

**Angus**
KIRRIEMUIR

£36-£50, 5,518 yards, par 68

Set at the entrance to the Angus glens and with views as far as Lochnagar, the scenery around Kirriemuir is beautiful. Like so many of the great courses in this part of Scotland, James Braid was responsible for the design of Kirriemuir. It's a picturesque layout with mature trees and hills providing a grand backdrop for most holes. It's a short course, but a strategic test with a number of short par 4s asking the question: do you go for glory and risk disaster or just attempt to play safe?

T 01575 573317 W kirriemuirgolfclub.co.uk**Perthshire**
PITLOCHRY

£35-£50, 5,681 yards, par 69

There may be a heart-pumping 200ft climb up the first three holes, but the panoramic views are more than worth the effort. Despite the modest yardage, this is still a proper test of golf; one which can be enjoyed by all. There are no par 5s and just three short holes, but the small greens, changes in elevation, hills, valleys, burns and distracting vistas all combine to make it an ideal blend of challenge and fun; pretty much the perfect definition of a hidden gem.

T 01796 472792 W pitlochrygolf.co.uk**Moray**
MORAY (OLD)

£55-£85, 6,572 yards, par 71

Located in the town of Lossiemouth, Moray Golf Club was founded in 1889. The Old course here is reminiscent of its namesake in St Andrews in as much as it starts and finishes in the town – golf really is a part of everyday life in this part of Scotland. The original layout was by the great Old Tom Morris, lined by gorse and pock-marked by perilous pot-bunkers, it's an exacting test of links golf. The clubhouse peers down upon the 18th hole providing a great backdrop as you make your way up the final fairway.

T 01343 812018 W moraygolf.co.ukRich
History**Isle of Arran**
SHISKINE

£20-£39, 2,996 yards, par 42

Though just 23 miles long and 11 miles wide, the Isle of Arran is home to seven golf courses. Arguably the pick of them is Shiskine on the island's west coast. A unique 12-hole course designed by Willie Park, it forges out along the beach before climbing to the precarious raised green of the 3rd then dropping back towards the sea on the spectacular 4th. Beneath the Drumadoon Cliffs and with views over the Kilbrannan Sound towards the Mull of Kintyre, it's a windswept and captivating spot.

T 01770 860226 W shiskinegolf.com**Fife**
SCOTSCRAIG

£56-£100, 6,550 yards, par 71

T 01382 552515 W scotscraigolfclub.com

Founded in 1817, Scotsraig is the world's 13th oldest golf club. Situated just outside Tayport to the north of St Andrews, the course is used as a venue for Local Final Qualifying when the Open Championship visits the home of golf. Lloyd Saltman was among those to get through at Scotsraig in 2010. Although it's close to the coastline, Scotsraig is predominantly a heathland course with firm turf, gorses, heathers and pines all featuring.

**Borders**
THE HIRSEL

£30-£44, 6,024 yards, par 70

Just outside Coldstream, The Hirsell is an excellent parkland course set through woods over undulating terrain. Narrow fairways mean this is a track where accuracy from the tee is absolutely crucial. The first two holes ease you into the round gently, both par 4s under 300 yards, but then you face the blind par-3 3rd that can be stretched to 240 yards from the tips. The run for home is particularly tough, with out-of-bounds a significant factor on each of the last four holes, your round will 'make or break' here.

T 01890 882678 W hirsellgolf.co.uk**Ross-shire**
TAIN

£37-£65, 6,404 yards, par 70

The course at Tain was designed by Old Tom Morris in 1890 and it's fondly described as his 'Northern Jewel'. Golfing visitors often overlook Tain as they steam northwards to Dornoch, but this is a mistake as it's a great example of the natural Scottish links. Sheltered by its position on the south side of the Dornoch Firth and protected by gorse, burns and deep rough, it's a challenging proposition. But, on a pleasant day with the call of oystercatchers on a gentle breeze there are few more serene spots to swing a club.

