeira's spectacular sunsets.

What's not to love?

TRÓIA GOLF
TRÓIA, PORTUGAL

Another Portuguese pick of recent discovery is Tróia located on a long, sandy peninsula south of the port town of Setúbal, about an hour's drive from the capital city of Lisbon.

I can't understand why this minx of a links hasn't been more proclaimed on the international stage. As a mark of its challenge, Tróia hosted the Portuguese Open back in 1987 and the cut stood at +12, to this day a European Tour record.

What makes Troia tick? Designed by Robert Trent Jones Snr, the course can play long and strong depending on your choice of tee and you really don't want to be playing this from the tips unless you're a masochist - or scratch golfer.

There's challenge aplenty in those uber-tight, umbrella pine-lined fairways which are augmented with a peppering of strategically-placed sand bunkers. The quality of the turf is exceptional and you'll find your entire game tested.

Tróia calls for creativity and touch on every shot and you'll arrive back at the clubhouse, enthused and exhilarated. Tróia is definitely one of the best courses in Portugal, if not Europe.

ROYAL DORNOCH
DORNOCH, SCOTLAND

I really didn't 'get' Royal Dornoch for the longest time. I

think I played it on half a dozen occasions and actually came to a point where I thought I didn't like the course.

It was the greens that were the problem. You couldn't argue about the setting, the wide, gorse-lined banks that in May are ablaze with yellow blooms, the smell, like marzipan driving the bees crazy. The town's a treat too with its old jail, Dornoch Cathedral and wide, sandy beaches.

No, it was definitely the greens I had issues with.

Most of them are like colossal molehills stepped upon by a great giant to flatten them off. I felt like Tom Thumb on those early rounds. Tom Watson, on the other hand, declared Dornoch "the most fun I've ever had playing golf".

That brought the Americans in by the busload and they too, seemed to be enjoying it. You simply can't just go attacking those noticeably raised, awkwardly angled greens from any old position; you need to consider your tee shots then, judiciously, give yourself a chance of hitting and holding the greens without being ejected out the back or side doors.

Now that I've unlocked the puzzle, Royal Dornoch is indeed one of the most 'fun' courses I've played.

**STREAMSONG RESORT
BOWLING GREEN, FLORIDA, USA**

I have a love-hate relationship with some American courses purporting to be 'the real deal'. Bandon Dunes didn't do it for me, especially after a six-hour drive to get there. The Loop in Northern Michigan is good but it too is a long way from civilisation.

It seems to me, Americans revere courses that are so out of the way that they have to mount a major expedition to get there. I remember the first time I tried to find Streamsong, I almost cried when I arrived, so arduous was the journey to the 'Middle-of-Nowhere', Florida.

The three courses at Streamsong should fit into the same category of questionable American hyperbole. For a kick-

off, they are completely fake. All that dazzling white sand that looks more natural than wind-blasted Scottish links is a byproduct of a sulphate mining operation that has stripped the surrounding land bare.

It sounds awful, doesn't it? Well, I have to admit, it's not.

I've only played the Red and Blue courses (now they've added a Black) but I have to say, Streamsong is a joy to play. In spite of its Disneyesque genesis, once you get here and get quartered in the sumptuous hotel, then stride out on links, you feel like you're in golfing heaven. And that's all that matters.

**ROYAL LYTHAM
LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND**

I remember staying at Royal Lytham Golf Club, sleeping in their comfy but dormitory-like Dormie House after a sumptuous dinner followed by a first-class breakfast in the morning, then stepping out onto the links thinking

everything was right in the world.

I was paired with a couple of members, a jeweller and a hotelier if I remember rightly, and they both remarked at how well I was playing. I was level par at the 9th and things could not get better.

They certainly did not. At the 10th, we turned into the wind. Suddenly, my poise and pride were cast aside as I started thrashing my way back on one of the worst back nines I've ever endured.

Talk about Jekyll and Hyde, Royal Lytham is a cunning adversary that flatters you at first before sending you to the gallows. The 10th is only a short Par 4 but suddenly, with the wind tearing at your trouser legs, you have trouble standing let alone swinging.

By the time I had reached the 14th, I was almost in tears, my score in tatters. Royal Lytham's back nine is renowned as a wrecking ball of many a good card, one of the most fearsome finishes in Open Championship history, and into a wind such as this, nye impossible. If the rough doesn't get you, the bunkers will.

Small wonder that the clubhouse is so warm and welcoming. You will need it after such a drubbing. But like all great courses, you take your medicine (in my case a stiff Scotch) and reflect, satisfied that you've survived one of the best - at its worst.

**KIAWAH ISLAND
KIAWAH ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA, USA**

I have an affinity with Kiawah Island, not too far from the city of Charleston, South Carolina. My dad was the pastry chef there when the resort first opened back in the late 1970s.

On my last visit, I called in on Remy Funfrock, the incumbent pastry chef whose name always tickled me, to see if he knew my father. He didn't but one or two of the older staff did recall the flamboyant Scotsman.

I've played all of the courses on this palatable property but the Ocean Course is by far its most outstanding; a genuine links test by the sea.

The course by and large plays between the Atlantic and a series of inland waterways with unobstructed views of the beaches and ocean from the majority of the holes.

Of course, this arrangement catches most of the wind that routinely patrols this coast. They say, there's no such thing as a prevailing wind here so you deal with each hole, indeed each shot as you find it.

One thing to bear in mind; if your ball strays into the sandy, grass wastes alongside the fairways, you have to abandon it. Being a Scotsman, I'm always on the lookout for the odd Pro Vs lost in action but here my caddy insisted, you don't go foraging.

"There are rattlers, diamondbacks and cottonmouths in there - not to mention gators." Enough said. The message is keep it on the fairway. ☺



Muirfield



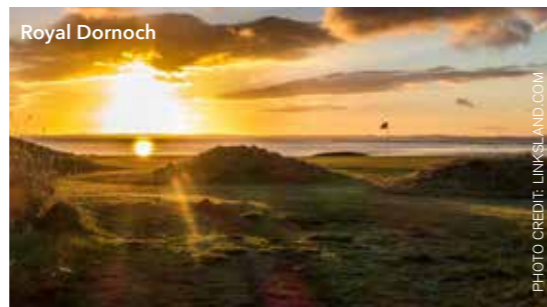
Tróia Golf



Kiawah Island



Palheiro Golf



Royal Dornoch



Royal Lytham



Streamsong Resort

PHOTO CREDIT: LINKSISLAND.COM

PHOTO CREDIT: LINKSISLAND.COM

PHOTO CREDIT: LARRY LAMBRECHT



BY JAMES MASON

ROYAL BIRKDALE SOUTHPORT, ENGLAND

My number one always fluctuates between Royal Birkdale and Formby but for most months of the year, the 10 times Open Championship course takes my number one spot.

Designed by five-time Open Champion JH Taylor and Frederic Hawtee in 1922, the course has stood the test of time and who could forget the exciting finish in 2017 when Jordan Spieth took that drop on the practice ground and went on to lift the Claret Jug.

Look out for the iconic art deco clubhouse, which opened in 1935 and sits behind the 18th green. Apart from several refurbishments inside, it remains a beautiful example of that period of architecture.

The holes meander through the sand-hills of the Birkdale Hills and offers some fantastic vantage points for spectators during tournaments. I always feel golf course designers should spend some time playing Royal Birkdale before they go onto designing golf courses.

The course has everything to challenge a golfer, risk-and-reward holes, perfectly-designed par 3 holes – I love all the par 3s with the pick being the 181-yard 12th and the 199-yard 14th – and the perfect finale with the par 5, 17th offering you an eagle or birdie chance and the tough 18th that can see you rapidly lose any shots you picked up on the previous hole.

When you walk off the course you know every part of your game, both mentally and physically, has been put to the ultimate test whether the wind is blowing or not and that is why it is my number one course in the world.

ROYAL PORTRUSH PORTRUSH, ULSTER, NORTHERN IRELAND

Many of you would have watched Shane Lowry win this year's Open Championship and I am sure Royal Portrush impressed you all. I played the new layout for the first time back in April and I certainly was.

The work that golf architect Martin Ebert of Mackenzie and Ebert had carried out to the original Harry Colt design has certainly enhanced Royal Portrush's reputation.

The 7th is one of the new holes and standing on the elevated tee of the uphill par 5 named Curran Point, you would think this hole was part of the original course. Martin and his team added five new greens, eight new tee boxes, 10 new bunkers and two new holes - the 7th and 8th on land which was once part of the Valley course.

The first few holes have not changed with the opening hole being played uphill to a very tricky green, the first of two par 3s comes at the 3rd hole, but it's the 6th named

“Harry Colt” that tested the pros; anything short will see the ball rolling off into thick grass from its raised green.

The course closes with a dogleg right with some very deep cross bunkers sitting in the fairway, anything close to the left of the green will run away and down into a collection area. I played the course with the stands all in place and walking down the fairway gave me goose bumps and they are empty. I am sure Shane's hairs on his entire body were tingling back in July when he did the same but with a cheering horde.

ROYAL PORTHCAWL REST BAY, PORTHCAWL, ENGLAND

Royal Porthcawl is probably one of the toughest links courses and not just when the wind blows off the Bristol Channel, but Bernhard Langer made light of this in The Senior Open Championship back in 2014 when he shot -18.

Your first port of call should be the clubhouse and its trophy room. The history and trophies on display are magnificent. The first hole plays along the shoreline, but make sure you aim at the right hand rough as the fairway runs from right to left. I played the course just before the Senior Open Championship returned and they had certainly Langer-proofed the course!

The fairways looked like slivers of emerald green between gorse, fescue, flora and fauna.

One of my favourite holes is the par 5 fifth hole that has a wide fairway with a bunker in the middle, right within the landing zone. The second shot is played up the hill to a long narrow green that has three tiers and is surrounded by mounding.

