

Golfing in Ireland

The 10 Top Courses

1. **Ballybunion Old Course**

Hit the ball (extremely) wrong and you will see it disappear into the Atlantic. The layout of this course right next to the ocean seems more natural than designed. So be in for a golfing experience that takes you "back to the roots" of the sport. Just a word of warning though: Ballybunion is a family holiday resort and can get busy as well as noisy! For dedicated golfers wishing to spend more than one day there is a second course nearby, the "Cashen Course", designed by Robert Trent Jones.



2. Ballyliffin (Glashedy)

These are Ireland's most northerly links, nestled in dramatic landscapes and often sporting no less dramatic skies. Glashedy

Course was designed by Pat Ruddy and Tom Craddock and is regarded as one of the best courses in the British Isles by

experts. The neighboring Old Course is still in use. It challenges players with very irregular fairways.



3. Druids Glen

A landscaped course designed by Pat Ruidie and Tom Craddock on the Woodstock Estate, roughly 25 miles south of Dublin. It is known as an "extremely tough course" with a definite need for spot-on accuracy. Nearby Druids Heath is also worth a visit.



4. The K Club

Though famed for its "pretty ponds", Tiger Woods would maybe see those as an unnecessary feature after the Ryder Cup

2006. The course is also hailed as "Arnold Palmer's Jewel" and the landscaping involved moving millions of tons of soil.

Apart from having numerous ponds, the K Club is also next to the Liffey, making it advisable to bring plenty of balls.



5. Lahinch

Lahinch is sometimes known as the "St Andrews of Ireland". The golf course was established in the 19th century and was a design of Old Tom Morris. This was partly preserved with an eye on "anachronistic" holes - the blind shots of "Klondyke" and "The Dell" are definitely unusual today. Comprehensively redesigned by Dr. Alister MacKenzie in 1927, the course is on dunes generally considered unsuitable for golfing. Lahinch these days also known as a surfer's paradise



6. Mount Juliet

This course was designed in the 1990s by Jack Nicklaus and as "American" as it can get. It is also also regarded as the best of the newer courses by some experts. On the other had the nearly perfect course makes for uninteresting play in the eyes of critics. The course is sometimes seen as being interchangeable and not "Irish", but the very exclusive country club atmosphere tends to make up for this perceived shortcoming.



7. Portmarnock Golf Club

The course is surrounded by the sea on three sides and only ten miles from Dublin's city center.

The club's greatest hazard

is long gone, however - this was the now legendary cow of Maggie Leonard, managing to swallow hundreds of golf balls.

Playing here is regarded as true links golf, the course requiring a creative attitude to play. Hard

to book and a letter of

introduction needed - a ready (if less glamorous) alternative would be the nearby Portmarnock

Hotel Links designed by

Bernard Langer.



8. Royal County Down

This is ranked among the hardest courses to play in the British Isles. It is situated on Dundrum Bay near the Mountains of Mourne, their often dark hillsides providing a dramatic backdrop. The course was originally laid out by Old Tom Morris in 1889 and despite many changes still allows "old school" play. Expect traditional links with undulating greens, tight fairways and deep bunkers, all spiced up by strong winds.



9. Royal Portrush (Dunluce)

This course is set among the dunes and often blessed with a bracing breeze straight from the sea. The club was founded in 1888 and located near the Giant's Causeway. This is (and will for some time remain) the only Irish course to stage the British Open. The course itself needs very accurate driving and is geared towards the technically excellent player.



10. Slieve Russell

This course adjacent to the 4-star hotel was designed by Paddy Merrigan and opened in 1992. It is essentially a parkland course amid the lakes and drumlins of Cavan. Water is a constant hazard in play. Though maybe not quite as glamorous as the K Club, the Slieve Russell has attracted PGA tournaments and is known as a remote retreat offering a very comprehensive range of facilities.