T 01862 892314 W tain-golfclub.co.uk**Inverness-shire**
TRAIGH

£20 per day, 2,456 yards, par 34

Just off the 'Road to the Isles' north of Arisaig, the nine-hole course at Traigh delivers golf in its purest form. A rugged and undulating track, it takes the game back to its roots – a battle with the elements over glorious seaside terrain. But it's the views that visitors will remember most vividly. Looking out over the white sands of the Traigh beaches, across the brilliant blue sea towards the Isles of Muck, Rum, Eigg and Skye, there's surely no more beautiful setting for golf anywhere in the world.

T 01687 450337 W traighgolf.co.ukInspiring
Views**Fife**
BURNTISLAND

£29-£48, 5,993 yards, par 70

Although the course at Burntisland features excellent views over the Firth of Forth and the striking road and rail bridges, the course is actually mainly parkland in nature. It is blessed with providing an interesting contrast to the other, perhaps better-known, coastal courses dotted around Fife. Designed by Willie Park Jnr in 1897 and updated by James Braid in 1922, it's a great layout set over rolling ground with abandoned quarries providing unusual hazards on the 11th, 12th and 16th holes.

T 01592 872116 W burntislandgolfhouseclub.com**Scottish borders**
WEST LINTON

£30-£40, 6,161 yards, par 69

From the club's foundation in 1890 right up until 1972, play at West Linton was over nine holes. At that time the layout was extended to 18 and since then, the course has become established as one of the best inland tracks in the area. Set across Slipperfield Moor with views to the Pentlands in the north and the imposing Mendick Hill to the south and west, it's a fine moorland course where rolling fairways are protected by pines, heather and an ever-present wind. The 230-yard 18th is one of the most difficult closing holes in Scotland.

T 01968 660970 W wlgc.co.uk

FJ Put Yourself In Their Shoes

PETER WHITEFORD
ON SCOTSCRAIG

"Scotsraig has long been used as an Open qualifying course which gives you a good hint as to its quality. One of the best things about it

for me is that, no matter what the weather is like during winter, we never have to play off the mats. It's in very good condition all year round, and the club allows me to come and practise there. The best hole is by far and away the 4th. It requires a good, positional drive – perhaps a hybrid or a 2-iron from the tee – into the right part of a narrow fairway. The approach is then difficult, as it is into a long, traditional plateau green, which can mean you end up very close, or very far away from the hole! For those reasons, that same hole would also get my vote for toughest

on the course. I go back there every winter to practise as it's the only course around my way where we can play during the depths of the Scottish winter!"





**East Lothian
KILSPINDIE**

£40-£75, 5,502 yards, par 69
The East Lothian coast features an embarrassment of top-quality links courses – Muirfield, Gullane and North Berwick spring to mind. But there are other, lesser-known tracks that complement the more established venues with some style. Kilspindie might be a short course at just over 5,500 yards but the winds blowing across Aberlady Bay – combined with some cleverly placed pot-bunkers – make the standard scratch of 66 a difficult one to match. Kilspindie is a course that will test your creativity and shot-making.

T 01875 870358 W kilspindiegolfclub.co.uk

FJ Put Yourself In Their Shoes

**LLOYD SALTMAN
ON KILSPINDIE**



“A traditional links course that runs right alongside the sea. It doesn’t have much length to it, but it’s a real old-school, fun place to play. I actually

won my first ever Junior Championship there back in 2002 in my late teens. I also had my lowest medal round of 62 there, but that was still behind Alastair Forsyth who I think shot 59! The 8th (above) is the best on the course for me. It’s a par 3 over the edge of the sea onto a small green, with sleepers and the beach on the right. A very pretty, but testing hole. The 3rd would be the toughest – a par 4 with the sea down the right. It normally plays dead into the wind which, when you combine it with the length of the hole, makes it a very good par 4 indeed. It’s a

lovely little links, and it’s next door to my house, so I’m back there all the time.”