The course closes with a wonderful par 4. A good tee shot will set you up nicely to a green that sits below with the backdrop of the Bristol Channel. It is a beautiful finishing hole but one that brings a tinge of sadness as it all comes to an end.

TURNBERRY TURNBERRY, GIRVAN, SCOTLAND

I had played Turnberry many years ago and when I had a chance to play the newly designed Ailsa course on a trip organised by Connoisseurs Scotland, I jumped at the chance. I couldn't have picked a more perfect day to check out Martin Ebert's (of Mackenzie & Ebert) changes to what was already a stunning course.

I have a wee smile on my face the last time I played here; it was a force seven gale and I was getting hit in the face from rain that was coming at me horizontally and what ended up feeling like a four hour long acupuncture treatment at my face.

For me the best changes come around the iconic lighthouse at the 9th through to the 11th. I must admit I was awestruck as I stood on the new 11th tee; Augusta may



Royal Birkdale



Royal Porthcawl



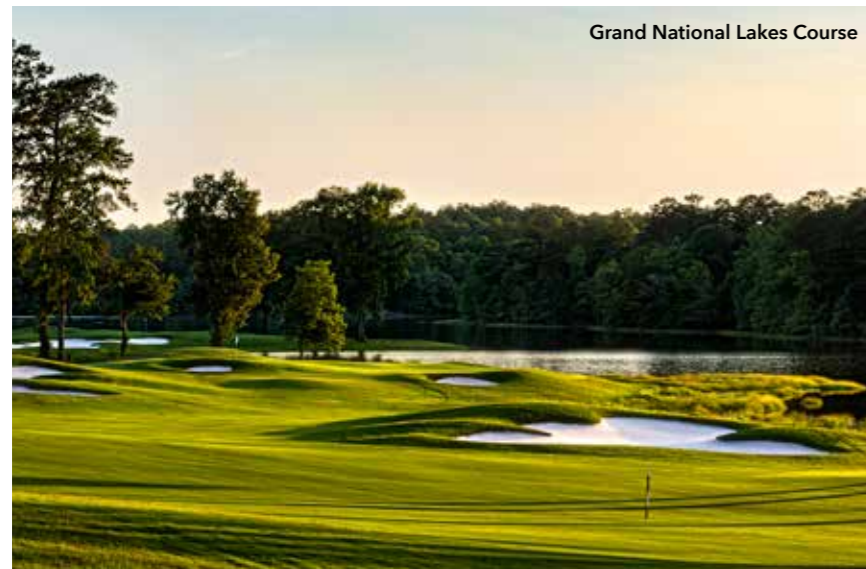
Turnberry



Royal Portrush



Burnham & Berrow



Grand National Lakes Course



Arcadia Bluffs



Rosapenna Sandy Hills

have its Amen Corner but Turnberry now has a set of holes to match them and although the par 5 tenth may give you a birdie or even an eagle chance, the par 3s at the 9th and 11th may take those shots back and then some.

Turnberry was always a great golf course but the changes have not only complemented the course but have also taken it to a whole new level. Mr Ebert has done a fantastic job and taken a diamond and turned it into a jewel fit to sit on any crown.

**BURNHAM & BERROW
BURNHAM-ON-SEA, ENGLAND**

The original design was laid out by Herbert Fowler, but Harry Colt was commissioned to add his genius with a little help from Dr Alistair Mackenzie of Augustan fame. Now, if those three designers have had a hand in a course design, you know it's going to be good.

The first tee sits right outside the beautifully appointed

clubhouse, so I would make sure you warm up on the new practice facilities that have been added. There has also been changes to the course with new tee positions at the 6th, 9th and 11th and a realignment of the green on 6th and all have greatly enhanced the course. The back tee of the sixth is one of the few places on course that you can actually see the sea.

One of the things that struck me the last time I played here was the colours that greeted me. The week I played the Atlantic Links courses we had some wonderful English weather, bright blue skies and perfect fast running golden-brown fairways and the fescue that lined the fairways had a slight orange-red hue; it truly was breathtaking.

The course offers one great hole after another and is a classic out and back links. Because of Dr Mackenzie's involvement in the 9th hole, I will give that a special mention as it looks a daunting challenge especially from the new back tee. The six bunkers that guard the green are deep and intimidating and just waiting to collect anything wayward.

of the double green shared with the first and water on the left, I had to laugh. Maybe you can have 18 spectacular holes after all.

As I walked off the 18th green I remember thinking I had just played the most visually appealing golf course ever and one that will live long in my memory.

**ROSAPENNA SANDY HILLS
COUNTY DONEGAL, IRELAND**

The course was opened in 2003 and sits next to the Old Tom Morris Course. Tom's course runs along the Dunes, the Pat Ruddy-designed Sandy Hills course goes through them, which does surprisingly offer you plenty of solitude.

You may see other holes from the greens and tees, but when you're on most fairways the dunes seclude you. I must admit playing here alone could become very spiritual – well if your game is in good shape that is. I loved all the par 3s, in fact I'm not sure that there is a weak hole on the course.

You will be hard pushed to name a favourite because as you start going back over them at the bar, you can hear your brain ticking away, saying how about the 18th and the way it funnels down to the green, but the 6th is the same with that stunning view, and how about the tee shot down to the fairway at the 8th, or the 5th and how the green sits between the dunes, and on and on it goes.

In the end you'll just settle for the fact that all the holes have something special about them and you need to come back again someday to sample that feeling of peace that you feel while walking and playing among the dunes at Sandy Hills.

**ARCADIA BLUFFS
ARCADIA, MICHIGAN, USA**

John Keats once said "A thing of beauty is a joy forever". I wonder if he had just walked off the 18th hole at Arcadia Bluffs. Words really don't do this track justice, you can throw in words like 'majestic', 'hallowed', 'wondrous', 'breathtaking' and they would all be within context.

Warren Henderson and Rick Smith have done a fantastic job. The course drops 225 feet from its highest to its lowest point and sits 180 feet above Lake Michigan. Make sure you stay around to watch the sun setting as the bagpipe player plays until the sun dips below the horizon; it is nearly as good as watching your teeshot sail down the 11th.

Stand-out holes for me were: It's really tough to pick as they are all stunning holes but I loved the 11th and the drive from the elevated tee. The 3rd for its stunning views, the 12th as it follows the shoreline above Lake Michigan and the 18th is a great finishing hole going back up the hill with the clubhouse as its backdrop. 🏌️

**GRAND NATIONAL LAKES COURSE
OPELIKA, ALABAMA, USA**

I was told as I passed through the professional shop eulogising the short course that if I thought that was good, "wait until you play the Lakes", and standing on the first tee, I could see why.

Robert Trent Jones said this was the best piece of land he had been given to work with and when you look down the first from the elevated tee with the double green below protected by water at the front and the sculptured white sand bunker carved into the fairway, I could fully appreciate those comments.

I remember that it was only when I got to the 6th hole that it was the first tee box where I had thought, "well you can't have 18 spectacular holes!" How wrong could I be.

The tee shot may not be as inspiring as the others but when you get up to the landing area and see the other part



BY JOHN GIBB

WENTWORTH VIRGINIA WATER, SURREY, ENGLAND

The Wentworth Club at Virginia Water in Surrey, England was opened in 1922 and is now one of the most sophisticated and famous golf clubs anywhere in the world. Home to the World Matchplay championship and to countless other tournaments over the years including the Ryder Cup.

There are now three major courses including the Burmah Road as the West Course is widely known, the East course, and the Edinburgh all of which are sophisticated heathland courses and two of which were designed by Harry Colt.

The West Course built in 1924, is 5,558 yards long and is the main Championship course. The third and most recent addition was the Edinburgh course, which is slightly less sophisticated than its two companions.

JOHN O' GAUNT SUTTON, SANDY, ENGLAND

Two attractive 18-hole parkland courses in Sutton Park about 30 miles from Cambridge and within easy reach of London. This is a traditional home counties golf club, which is why the name "John O Gaunt" seems so fitting when you first see the clubhouse as you drive down the gravelled track.

This is a fundamentally English place to play golf with all the comforts and amenities you would expect even though it only dates back to 1948. It sits in Sutton Park near Sandy in Bedfordshire which is just off the A1.

The courses are two of the most accomplished designs produced by the course architect, Fred Hawtree and were built while England was beginning to recover after the second World War. There is a magnificent, slightly old-fashioned clubhouse while the club as a whole is about 30 miles from Cambridge and feels reassuring, particularly as you stroll in through the front doors for lunch on Sunday.

The food here is as excellent as you would expect it to be and there is a subtle atmosphere of gentlemanly chivalry about the club as you walk through the doors.

CASTLETOWN DERBYHAVEN, ISLE OF MAN

It can be a bit of an effort to reach Castletown on the Isle of Man, but it's worth it. Someone has worked out that, when you're standing with your driver in your hand on the back tee of the 17th hole, you're actually about to drive the ball into England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

Before playing this course, I was told that wherever you

are, any lack of certainty about where you're going to hit the ball is the least of your worries because you could arguably be standing in England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales and the wind could blow you over the border.

Personally, I think the solution to this irritating conundrum is that it doesn't matter because the wind is likely to make the shot almost impossible to play anyway, because you won't be able to hold your balance or you'll be disoriented because the course is subject to wind from every point of the compass at the same time.

Castletown is on the southern end of the island and was designed by Mackenzie Ross in 1892 and has a par of 72 at 6040 yards. It is a true links and the only shelter on the course are the bunkers.

There are no trees and the clubhouse is not always close by. The course is flat and thus exposed to the weather but it is certainly fun and good for your game because it forces you to keep your balance as best you can.

There are no trees to speak of and the architect Mackenzie Ross was inspired by the challenge of such an exposed site for a links course, which was why he came down here immediately after his triumphant success at Turnberry.

I played it once on a rare windless morning and it was in the Midsummer in 1984.

ALDEBURGH GOLF CLUB ALDEBURGH, ENGLAND

This is a stunning seaside course on the verge of being a links,

although at the same time, it has all the characteristics of a well-planned parkland golf course.