**Midlothian
GOGARBURN**

£15-£30, 2,761 yards, par 43
Just to the west of Edinburgh between the A8 and M8 roads, Gogarburn provides a great example of the fact golf courses don’t have to be monstrously long to be challenging and enjoyable. Founded in 1975, it’s only 12 holes and less than 3,000 yards. But the drivable par 4s place a great emphasis on the short game and it’s the player with a deft touch who will enjoy most success around this charming wee track.

**Dumfries and Galloway
STRANRAER**

£35-£55, 6,308 yards, par 70
On the shores of Loch Ryan, Stranraer is a parkland course with amazing views up the loch towards the Isle of Arran and the Ailsa Craig. Designed by James Braid in 1950, it was the very last course the five-time Open champion worked on. For that reason alone, golf lovers should make the pilgrimage to Stranraer. Those who travel to this southwest tip of Scotland will find a superb and subtle layout with a great selection of holes bearing the trademarks of the great designer.

**Glasgow
WHITECRAIGS**

£40-£50, 6,100 yards, par 70
On the southern side of Glasgow in the beautiful parkland of the Netherton Estate, Whitecraigs was founded in 1905. The original course design was by Willie Fernie with later alterations by the ubiquitous James Braid. Playing over gently undulating ground this is a unique and interesting layout from the outset – the 1st is a short uphill par 3 providing an early test of accuracy. The finish epitomises the variety to be found at Whitecraigs – the 17th is a short par 4, then the closing hole is a sprawling par 5 requiring three good shots for all, but the very longest hitters.

**Angus
EDZELL**

£40-£60, 6,455 yards, par 71
Angus may be best known to golfers for superb links courses like Montrose and Carnoustie, but travel away from the sea to Edzell and you’ll find one of Scotland’s finest inland courses. At the point where the fertile plains of Strathmore meet the foothills of the Grampian Mountains, it’s a breathtaking spot and perfect golfing heathland. Re-designed by James Braid in the early 1930s, this is a wonderful layout carved through the pines with firm fairways leading to greens, which are always slick and smooth.



**Conway
NORTH WALES
(LLANDUDNO)**

£30-£52, 6,254 yards, par 71
T 01492 875325 W northwalesgolfclub.org.uk
North Wales is a links of wild grandeur set on the West Shore in Llandudno with wonderful, and, seriously distracting, views of the coast and north Welsh mountains. There are pot-bunkers aplenty on a layout at whose far end there is little more than one hole’s width from the adjacent railway to Penmorfa Beach. There’s a magnificent stretch of holes from 14 to the clubhouse, with the innocuous-looking 16th and 17th – a criss-cross pair of par 3s intriguingly christened ‘O.L.’ and ‘L.O.’ – more than capable of scuppering your plans if your short-iron radar plays up late on.



**Dumfriesshire
MOFFAT**

£25-£36, 5,276 yards, par 69
Designed by Ben Sayers of North Berwick in 1904, Moffat is a pretty and natural inland course set on Coats Hill with panoramic views of the beautiful surrounding countryside. It’s not a long course, but some of the shorter holes provide the toughest test. There are a number of par 4s under 300 yards that tempt the longer hitter to cut loose. But, on holes like the 4th and 6th, a wayward drive will make par unlikely. It’s testament to Sayers’ design that, although the layout is only just 5,000 yards, you may have to use every club in your bag.

**South Lanarkshire
LANARK**

£30-£50, 6,306 yards, par 70
Set through scenic Clyde Valley countryside, Lanark is an excellent, well-draining moorland course built on glacial sands. The course is often compared to the King’s at Gleneagles and the creator of that masterpiece, James Braid, also had a hand in shaping the layout at Lanark. The club is the 25th oldest in the world having been founded in 1851 and play has always been over the same swathe of moorland. As such, the course sits naturally in the surrounding countryside and there’s a feeling of permanence and maturity.

**Powys
CRADOC**

£20-£40, 6,188 yards, par 71
An undulating, parkland layout set around a stunning Georgian mansion called Penoyre House, Cradoc is an incredibly scenic course with fabulous views to the Brecon Beacons. Although the track is a relative youngster, dating from 1967 and designed by C.K. Cotton, the mature swathe of parkland across which it runs gives Cradoc the feel of a course that has existed for far longer. There’s a diverse selection of holes with well-placed bunkering and sloping, testing greens.