I've been a member of Aldeburgh for years and it is hard to define because it bears the hallmark of so many eminent designers including Donald Steele, Willie Park Junior, JH Taylor and Willie Fernie.

It would be a big mistake to dismiss Aldeburgh simply as a pleasant holiday outing; it is a grown-up parkland course and full of challenges, amongst which is the remarkable collection of well-placed bunkers and the punishing gorse.

However, the nightingales arrive in spring and remain until May. It is a unique experience to play golf on a spring evening, especially when you're accompanied with the deliquescent song of this beautiful bird when it is supported by the cuckoo.

THE BERKSHIRE WINKFIELD ROW, ASCOT, ENGLAND

Of the two Berkshire courses, I personally have always preferred the Blue. The Red and the Blue courses are unique in that the Red finishes with a par three and the Blue starts with a par three. The club can help you here with an easy way to describe the courses.

The red has six par fives, six par threes and six par fours, while the Blue has nothing very unusual. However, both courses are rich in pine, chestnut and birch. This course is a classic showcase for the beauty of the Berkshire countryside.

The last time I played there, I had just finished the 18th



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hole on the Red and was walking to the bar and thinking about a drink when I heard the full-throated roar of what, for many English men, will always cause the hair on the back of the head to rise; and that is the sound of the Merlin V12 piston aero engine at full throttle.

It tends to make you come to a stop and look up, and of course I did; and I directed my eyes to the west above the tall pines and saw the Spitfire. It was flying low above the woods which line the first fairway and there, at low altitude and coming along the avenue of pines was the Spitfire, flying low and directly above us.

We stood on the first tee and watched overhead and away towards Windsor. It is a sound you'll never forget.

BALLYBUNION COUNTY KERRY, IRELAND

The first time I played at Ballybunion, I drove down to Tralee on the west coast from Dublin with some friends who were medical students at Edinburgh University. The idea was to play a few rounds at Tralee and then drive to the Ballybunion Old course, which has in recent years, become renowned for its quality as a classic links.

It seemed during the last four years to be becoming notorious as a serious golfing challenge. Tom Watson had seemed to become almost overpowered about its quality, stressing its significance as one of the finest, if not the finest links courses in the world.

I had talked to everyone I knew who had played it and discussed it with the Irish Tourist Board and had been told it was reputedly difficult even on a calm day, but "when there was a wind," I was told, "it was murder."

The landlord of the Pub joined us. He said, "Forget par. Forget the 3s, 4s, and 5s because you'll find your ball is being blown away off the green and into greenside bunkers. That's if your drive hasn't gone back over your head and is running away down towards the rubbish or back off the tee and into the clubhouse."

We wandered down to the course at Ballybunion and stood on the first tee and looked down to the sea and sniffed the salt in the sea air. I remember thinking to myself that morning, that I had never seen a more enticing golf course. There was only a slight breeze, and the first hole was basking in the sun.

FORMBY GOLF CLUB MERSEYSIDE, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

Formby's links credentials are immaculate. Willie Park, Frank Pennink, Donald Steel and Harry Colt are all listed as architects who have worked on this lovely old course.

The first time I played there on the way back from Turnberry to London, I was welcomed by the secretary who was dressed in a formal three-piece suit and carrying a bowler hat. That's what I love about Formby.

It was opened in 1895 and it still has the feel of a links

although there are trees within the landscape of dunes and soil on many holes. The land is exposed to the wind off the sea from Liverpool Bay and the turf is often hard and does not always allow the ball to sit up and wait to be struck.

I like it and I respect it and I liked the atmosphere in the clubhouse. Before playing here, I read Bernard Darwin's description of the course. He wrote: "It's one of those courses where the player's fate is entirely in his own hands."

Also, I was told that "the Ladies have their own course and their own clubhouse here at Formby so I wouldn't have to worry about them getting in the way." So I suppose tradition is still alive in Formby.

SWINLEY FOREST WINKFIELD ROW, ENGLAND

Swinley Forest is a gentleman's club designed by Harry Colt and built in 1909. All is perfect, from bunkers, greens, tee boxes, and even the trees are immaculate. Everything is in the right position.

It's a beautiful course, and there is a feeling of privacy and discretion here, which would enable Bertie Wooster to relax in his armchair after a Sunday lunch. The course is a par 69 with five par threes and it always gives me the impression of wide open spaces and carefully planted bushes and trees.

Swinley is 5,441 yards long and many of the members also belong to Boodles. Swinley Forest was originally part of Windsor Great Park and was a royal hunting ground used by the Prince of Wales.

Today, whilst Swinley is a gentleman's club, ladies and dogs are welcome and rules of admission may be relaxed with a telephone call to the Secretary.

SUNNINGDALE SUNNINGDALE, ASCOT, ENGLAND

When I was a kid, I used to go to Sunday church at Sunningdale. It was close enough for me to nip over from the little shed-like chapel just off the A20 and the lyrical mass, given every Sunday by Father Fontinari, and for me to find my way onto the Old Course at Sunningdale.

This was where I could get a bite at the halfway hut on the Old and in those days, this was where you could get the best breakfast in Berkshire.

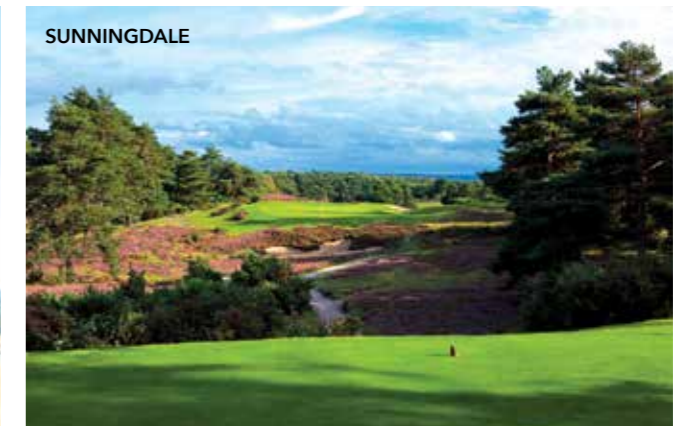
It was prepared by a series of local girls who would take turns to start early enough to coincide with golfers who wanted to get a round in before 10 o'clock and include a good breakfast before playing another round before lunch.

It was tight but at least you got a plate of good bacon, eggs, a glass of sherry and some toast and marmalade. Then, depending on your status, you might get another nine or so holes in before a second round and maybe a decent lunch and a bottle of claret.

I don't know about the legal status of the Sunningdale



BALLYBUNION



SUNNINGDALE



ST ENODOC

hut, but I do know how popular it was. It satisfied the requirements of a mainly male market of mostly Sunningdale members and, over the seasons it also seemed to satisfy a market of local passers-by and their "guests", ie caddies and hikers from Chobham Common.

Unfortunately, it all fell to bits when someone complained after two attractive young girls took over the hut and predictably, trade flourished as the market of male Sunningdale members also immediately flourished and one of the girls bought a new Mini.

ST ENODOC ROCK, WADEBRIDGE, ENGLAND

St Enodoc Church was for many years buried beneath the dunes on the edge of Damer Bay by the Camel estuary on the North Cornwall coast.

Every year, the parish priest was lowered down through

the spire of the ancient building in order for the church to be reconsecrated. At the end of the 19th century, the golf course was built around the church together with the first and last holes and the clubhouse was built a little further down the estuary at the little port of Rock.

The Church remains where it always was, right by the 10th hole and close to a huge bunker, known as the Himalayas. The bunker is part of a large dune over which you must hit your second shot in the often forlorn hope that you will find the green, which is hidden in a pit on the other side of the dune.

The views from the course over the estuary and down the coast, are sublime and the course, with its high hills and dunes and a certain amount of gorse, is a good test of golf and is beautifully laid out.

Once you have played St Enodoc, you will never forget it. The course was completed in 1890 and the architect was the great James Braid. The par is 69 and is a classic links in every way. ☺



BY PAUL JANSEN

**WEST SUSSEX
PULBOROUGH, ENGLAND**

The one golf course I could play everyday for the rest of my life. With such a remarkable variety of holes including back-to-back par 3s coupled with some wonderful terrain and flora, this is one special place for golf. The Par 68 layout can be played in under three hours even at a leisurely pace.

**KAMBAKU KOMATIPOORT GOLF CLUB
BORDER OF SOUTH AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE**

In my opinion, the best 9-hole golf course on the planet. Built by the locals, this layout traverses unique African bushveld terrain. The golf course is populated with an abundance of African wildlife including zebra and local buck and with views out over the Kruger National Park, there are few better golf course experiences anywhere. A true African unique golf course.

**LAGUNA LANG CO
LANG CO, VIETNAM**

The first golf course I designed in Asia alongside Sir Nick Faldo for the Banyan Tree Group. The course has a strong sense of place, is strategic to play, and is a good example of environmental sustainability particularly since working rice paddy fields bound some of the holes on the front and back nine.

**ROYAL COUNTY DOWN
NEWCASTLE, COUNTY DOWN, NORTHERN IRELAND**

In terms of sheer beauty this is my favorite golf course. It is also one of the hardest golf courses I have ever played

**HIMALAYAN GOLF CLUB
POKHARA, NEPAL**

The Himalayan Golf Club might not be the best maintained golf course you will ever play but with the Annapurna Massif as your backdrop and holes that manoeuvre up and down the mountainside like a sherpa would, this might be the best adventure you will ever experience on a golf course. What a memorable place for golf and admiring the view.

**UTRECHT DE PAN
BOSCH EN DUIN, THE NETHERLANDS**

Golf in the Netherlands is very underrated starting with De



Shinnecock Hills GC



Nuwara Eliya



Dave Pelz's Backyard



Pan. Routed on a small parcel of land that is populated with pine trees and sand deposits, the golf course takes advantage of every feature and is masterfully designed so that golfers have to plot their way around the golf course using equal amounts of brain and brawn.