**Isle of Anglesey
BULL BAY**

£35-£50, 6,276 yards, par 70
It may surprise you that the small north Welsh island’s tally of eight courses should include one of the calibre of Bull Bay, Herbert Fowler’s only Welsh creation. The predominantly heathland course plays through rocky outcrops over elevated, rolling terrain, and is a veritable sea of yellow when the gorse is in bloom. The Isle of Man, Lake District and Snowdonia are all within view on a fine day, with the 18th tee the very highest point encouraging you to launch a final drive away to a distant green in front of the clubhouse.



Cardiganshire
ABERYSTWYTH

£30-£40, 6,119 yards, par 70
Harry Vardon is the man to thank for the charming 100-year-old course at Aberystwyth. Vardon described the “views obtainable as second to none”, and it really does enjoy a special setting looking down over the town and Cardigan Bay to the west, and the often snow-capped peaks of Snowdonia to the north. A couple of opening 430-yarders are followed by shorter par 4s, and eventually a couple of par 5s, which, depending on the wind, may bring scoring opportunities.
T 01970 615104 W aberystwythgolfclub.com

Stunning Setting

Neath
NEATH

£35-£50, 6,490 yards, par 72
James Braid’s 1934 heathland course is another which boasts excellent far-reaching views. It is an entirely natural patchwork of trees, heather, gorse, drystone walls and fine undulating greens. The tee shot at the 15th, a 391-yard par 4, which is played from the side of a huge rock down to the fairway seemingly far away below, feels as though you are driving into the sky. According to Henry Cotton, “I’ve travelled the entire golfing world, but never before seen such golfing beauty as at Neath.”
T 01639 632759 W neathgolfclub.co.uk

Cardiganshire
CARDIGAN

£27.50-£35 per day, 6,687 yards, par 72
Cardigan serves up a blend of links, clifftop and heathland holes, but is no holiday layout, stretching to 6,700 yards. Yet it’s just the sort of course you long to find on holiday, with views over the bay and a tangible sense of golfing freedom. Savour the ocean view before opening your shoulders on the par-5 9th, whose wide fairway and downhill approach make it highly reachable in two. Towards the end, the par-3 16th playing towards the sea, has an intriguing bowl-like green that’s more lenient to certain miscues than others.
T 01239 621775 W cardigangolf.co.uk

Superb Value



County Kerry
DOOKS

€55-€70, 6,600 yards, par 72
T 00353 66 976 8205 W dooks.com

Dooks was founded in 1889 and is blessed with an idyllic setting. A few years ago, the club made the bold move to commission Martin Hawtree for an almost complete redesign, with Hawtree commenting: “We are delighted at this design challenge – it is indeed a case of polishing an exquisite gem.” The result is a perfect example of classic links golf with spectacular views across Dingle Bay on one side and the backdrop of MacGillycuddy’s Reeks on the other. The clubhouse has also recently been remodelled and has a friendly atmosphere.



County Down
BELVOIR PARK

£65-£75, 6,685 yards, par 71
A superb parkland course, Belvoir Park was designed by the famous architect Harry Colt in 1927. Out on the lush, tree-lined fairways here it’s hard to believe you’re just two miles from the bustling centre of Belfast. Colt’s skill as a designer is displayed by the fact this layout has remained largely unaltered since his original design and, as a result, this is a course of considerable class and maturity. Anyone who takes on the full 6,685 yard par-71 challenge will come away having enjoyed a proper test.
T 028 9049 1693 W belvoirparkgolfclub.com



County Wicklow
WOODENBRIDGE

€40-€50, 6,341 yards, par 71
Golf was first played at Woodenbridge in the beautiful Vale of Avoca in 1884 when the Bayly family founded the club here. The current course is 100 years younger than that though. In 1994 Patrick Merrigan was contracted to construct an 18-hole layout on this fantastic tract of parkland. Set at the confluence of the Aughrim and Avoca rivers, this is a beautiful setting and it’s unsurprising that water plays a major part in a round at Woodenbridge. In fact, the Avoca comes into play on no fewer than 10 holes.
T 00 353 402 35202 W woodenbridge.ie