SHINNECOCK HILLS GC SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK, USA

A major championship site with five US Opens held there - the last in 2018 won by Brooks Koepka - everything about Shinnecock Hill oozes with class. Everything.

The current design (by William Flynn in 1931) is old but gold. For the 2018 US Open, Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore merely added new teeboxes and retained the routing; a testament to the timeless appeal of this par 70 course.

NUWARA ELIYA NUWARA ELIYA, SRI LANKA

One of the oldest golf clubs in Sri Lanka, Nuwara Eliya

was built in the 19th century atop the cool and beautiful tree hills of said township. I am fortunate to consult at this storied club which might also be the most unique, distinctive and fun golf course to play at. The clubhouse structure, with its accommodation, could also be the best place on the globe to enjoy a cup of tea and butter cake. My happy place.

DAVE PELZ'S BACKYARD SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

The best three acres of golf anywhere on the globe is in the home of short game guru Dave Pelz, who teaches the likes of Phil Mickelson and Patrick Reed. He built a remarkable golf course complex in his own backyard using synthetic material to help reduce the cost of maintenance. It is possible to play every shot within a 100 yards of the pin within this small confined space. Every fanatical golfer should have a facility such as this in their own backyard, if they can get past the missus. 🍷

BY PAUL PRENDERGAST



THE OLD COURSE ST ANDREWS, SCOTLAND

If you've played it, it's unfathomable to think that the Home of Golf would not appear on any self-respecting judge's Top-10 list for many and varied reasons.

Just to visit and walk around the town of St Andrews is unforgettable in itself. If you've braved the daily ballot to wait for a tee time on the Old Course, you'll know the feeling of expectation and anticipation that builds on every day you gaze longingly down the 1st and 18th holes, hoping to finally see your name on the sheet for the following day.

When that moment arrives, especially with the sun on your back, is there no more glorious day to be had playing the ancient game than on the very links from which all in golf has sprung forth?

The double greens, the blind shots, the hidden bunkers, the relative simplicity of many of the tee shots if you simply aim left, only to be flummoxed by the more exacting of approach shots into the greens over humps and hollows from that angle.

My own Old Course experience began unforgettably in that as a teenager, I played my first ever 18 holes of golf at the Old Course - yes, ever - with my Dad on a holiday to Britain. Of course I had no idea of the significance of where I was but in hindsight, not a bad introduction to the game, in my humble opinion.

KINGSTON HEATH MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Dr Alistair Mackenzie visited Australian shores and built the West Course of Royal Melbourne. Another to benefit from this visit is Kingston Heath. This is a club that had waited over 12 months for the good doctor's arrival before committing to the construction of any bunkers on the Dan Souter-designed layout.

Apart from the bunkering plan, MacKenzie's tour of the course resulted in only one suggested change, altering the 15th from a short par 4 and re-routing it up the dune to create what is one of Australia's most iconic short par 3s.

The quest for excellence at the Heath has continued on from almost a century ago with the club continuing to refine and improve the presentation of roughs, natural grasses and sandy, heathland areas.

It is widely regarded as one of the best in the world and certainly one of the most intriguing and inspiring tests of golf that could exist on such a small, fairly flat parcel of land.

Like Royal Melbourne, the greens and bunkering at the Heath are sublime examples of sandbelt golf at its best and is always a treat to be able to play it.

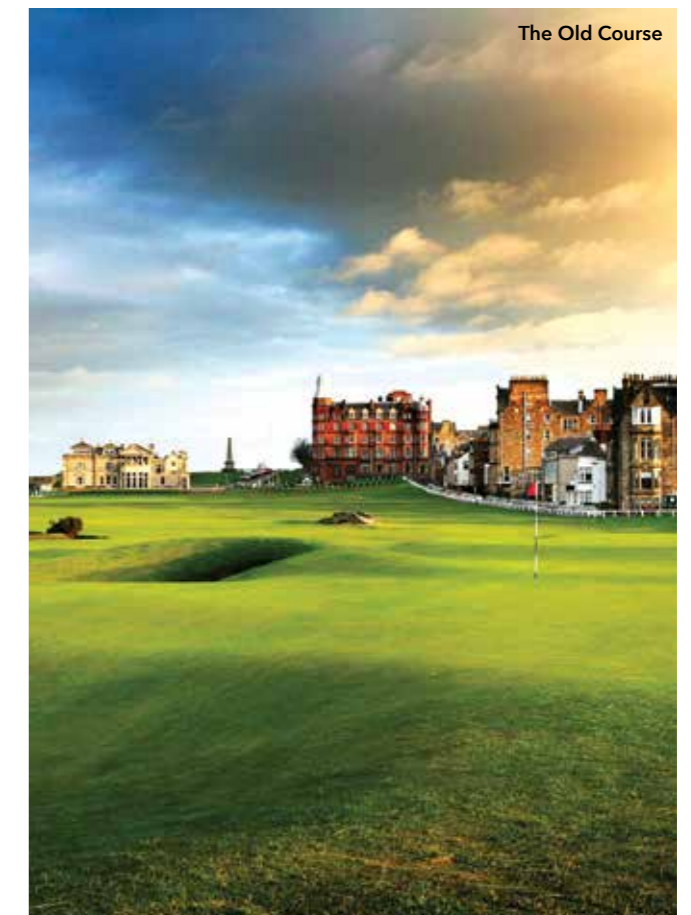
PASATIEMPO SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA, USA

I visited Pasatiempo in the hills above Santa Cruz the week after attending the 2015 US Open at Chambers Bay. It's a golf course I'd always wanted to see simply for the fact that Alister MacKenzie designed it and spent the later years of his life living right there, making adjustments along the way.

Having seen his design influence first hand in Melbourne and other courses where he consulted around Australia, I was not surprised to be confronted by the superb bunkering in the 'flash-faced' style, albeit that the bunker sand was more gleaming white (see Augusta National) than the more natural hues on the sandbelt.

The routing through and across natural ravines (termed "barancas"), the dramatic green contours, the visually striking vistas down to Monterey Bay, even the '19th hole' lunch and beverages in Hollins House, certainly had me pining for more.

The Old Course



The Tom Doak restoration work that had been carried out over many years was brilliant and in some areas, inspired by aerial images that had been unearthed of the course taken during World War II.

Like many of the Melbourne courses, I loved the par 3s, none more so than the long 3rd up the hill (yes, it is possible to love a long uphill par 3 when you see this one) and the 18th which sits in a striking amphitheatre setting directly over one of the barancas.

**NEW SOUTH WALES
SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA**

I've spent the bulk of my golfing days in the Sydney area and as such, played quite a lot of golf at 'New South' in just about every weather condition imaginable, with the possible exception of "calm".

It seemed I only ever saw NSW in a milder mood when the professionals came to town, although the contestants at the gale-affected Australian Open of 2009 would beg to differ.

That's no criticism of the course or its location, smack bang on the northern tip of the entrance to Botany Bay. Like most seaside layouts, it is simply a fact that the elements are going to play a part more often than not.

What sets NSW apart from many others are the quantity of exhilarating shots and scenes you get to experience.

The view of the ocean and Botany Bay entrance when you climb the hill on the par 5 fifth is a jaw dropper, so too is the tee shot from the rocky outcrop over the corner of the bay at the par 3 sixth, the approach shot to number 13 where there appears to be nothing behind the green but ocean; the quirky dogleg 14th; the white knuckle tee shot up the narrow shoot and over the saddle on 15, and on and on.

There are so many exciting and memorable opportunities to achieve success or abject failure at NSW but rest assured, either outcome will still leave you wanting to come back for more.

**BANDON DUNES/PACIFIC DUNES
BANDON, OREGON, USA**

One of my all-time favourite 'buddy trips' as my American friends like to call them, was to remote Bandon Dunes Golf Resort on the Oregon coastline.

108 holes in three days on foot - six rounds spread out

across four courses. To be fair, I might have picked any and every course at the resort for this Top-10 list but in the interests of variety, narrowed it down to the original Bandon Dunes layout and the spectacular Pacific Dunes which take advantage of much of the dramatic coastline opportunities.

The vision for Bandon is one to make the purists smile with owner Mike Keiser determined to create a links golf destination worthy of the classic layouts of Britain and Ireland, but right in the United States.

He scoured the country until he found this property high on the cliff tops of Bandon and set about his task of building a first (Bandon Dunes) and subsequent layouts over time.

The remote setting and cliff-top views are breathtaking, the cooler marine layer provides for a much more temperate climate than from even five miles inland, with fog rolling in to provide a very 'Scottish' experience.

Even after 36 holes a day and feeling a little footsore and weather beaten, we couldn't resist trying our hand on the Punchbowl putting green complex designed by Tom Doak, inspired by the Himalayas putting green at St Andrews.

Not easy to get to but once you're there, it's a golfer's haven.

**PEBBLE BEACH GOLF LINKS
PEBBLE BEACH, CALIFORNIA, USA**

Speaking of dramatic coastline golf, is there a more famous offering than the Pebble Beach Golf Links in Monterey, California? The site of the 2019 US Open – won by Gary Woodland – is a public course open to play at your leisure, if you have the time and resources to do so.

Only a handful of locations would consistently appear on most golfers' bucket lists and I'd warrant Pebble Beach would be one of them.

I'd visited more than once without playing Pebble, done all the usual things like walking down the glorious 18th, stood on the spot by the 17th green where Tom Watson chipped in for birdie on his way to winning the 1982 US Open.

When my first opportunity came to actually tee it up one summer, I felt a bit like I did on my second trip back to St Andrews, where you find you can't keep the smile off your face all day.