County Down
KIRKISTOWN CASTLE

£25-£30, 6,167 yards, par 69
Kirkistown Castle is a most traditional links and the most easterly 18-hole course on the entire island of Ireland. The club was established in 1902, but James Braid visited in 1934 to advise on some redesign work at which point he remarked, “If only I had this within 50 miles of London!” The signature hole is the 435-yard par-4 10th, which features out-of-bounds along the entire left side, subtle bunkering on the right, and a raised, pulpit green flanked by gorse and rough.
T 02842 771233 W linksgolfkirkistown.com



County Antrim
CAIRNDHU

£23-£28 per round, 6,136 yards, par 70
Although the club here was founded in 1928, the move to the present site did not occur until the mid 1950s. Since that time the course has been lengthened and modified and is now regarded as one of the best in the area. It’s a highly picturesque layout blending elements of parkland and links. The club has welcomed numerous tournaments over the years, none more prestigious than the three-day pro-am held in 1981. That event drew an international field that included Nick Price, Ian Woosnam and Mark McNulty.
T 028 2858 3324 W cairndhugolfclub.co.uk



County Down
CLANDEBOYE

£35-£45, Ava: 5,755 yards, par 70, Dufferin: 6,559 yards, par 71
Clandeboye is lucky enough to boast two hugely enjoyable courses, each quite different from the other. The better is the Dufferin, a blend of heathland and parkland where gorse and bracken are a constant feature. The opening hole offers panoramic views over the eastern seashore with the tough 4th demanding an approach to an elevated green that avoids gorse, heather, trees and rough. A good deal shorter, but still highly enjoyable, the Ava is tight and quirky, twisting through landscape that has served as quarry and reservoir.
T 02891 271767 W cgc-ni.com

FJ Put Yourself In Their Shoes

RORY MCILROY ON CLANDEBOYE



“This is a great 36-hole set-up where my dad, Gerry, ran the restaurant for a while. The longer Dufferin course is very tough and has even

hosted a Challenge Tour event, but when I was younger I used to play the shorter Ava course every Sunday with my dad and uncle. Looking back they were great days! Testament to the strength of the test, when I won the Irish Youths Amateur Close Championship there back in 2004, nobody broke par, although I did eventually win by three strokes. The best hole at Clandeboye is the 8th on the Dufferin course – what I still call the ‘big’ course! It’s a very long 452-yard par 4 with an interesting green. I’d also say it’s the toughest hole there. I’ve been back plenty of times since turning pro – it’s class.”





County Dublin
CORBALLIS LINKS

€10-€20, 5,114 yards, par 66
This stretch of coast to the north of Dublin has some wonderful, traditional links such as The Island, but this new, shorter course achieves Hidden Gem status as it is on a) a beautiful piece of land, b) is the only public links course in the country and c) is very modestly-priced. Veteran designer Ron Kirby, who has worked with both Robert Trent Jones Senior and Jack Nicklaus, has made recent changes. He believes it now has “perhaps the four best ocean holes in Ireland”.

T 00 353 01 843 6583 W corballislinks.com

County Kerry
CEANN SIBÉAL

€40-€65, 6,737 yards, par 72
Ceann Sibéal, or Dingle Golf Links if Gaelic pronunciation is not your forte, is a true piece of golfing heaven on the gorgeous Dingle Peninsula in south-west Ireland. The course itself is a fine links test, benefiting from the shrewd design of Eddie Hackett, but when you add in a backdrop that includes rolling hills, mountains, a winding burn, the ocean and distant islands, it really does have the lot. And being in southwest Ireland, the clubhouse and indeed town of Dingle, are very convivial places in which to reflect post-round.