At courses like Pebble and St Andrews, there's that air of familiarity having seen them on TV so often, but the atmosphere is something you can't fully appreciate until



Kingston Heath



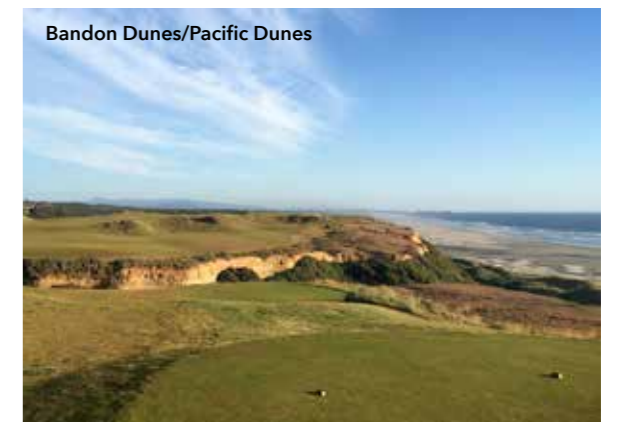
Pasatiempo

PHOTO CREDIT: PASATIEMPO



New South Wales

PHOTO CREDIT: MARK WILSON



Bandon Dunes/Pacific Dunes



Pebble Beach Golf Links

PHOTO CREDIT: EVAN SCHILLER



Victoria Golf Club



Els Club Teluk Datai

PHOTO CREDIT: MARK WILSON

you're there.

Holes 5 through 10 that come back to that gorgeous coastline really are that spectacular and number 18 along the ocean is just one of those great 'photo ops' in golf.

POPPY HILLS
PEBBLE BEACH, CALIFORNIA, USA

This might be a surprise from a course ranking perspective and when compared to the many other layouts of such quality on the Monterey Peninsula. However, when asked to compile a list of some of your favourite courses, there are individual elements unique to us all that endear certain places to us.

With friends in the Bay Area, Poppy Hills was a preferred destination many years ago as it is owned and run by the Northern California Golf Association and offered favourable rates to members and guests.

It is the course I have played the most in the United States and a place I spent many days playing 18 holes in the morning with mates, having a beer or two after the round,

only to be offered a discounted rate to play another 18 into the twilight.

Poppy is set in the pines of Del Monte forest above Monterey and for a time, was part of the now Pebble Beach Pro-Am rotation of courses, so it was definitely no snack.

I haven't been back in decades but with the course having undergone major renovations to remove turf and introduce more natural waste areas, I can only imagine the course will be an improved and exciting test to the Poppy I remember with fondness.

VICTORIA GOLF CLUB
BLACK ROCK, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

I first played Victoria in an Australian Junior Championship many moons ago. I'd played a few sandbelt layouts socially a few years early but this was something else.

The wintry weather, strong winds, the quickest and firmest greens I'd ever seen to that point in time, ensured that the course ate my lunch across the four days.

I most certainly wasn't alone, as the winning score was

over 300 for 72-holes in a field that included the likes of Craig Parry, Bradley Hughes, Brett Ogle, Peter O'Malley and former Players Champion, Craig Perks.

Victoria is a favourite destination in Melbourne for golfers not simply because of the lure of a world-class layout, but for the accommodations available in the upper level of the clubhouse – a superb base for your sandbelt trip.

The clubhouse has an old world charm with leather lounges, log fires in the winter, excellent dining and a rare collection of trophies and other artefacts in display from the career of club member, the late Peter Thomson.

The driveable par 4 first hole is a throwback to course design blueprints of yesteryear and there is a marvellous balance of long and short holes at a course that boasts a significant pedigree and history as a championship venue.

ELS CLUB TELUK DATAI
PULAU LANGKAWI, MALAYSIA

Slightly left field but for the overall experience of the setting and unique local hospitality, there aren't too many more

idyllic locations to play golf, or to visit than Langkawi.

My family and I have loved our trips to Langkawi over the years and while I never played the old layout, driving along the coastal road on the north of the island near the golf course offered many reasons why it wouldn't matter.

With the ancient jungle and jagged limestone outcrops looming on one side and the sparkling Andaman Sea and distant islands of Thailand on the other, it confirmed for me that this was a pretty special place for any golf course.

Ernie Els' work on the new layout has removed the road and in its place, a number of stunning green and tee locations have been introduced to maximise the 'wow' factor of the setting.

The course is a rarity in that it deliberately has no bunkers – to save constant rebuilds during monsoon seasons - but the grass bunkers, slopes and swales that Els incorporated into the design are thought provoking and provide ample protection and interesting options for play into and around the greens.

A post-round Nasi Lemak and a chilled something to accompany on the clubhouse verandah was the perfect end to a memorable day at the Els Club. ☺



BY SPENCER ROBINSON

**AUGUSTA NATIONAL GOLF CLUB
AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, USA**

No matter how many years you've set your alarm to awake in the early hours in Asia to watch the Masters Tournament on your television screen, and how intimately you may think you know the course and the lie of the land, there's nothing that quite prepares your senses for that very first time you step foot on the hallowed grounds of Augusta National Golf Club.

The vivid hues and colours, the pimento cheese sandwiches and peach-flavoured ice cream, the nerve-tingling roars of the patrons and the sheer, unadulterated beauty of the flora and fauna. It can all be rather overwhelming. So, too, the distinctive aroma of the majestic, towering pine trees across the property.

There's history at every turn – along Magnolia Drive, within the under-stated clubhouse and Butler Cabin, across the par 3 course, through Pink Dogwood, Flowering Crab Apple, Chinese Fir, and all the way around Amen Corner. Even though it's the only course on this list I've not yet managed to play, after paying a visit, there is simply no way you could possibly omit this from your top 10.

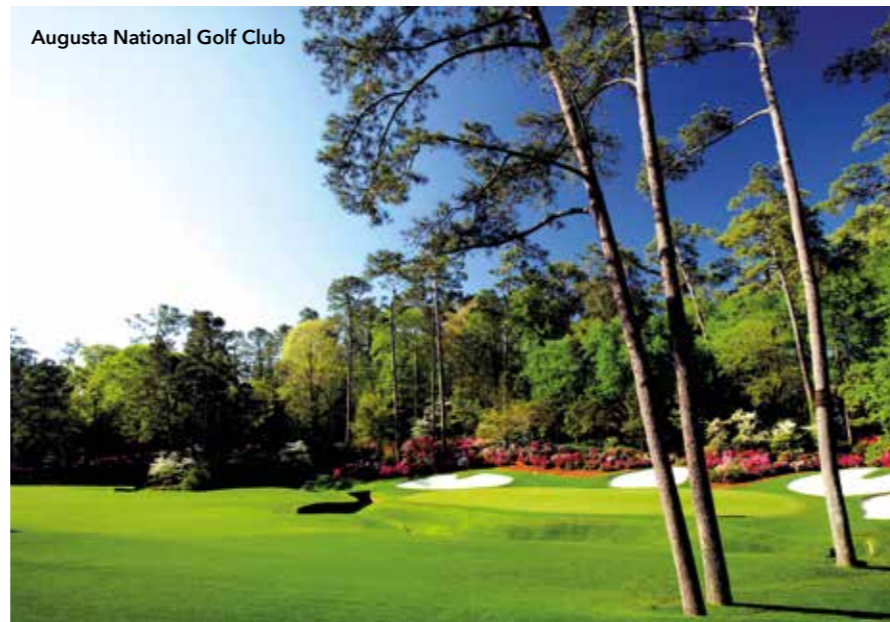
**BALCOMIE LINKS
CRAIL, ANSTRUTER, SCOTLAND**

Who can forget 'Long' John Daly's play-off victory over 'Cuddly' Costantino Rocca in the 1995 Open Championship at St Andrews? Yes, the one where the Italian duffed his chip at 18 before holing a birdie putt from the "Valley of Sin" to force extra time?

Ultimately he lost out, but Rocca is one of the few Open runners-up who is easily remembered. For me, that 1995 Open was also notable as it marked my introduction to Crail's Balcomie Links – 100 years after the Tom Morris-designed course was opened.

It was unashamedly love at first sight, on my part, at least. A wee nine-mile drive along the A917 coastal road from St Andrews, it is with good reason this is considered one of Scotland's classic links courses and why I return at every opportunity.

Less than 5,900 yards from the white tees and playing to a par of 69 (three par 5s, six par 3s and nine par 4s), be prepared for an almighty test of nerve and shot-making, beginning with a drive from a clifftop. From there, there is little let-up as you tee-off over rocky bays and strike approaches to greens precariously perched on ledges. Oh, and the wind is a constant and ever-changing feature.



Augusta National Golf Club



Club Intramuros



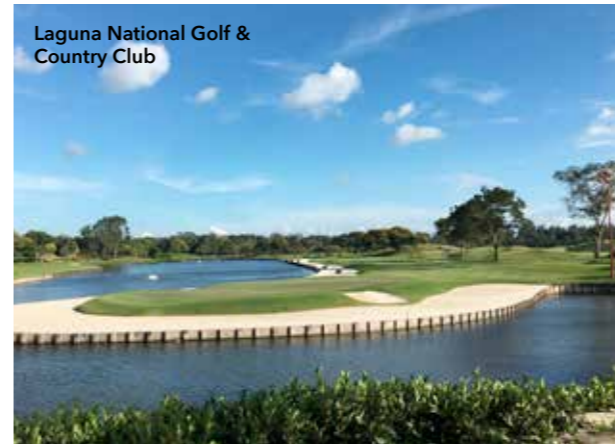
Chung Shan Hot Spring Golf Club



Balcomie Links



Hong Kong Golf Club



Laguna National Golf & Country Club



Laguna Golf Phuket

**CHUNG SHAN HOT SPRING GOLF CLUB
ZHONGSHAN, GUANGDONG, CHINA**

Unquestionably one of Asia's most historically significant golfing venues, Chung Shan Hot Spring's Arnold Palmer-designed course was the first modern-day golfing establishment in the People's Republic of China.

Opened in 1984 in the wake of then Chinese paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's grandiose 'open-door policy', the club that is easily accessible via Macau and Zhuhai was the brainchild of Hong Kong tycoon Henry Fok.

Reflecting on his Chung Shan experience, Palmer frequently recounted how thousands of Chinese workers were brought in to effectively build the course by hand because there was no heavy machinery.

He also remembered giving a golf ball to one of the workers. "He stared at it for a few moments, then tried to take a bite out of the cover. That's when it dawned on me that the men engaged in the gruelling labour of building our golf course had no idea what golf was," said Palmer.

The immaculate bent grass greens and endearing vistas of rice paddies and oxen at work quickly captured the imagination of the golfing world and paved the way for China's original golf course construction boom in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was in 1993 that a Jack Nicklaus-designed course at Chung Shan was unveiled.

**CLUB INTRAMUROS
INTRAMUROS, PHILIPPINES**

As a fresh-faced newcomer to Asia, the buzz of Manila in the mid-1980s was intoxicating. For the uninitiated, so, too, was the unique experience of golfing at Club Intramuros – as far removed from a traditional Western-style golf and country club as you could imagine.

Indeed, golf at Club Intramuros was much like the capital of the Philippines itself at that time – colourfully manic with never a dull moment. Laid out within the fortifications built by the Spanish colonisers that replaced the palisades of Manila's first Muslim settlements, the walls that run alongside fairways and greens are an integral part of playing golf there.

Often your score was influenced by your adeptness at ricocheting balls off the walls and back into play. Then there were the water boys, waiting at the various lakes, ready to dive down and recover your ball after a false stroke (or a bad bounce off the wall).

Invariably, we arrived at the club by jeepney along the congested Roxas Boulevard. On the return journey, we'd alternate between stopping for dinner at Barrio Fiesta or a more up-market restaurant where diners were instructed 'to leave your firearms at reception'. My ex-golf partners in England were convinced I was making it all up.



Nirwana Bali Golf Course



Real Club Valderrama

HONG KONG GOLF CLUB DEEP WATER BAY, HONG KONG

Steeped in history and tradition, it is with good reason that the 54-hole Fanling facility is globally referred to as 'The Home of Golf in Hong Kong'. Indeed, many go further and describe it as 'The Ancestral Home of Golf in Asia'.

Relatively short in distance they may be (by modern standards, at least), but the Old, New and Eden courses, with their tree-lined fairways and subtly contoured greens, remain a test for the best.

Meanwhile, the Composite Course (made up of 10 holes of the New and eight from the Eden) continues to be a favourite among the professionals from the European Tour and Asian Tour who make their annual pilgrimage for the Hong Kong Open which has made its permanent home at the Hong Kong Golf Club since its initial staging in 1959.

The beautiful and understated clubhouse retains a whiff of colonial grandeur while the verandah, overlooking the putting green and the 18th green of the Eden, is the most atmospheric 19th hole in Asia. While Hong Kong's pressing need for additional housing is well documented, the threat of losing part of the Fanling landscape is heart wrenching.

LAGUNA NATIONAL GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB LAGUNA GOLF GREEN, SINGAPORE

In the spirit of full disclosure, Laguna National has held a special place in my heart since 1996 when, for the first time, it staged the Singapore Open, then promoted by a company I was working with.

When I relocated to the island republic a few years later, we opted to live on the east coast, within close proximity to the Xilin Avenue venue. With the Masters and Classic courses complemented by a spa, a spectacular swimming pool slide for kids, tennis courts and Chinese and Japanese restaurants, persuading the family to join up was a cinch.

Recent years have witnessed notable changes. I moved to the west of Singapore and Laguna National has undergone various facelifts on and off the courses. While the Masters has remained pretty much unscathed and is affectionately referred to as 'The Grand Old Lady', the Classic Course is now in its third iteration – one of the toughest golfing tests in the region, but also fair if you play from the tees your handicap dictates.

With a new clubhouse and the Dusit Thani Laguna Singapore due to be unveiled in 2020, and the club's lease extended to 2040, exciting times lie ahead for this site.

LAGUNA GOLF PHUKET PHUKET, THAILAND

During my courting days, Phuket was always the first-choice getaway. More specifically, Laguna Phuket. Within Asia's first integrated destination resort, there was everything you could possibly require – restaurants, bars, spas, canoeing, sailing, swimming and golf, among them.

Whether you were there for an overnighter, a weekend break or a week-long escape, no need even to consider departing the multi-hotel resort on the iconic Thai island's north-west coast.

Initially opened in 1992 as Banyan Tree Golf Club, it was an ideal venue for a stress-free round, wide-ish fairways and flat-ish greens encouraging you to go lower than your handicap.

Not that it was a pushover, two holes regularly combining to wreck a decent scorecard – the par 4 tenth and the water-strewn par 5 seventeenth, alongside the child-friendly Allamanda apartments in which we occasionally would stay after marriage and children came along. There would also be a change of nature and character for the golf course.

Paul Jansen's extensive revamp succeeded in modernising the design and enhancing the challenge without impinging on the charm of the lagoons, woodlands and mountain views. With an excellent academy and practice facilities and an attractive dining area at the clubhouse, Laguna Golf Phuket remains a personal favourite.

NIRWANA BALI GOLF COURSE TANAH LOT, BALI, INDONESIA

Are the Trumps really to blame for tearing up Nirwana Bali Golf Course? Opened in 1998, the course, fronting the coastline of southwest Bali, in the Tabanan regency, was sculpted by Greg Norman.

Situated on approximately 60 hectares, the iconic layout was famed for its panoramic Indian Ocean views and lush Balinese landscapes and was deservedly named among the world's top-100 courses.

The dramatic par 3 seventh, hitting from a cliffside tee across a piece of the ocean to a well-guarded green with the sacred island temple at Tanah Lot down below, was one of the world's most photographed holes.

In total, there were five oceanside holes, three cliff-to-cliff tee shots with eight other holes gently sweeping through traditional Balinese rice paddies. Simply breathtaking.

Yet in 2017, Indonesian property developers MNC Land confirmed that Phil Mickelson and his Phil Mickelson Design team had been retained to work directly with MNC Land and The Trump Organisation to re-design the course, under plans to re-launch the property as Trump International Golf Club.

According to Eric Trump, Executive Vice President of The Trump Organisation: "Together with MNC Land, we will create one of the finest courses anywhere in the region

and beyond." It is near the end of 2019 now. We wait with bated breath, Mr Trump.

PORTERS PARK GOLF CLUB SHENLEY HILL, RADLETT, ENGLAND

Much like you don't forget your first kiss, you can't help but retain affection for the first golf club with which you entered a serious relationship with. In my case that was Porters Park in the Hertfordshire village of Radlett, some 20 miles from central London.

My awareness of this glorious parkland-style track was sparked one evening on returning home from school to a slap-up celebration dinner, served to commemorate the first time my mother had broken 100!

I'm not sure if she ever managed the feat again, but by my early teens I was visiting the club with increasing frequency, replacing my weekend morning paper rounds with a more lucrative spot of caddying.

Three pounds a round was the going rate. If your player had a good day, you might head off with a fiver! Although football and cricket remained my primary sporting pursuits, I had my first golf lesson at Porters Park.

One fabulous English summer, I played there almost daily as a junior member. Often we'd do 36 holes a day, sometimes 54, happily carrying our bags. After 30 years away, I returned to play in 2018. I remembered every wonderful hole. Little had changed. Add it to your bucket list.

REAL CLUB VALDERRAMA SOTOGRADE, CÁDIZ, SPAIN

The Augusta National of Europe was how it was described to me ahead of my first trip to Valderrama in the early 1990s. As I discovered, such a lofty reputation was well earned.

As host to the European Tour's season-ending Volvo Masters, the late billionaire owner Jamie Ortiz-Patino always insisted it was imperative for the course to be immaculately presented for the tens of millions of golf fans watching around the world – the very people that the southern Spanish region of Andalucía was aiming to attract as high-end golfing tourists.

Indeed, that only added to the stress of playing in the pre-tournament Volvo Masters Pro-Am. One high handicap amateur who I played alongside confessed to having woken up in a cold sweat fearing he'd take a divot out of the pristine, carpet-like fairways – and be summarily frog-marched from the course.

Not commonly known is that Valderrama, like Augusta National, also has a delightful nine-hole par 3 course. While it's pine trees that dominate the scene at Augusta, narrow fairways framed with cork trees define Valderrama, which in 1997 was afforded the honour of becoming the first European course outside Britain to host the Ryder Cup.

Captain Seve ensured it will never be forgotten. 🏌️



BY TIM SOUTHWELL

**OLD HEAD OF KINSALE
KINSALE, IRELAND**

When Tiger Woods first played Old Head, he walked onto the 12th tee and uttered two words: "Holy shit!". It's now become known as the "Holy shit!" hole. And little wonder. To your right is a virtual mountain, which climbs up and eventually spits out a fairway some 230 yards in the distance. To your left is a 200-foot drop to the Atlantic Ocean. When I played this hole there was, the caddie assured me, just a mild breeze. The caddie also urged me to aim at a place which was 90 degrees away from the fairway. In fact, I was aiming the ball at a virtual left-angle straight out into the ocean. When my drive started out - straight and as low as I dared send it, I watched in awe as the wind took hold, sending it into a dramatic high curve and back towards the fairway. It ended up in the light rough on the right of the fairway. I was gob-smacked. No wonder they call Old Head "Pebble Beach on steroids". This remarkable piece of land juts out into the sea like a massive grassy ocean liner. It is one of the world's most dramatic and spectacular golf courses. The lodges and spa are an experience all in themselves.

**LE TOUESSROK
ILE AUX CERFS, MAURITIUS**

The first time I saw a picture of Le Touessrok, I dropped my bacon sandwich. What was this place? A golf course on its own island, fairways fringed by white sands and surrounded by the beautiful blue Indian Ocean. When I was lucky enough, 10 years later, to actually jump on the boat taking my golf clubs and me from the Mauritian mainland to Ile aux Cerfs, I could barely contain my excitement. Le Touessrok Golf Course is one of the wonders of golf. Fiendishly designed by Bernhard Langer, the course navigates its way through a coastline of little bays, inlets and promontories, volcanic rock outcrops, lakes and gullies, and a profusion of tropical trees and plants. Designed with accuracy, not length in mind, you are well advised to take an iron or rescue club off most tees. It is a golf course you have to check your ego at the door and pick your way through. There are nine lakes in all, with a number of holes requiring tee shots across sea inlets to the fairways. With so many incredible vistas to drink in, it is sometimes hard to concentrate on your golf, but if you can put your camera away for five minutes, you will find absolute golfing paradise.

**TREVOSE
CORNWALL, ENGLAND**

A short drive from the UK's surfing mecca Newquay, Trevoze features one of my favourite holes in all of golf. When you walk onto the first tee, you're confronted by a vast golf course, which sweeps down and away from you towards the Atlantic Ocean. It is like you are standing on the shoulders of giants. The 4th is a 504-yard par 5. As with most of the golf course, the fairway is generous. Great, hit the fairway, knock your second to about 100 yards and then you are face-to-face with the ocean. The rolling, often rain waves provide a stunning backdrop to the green. It literally takes your breath away. In keeping with most Harry Colt designs, the course is set out in two loops of nine holes. The front nine hugs the sand dunes and coastline, while the back nine takes you inland and towards the clubhouse, which offers a friendly, family atmosphere which has been nurtured by the Gammon family for decades. There is also a brilliant 9-hole short course, which is laid out exactly like a proper course with bunkers and excellent greens. This is ideal for kids and beginners with par 3s ranging from 85 to 169-yards and par 4s at 150-200 yards.

**SHISKINE GOLF & TENNIS CLUB
ISLE OF ARRAN, SCOTLAND**

Founded in 1896, Shiskine was an 18-hole course designed by 1883 Open champion Willie Fernie and later amended by Willie Park Junior, but they lost six holes to agriculture during World War 1. The result is a quirky 12-hole accidental masterpiece. It takes about two hours to play Shiskine. Set on the west coast of the wonderful Isle Of Arran, most of the shots you will play here are blind (you get an A4 sheet of instructions) but whenever you scale a mound or hill you're rewarded with superb views. I arrived at Shiskine at sunrise on a rare warm, sunny Isle Of Arran day. There can be few more wonderful sights than standing on the first tee, just a couple of feet away from the Firth of Clyde. When I played, there was no clubhouse, just an honesty box and a golf course. Since then they have built a splendid clubhouse, and though it doesn't have a bar, you can bring your own and they will chill ready for your return after playing. I've become a complete advocate for 12-hole golf courses. I don't know why really, it just seems like a more pleasing amount. Shiskine's 128-yard 3rd (Crow's Nest) and 4th



Le Touessrok



Trevoze



Old Head Of Kinsale



Shiskine Golf & Tennis Club



Andermatt Golf Club



ALAND GOLF CLUB



THE GREEN MONKEY



PRESTWICK GOLF CLUB



WEST SUSSEX

WEST SUSSEX PULBOROUGH, WEST SUSSEX, ENGLAND

The 15th hole at West Sussex blew my mind. It was the first time – as an impressionable 16-year old golf nut – that I played a shot over water. And what a shot.

At its longest it plays 145-yards. When I played, it was a crowd-pleasing 123-yards which seems like a monumental relief compared to what I had so far endured on the challenging back nine.

A 9-iron was in my hand. The water was black, the green surrounded by magnificent pine and birch trees which create an amphitheatre. I was suddenly at Augusta. I hit a shot pure and true and it hit the green virtually pin high. 12 feet. Birdie putt.

The three-putt debacle that followed is not important. West Sussex GC had stolen my heart. The previous 14 holes wound their way through the heathery Sussex countryside, a course based on sandy farmland with challenging holes and doglegs – truly it is a visual treat.

The Morning Post put it perfectly when they reported on the newly opened West Sussex Golf Club in 1930. “The course is laid out over a heather moor, rising suddenly and surprisingly out of meadow and marshland that is characteristic of Sussex... it is absolutely ideal golfing country... every type of hole and shot in the game are there”.

ALAND GOLF CLUB ALAND, FINLAND

I didn't really know what to expect from my golf adventure to Finland but what I found was pretty amazing. First up, when people greet you here they don't just say “hi”, or “hey”, they say “Hey, hey!” with the kind of enthusiasm normally reserved for bumping into an extremely good friend you haven't seen for a while.

Secondly, to get to Aland you have to navigate your way through Finland's beautiful Archipelago Sea. There are more islands and skerries here (over 6,500 of them), both big and tiny, than any other archipelago in the world, which makes it a magical, peaceful ferry journey to get to Aland from the mainland.

To my surprise, there are 126 golf courses in Finland and two of them are right here in Aland, the Castle and Kings, both in the shadow of the magnificent Kastelholm Castle.

The 15th, a 545-yard double-dogleg par 5 is an absolute belter, snaking its way downhill to an elevated green. Oh, yes, I almost forgot, on the way back to Turku airport you can, if the fancy takes you, visit Moomin Land in Nantaalin, a truly bizarre experience. Hey, hey indeed, Finland.

PRESTWICK GOLF CLUB PRESTWICK, AYRSHIRE, SCOTLAND

Depending what time you are teeing off, the first tee

at Prestwick can be one of the most terrifying in all of golf. That's because, to your immediate right, is the train station platform.

When I first played Prestwick it was 8:10am, commuter time. With little time to warm up, I simply took a deep breath, hoped for the best and tried to make decent contact. The mind truly focused, I piped one straight down the middle. I don't think I've ever been happier.

Five holes in and I'm totally mesmerised. Prestwick is like a majestic golfing jigsaw puzzle with quite a few of the pieces missing. I lost count of the times I stood on a tee or fairway completely clueless as to what to do, where to go next.

You need imagination and patience to play Prestwick and I absolutely love the place. And the history! It doesn't get any better. Prestwick was founded by a group of golfers in the local Red Lion pub who lured Old Tom Morris from St Andrews to come and design the original 12 holes.

10 years later, Prestwick hosted the very first Open Championship in 1860. The next 11 Opens were also contested there with Willie Park Snr, Tom Morris Snr and Jnr dominating proceedings. Talk about walking in the footsteps of legends.

THE GREEN MONKEY SANDY LANE, BARBADOS

A very exclusive experience, you usually have to be staying at the Sandy Lane Hotel to even get a look in on this terrific golf course. Carved from an old limestone quarry, the exposed rock faces form dramatic contrasts to the lush, rolling greens of the fairways and offer tremendous elevation change.

After a few holes you notice something uncanny – you haven't seen another golfer. One of the reasons is because they limit the amount of people each day to a handful, thus keeping the golf course in pristine condition for its golf crazy owners J.P. McManus, Dermot Desmond and James Magnier.

And secondly, because the way the course is designed, you can only see the hole you're actually playing, which makes for a wonderfully secluded experience.

That is, of course, until you reach the sixth tee where the reveal is gob-smacking; the course opening up beneath you and unveiling the towering limestone quarry cliffs, at the foot of which is a green for this magnificent par 3.

In the vast bunker next to the green is a bunker with a green monkey carved out in grass in the middle of it. You can only buy Green Monkey merchandise if you've actually played the course. Which is not easy if you aren't staying at the hotel. Which is also extremely nice. Free to those who can afford it, very expensive for those who can't. 🐒

(The Shelf) are gob-smacking holes, nestling underneath the towering Drumadoon Cliffs.

You really feel that you are, delightfully, in the middle of absolutely nowhere. Total tranquility.

ANDERMATT GOLF CLUB SWISS ALPS, SWITZERLAND

There are many reasons to love this golf course: The way the ball hangs in the mountain air (you're 1,144 metres above sea level) making you feel like superman and the sound off the cow bells making you feel like you're in Sound Of Music are but two.

The best thing about this golf course is how you get here. The Glacier Express is one of Europe's most impressive and

authentic modes of transport. The Glacier Express starts its journey in Zermat and winds up and through the Swiss Alps and descending on the likes of St Moritz and Andermatt.

When the train begins its descent to Andermatt, you can see a glorious mountain golf course spreading itself out with the kinds of undulations that make you thankful for the invention of the buggy.

There are no trees on the course but the rough can be reminiscent of a Scottish Open links course. The giant Gemsstock mountain towers over the course while cows and horses graze around you.

No wonder this has been voted the best golf course in Switzerland for the last three years in a row. The Chedi Andermatt hotel, with its timber frames and sumptuous spa, may well be my favourite hotel in the world.



BY TOM PETERS

CAPE BRETON HIGHLANDS GOLF COURSE

INGONISH BEACH, CAPE BRETON, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

It only took one trip around the Cape Breton Highlands golf course and I knew this would be one of my favourites, if not my favourite course of any I have played across North America and in several countries.

Built in Cape Breton Highlands National Park and opened in 1941, Canadian architect Stanley Thompson was given carte blanche to create this gem in an unbelievable wilderness setting.

Being in a remote area it was difficult to bring in heavy equipment during the time of construction and therefore, much of the course was fashioned by local labour. The early holes move nicely along the Atlantic Ocean and then swing inland through the Clyburn River Valley that is surrounded by the Cape Breton Highlands.

The river is an intricate part of the design. Thompson allowed the course to flow with the rolling and hilly terrain and his design took advantage of the mountain and ocean vistas. The course has been referred to often as Thompson's "mountains and ocean course."

I have played the internationally acclaimed Cape Breton Highlands course on many occasions and each time I am treated to something unique in this breathtaking setting. No two holes are the same and each has its own degree of difficulty.

The original plan for the course was nine holes but Thompson pushed for 18. His glorious final product has stood the test of time.

CABOT CLIFFS

INVERNESS, CAPE BRETON, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

This "new kid on the block" opened in 2015, smacks you with jaw dropping ocean views from the time you step onto the course until you turn out the lights. Cabot Cliffs, designed by the famous duo of Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, has several holes that run parallel to the cliffs and beaches that border the Gulf of St. Lawrence on the western coast of Cape Breton Island.

A sister course to Cabot Links, considered the only true links course in Canada, Cabot Cliffs was rated No. 9 in Golf Digest's World's Greatest Golf Courses for 2018. My favourite aspects of the course are its openness, much like a links style course, its design which makes you play a bump-and-run style of game on a number of holes, and its proximity to the ocean which can supply a soft warm summer breeze or a harsh, stiff wind which in either case, dictates the way you play the course.

Many golf courses boast a "signature" hole but in the case

of Cabot Cliffs, in my book, any one of its holes could have that signature tag. My favourite is the 16th, a par 3 that plays over a shoreline inlet to a green that sticks out on a point.

There is plenty of bailout area to the left but the challenge is picking the target with some risk involved. If you like your golf by the ocean, Cabot Cliffs is perfect.

THE RIVER COURSE

HUMBER VALLEY, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, CANADA

Your eyes and game will light up with the quality of golf in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The masterpiece on the west coast of the island of Newfoundland, and for many on the entire island, is the River Course at Humber Valley Resort, just a short drive from the city of Corner Brook.

Canadian architect Doug Carrick let his creative juices flow incorporating hilly terrain, Deer Lake, the Humber River, creeks and other natural features into a golf course that has several holes that are all suitable for a postcard and ready for framing.

The River Course, which opened in 2006, is one of my favourites because its physical features, surrounded by the Appalachian Mountain Range, are spectacular. Its challenging, yet fair and Carrick's knack to create this excellent design within Newfoundland's rugged beauty is a credit to his outstanding ability.

The River Course, which features some extreme elevation changes, like a 300-foot drop from the 10th tee to the fairway, its large undulating greens, 108 sand traps, fairways that wrap around water, major rock outcroppings and all routed through heavily forested terrain, is part of a multi-million dollar, exclusive resort community.

I agree with Carrick's assessment: "I don't think you will find a property with more scenic beauty anywhere. It's stunning." Amen to that!

ALGONQUIN GOLF COURSE

ST. ANDREWS-BY-THE SEA, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA

There is something about seaside golf courses that have always tweaked my interest. The salt water breezes, the white caps and the vistas. The Algonquin course, which has a storied history, is on my list because of these features and the fact that it is just a great golf course.

I liked the course from the first time I stepped on the first tee several years ago and played it. The course overlooks the Passamaquoddy Bay, which produces some of the highest tides in the world, up to 60 feet, and was established in 1894.

It was renovated in the 1920s based on plans by famed architect Donald Ross, who was born in Scotland but honed

his craft in the United States.

Ross's design was a fun course but modern times saw it remodelled again in the late 1990s and more recently in the past few years. It has been these transformations, in my view, that have kept the course relevant.

The most recent transformation was under the guidance of Canadian architect Rod Whitman. It was Whitman's background with seaside courses that took Algonquin to another level and in doing so, added some Scottish flavour.

He has incorporated more of the sea shore into his finished product plus has brought back some of the Donald Ross influence and in doing so has added a greater "wow" factor.

TWIN RIVERS GOLF COURSE

PORT BLANDFORD, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, CANADA

Not in my many years of travel have I come across a golf course that echo the philosophy of letting the terrain dictate the design. Twin Rivers Golf Course was built in two stages

by two highly talented Canadian golf course architects.

The first nine holes, opened in 1984, was the creation of Robbie Robinson while the second nine, opened in 1991, the genius of Doug Carrick.

This vast province is known for its ruggedness and great wilderness and the Twin Rivers course reflects those characteristics. The design is very playable, always well maintained and sits in part along Clode Sound, an arm of the sea on Bonavista Bay, and incorporates its namesake, two raging, churning rivers, the Northwest River and Salmon River, which crosses the course on a number of occasions.

The Northwest River comes into play on four holes and parallels a fifth. The stunning 18th, a par 3 over the Salmon River, is a 175-yard shot from an elevated tee to a green about 80 feet below.

What adds to the flavour of this intriguing course, part of the Terra Nova Golf Resort in Terra Nova National Park, is an abundance of wildlife around the course, salmon in the rivers and birds of prey in the sky. The only thing that may be missing is an abundance of birdies on this demanding test.



Cape Breton Highlands Golf Course



Algonquin Golf Course



Cabot Cliffs



The River Course



Twin Rivers Golf Course



Pinehurst No. 2



Stewart Creek Golf Course



Copperhead Golf Course



Punta Espada

**PUNTA ESPADA
CAP CANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

I have played several courses in the Caribbean and the course that has had the greatest impact on me is Punta Espada. The whole setting of this place is spectacular and is absolutely pristine.

The course was in incredible condition. Flower beds and sand traps were immaculate. There were no garbage cans at the tee boxes because my caddy picked up everything including broken tees.

The course is a Jack Nicklaus Signature design and part of a 35,000-acre private resort destination. Punta Espada, when translated means “Tip of the Sword”, which I thought was a very dramatic and fitting translation for such a dramatic setting.

Eight holes at Punta Espada are laid out along the ocean where the surf pounds against the jagged coral coastline and from several other holes you can see the warm Caribbean as it breaks over distant shoals.

I haven’t played many Nicklaus designs but I certainly have high praise for this one. It is challenging and fun and be assured this layout will test your best game from any of the four sets of tees at each hole. It is a course that requires positional play to avoid long waste bunkers and water.

As the Golden Bear said himself: “Nowhere else in the world will there be a golf experience like this.” I must admit it was an unforgettable experience.

**THE NEW COURSE
ST. ANDREWS, FIFE, SCOTLAND**

Playing the New Course at St Andrews was packed with memories and emotion which were among the reasons it’s on my Top 10 list.

St Andrews is recognised as the Home of Golf and playing the New Course, designed and built by “The Keeper of the Green”, Old Tom Morris in 1895, was in itself, and was in all likelihood, a once in a lifetime experience for me.

But what made this event so much more than just a game of golf on a true historical links course was the fact that I was playing this course with my son. We had travelled to St Andrews in 2015 to watch the Open Championship, to play some golf and to get our picture taken on the Swilcan Bridge.

Golf on the Old Course, first occurred in 1552 and over the years underwent some design changes likely the most notable by Old Tom Morris. We attempted to play the Old Course after the Open but our names were not pulled in a draw.

The next best thing was the New Course which we got on for the “wee” sum of 85 British pounds. It certainly proved to be money well spent.

The course was relatively flat but filled with treacherously deep pot bunkers, lots of thick gorse and gnarly bushes, and small sloping greens. The undulating fairways were hard and fast and put a premium on club selection.

I got a big hug from my son after the game and it all couldn’t have been any better.

**COPPERHEAD GOLF COURSE
INNISBROOK RESORT, PALM HARBOR, FLORIDA**

One would be remiss if you went to Florida and didn’t play golf a course that stages a PGA Tour event. Copperhead, which hosts the PGA’s Valspar Championship annually, was my choice and obviously a choice that I’m glad I made.

The Innisbrook resort, north of St Petersburg, actually has four courses all designed by Lawrence Packard, considered one of the most prolific course architects in modern times with more than 230 designs to his credit.

Copperhead catches everyone’s attention because of its PGA Tour connection and its characterisation of being a demanding layout. The course plays just over 7,200 yards from the back tees all the way down to 5,530 yards from the most forward tees so every level of golfer can get a chance to enjoy this layout.

Copperhead is cut through tall pines, has some rolling terrain, narrow fairways, lots of bunkers and of course water on several holes which obviously dictates ball position. The course finishes with the Snake Pit, considered by the pros as one of the toughest, three-hole finishes on the PGA Tour. The holes are named appropriately, “The Moccasin”, “The Rattler” and of course “The Copperhead”.

The course is a memorable round and one that gave me a good taste of Florida golf.

**PINEHURST NO. 2
PINEHURST, NORTH CAROLINA**

Pinehurst No. 2 had been on my bucket list for many years. The iconic course has hosted many major championships, including the US Open. Pinehurst is as much of a magnet to North American golfers as St Andrews is to Europeans.

Opened in 1907 and designed by Donald Ross, I wanted to play it because it is a US Open course and to see how the design is made more difficult with its length and narrowing of fairways.

I played it after Payne Stewart won the Open in 1999 and you are greeted by the bronze statue of Stewart thrusting his fist into the air after his win. It was actually chilling.

The course was lined with stately pines and was immaculately manicured. But I quickly found out that the true test of No. 2 is its crowded, undulating greens. I quickly named them ‘inverted soup bowls.’

My caddy, of many years experience at Pinehurst, told me on a number of occasions not to hit second or third shots at the flag. Aim to the left or to the right instead. If you aim directly at the flag, and because of the green’s shape, you could see your ball roll off the putting surface.

It was because of the difficulty of these greens that my caddy called No. 2 a “second shot golf course.” But to walk among those pines and soak in that historic atmosphere, I would love to give it a second shot.

**STEWART CREEK GOLF COURSE
CANMORE, ALBERTA, CANADA**

I always felt playing golf in various settings kept the game interesting. Stewart Creek golf course near Canmore and approximately 25 minutes east of the internationally known town of Banff, was my opportunity and choice to play a real mountain course.

Located in the Canadian Rockies and designed by Canadian Gary Browning, Stewart Creek, which opened in 2000, sits at an elevation of approximately 4,300 feet above sea level. It is surrounded by mountain peaks, some snow covered all year round, that stretch up 10,000 feet so one can imagine what a dramatic setting surrounds this course.

I absolutely enjoyed this course because fairways were cut through thick forests which put a premium on shot making. It had numerous elevation changes, it incorporated mountain streams and lakes, the greens were sloping and challenging, and it offered a number of glimpses at wildlife such as big elk and deer.

An additional plus was its elevation which allowed a little more ball carry through the thinner air and for short hitters like me, that was a real bonus. Another interesting fact about Stewart Creek was that golfers had a choice of eight locations on the tee box so the course could be played as short as 5,023 yards.

Stewart Creek certainly gave me my Rocky Mountain golf high. 🏔️