T 00 353 66 915 6255 W dinglelinks.com

County Donegal
PORTSALON

€40-€50, 7,078 yards, par 72
One of the founder members of the Golfing Union of Ireland, Portsalon has a long and distinguished history. Since the club's establishment in 1891, the links here has seen many significant changes from Charles Thompson's first layout. The most recent update to the course came courtesy of Pat Ruddy in 2000. It's a fabulous and natural links delivering pure, unadulterated golf in a spectacular setting, with the Knockalla Mountains serving as a striking backdrop.

T 00 353 74 915 9459 W portsalongolfclub.com

Great Test of Golf

County Louth
SEAPOINT

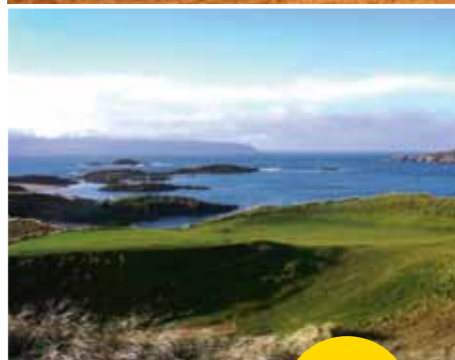
€35-€50, 7,150 yards, par 72
The Irish coastline is littered with top-class links courses, many with international reputations and green fees to match. Just north of Baltray on Ireland's east coast, Seapoint may not have the fame or price tag, but it's a course of considerable quality that has received praise from Pádraig Harrington amongst others. Winding through the dunes and gorse, rumpled fairways lead to large and subtly sloping greens. With an ever-present breeze and deep bunkering, this is a course that will test the very best of players.

T 00 353 41 982 2333 W seapointgolfclub.com

Surrey
REIGATE HEATH

£35-£40, 658 yards, par 67
T 01737 242610 W reigateheathgolfclub.co.uk

Reigate Heath is Surrey's finest nine-holer – a heathland course where the holes play through heather and woodland. Don't be fooled by the modest yardage, the course can certainly bare the odd tooth, most noticeably in the long, dogleg left 4th/13th – which morphs from potentially reachable par 5 on the front nine into a demanding par 4 second time round – and the 226-yard par-3 6th. The course has been hailed a miniature Walton Heath, its prestigious 36-hole neighbour, and the comparison is a good one, although Reigate Heath enjoys more elevation changes.



Stunning Setting

County Donegal
CRUIT ISLAND

€25, 5,618 yards, par 68
Quirky, short, and relatively young, this isolated and beautiful nine-holer sits at the head of a narrow promontory overlooking the Atlantic, rocky outcrops and uninhabited islands. There are blind shots and drivable par 4s, but for the setting alone it is well worth a visit. The signature hole is the 150-yard 6th, played right along the cliff's edge – not one for vertigo sufferers. And depending on the mood and direction of the wind, it can call for just about every club in the bag off the tee.

T 00 353 74 954 3296 W cruitislandgolfclub.com

County Meath
HEADFORT

€35-€80, New: 7,124 yards, par 72
Old: 6,532 yards, par 72
A few years ago, the members purchased land adjacent to their lovely Old Course and commissioned Christy O'Connor Junior to build something completely different. The New is a real adventure as you work your way through trees and parkland, uphill and down dale, across and alongside the River Blackwater. Water is a recurring threat, especially at three of the very scenic par 3s, and the course has very quickly established itself as one of Ireland's finest inland tracks.

T 00 353 46 924 0146 W headfortgolfclub.ie

County Donegal
NARIN & PORTNOO

€40-€70, 6,937 yards, par 73
The wonderfully rugged and scenic coastline from Connemara in the west up to Ballyliffin in the north is home to some truly magnificent golf. Some of it is celebrated, some of it less so. This fabulous course deserves to be in the former category, running as it does between the shore and Clooney Lake before leading you through some majestic dunes and back to the splendid new clubhouse. Unusually, there is a hat-trick of par 5s from the 13th to the 15th. The views from the course are simply magnificent.

T 00 353 74 954 5107 W narinportnoogolfclub.ie

Hampshire
STONEHAM

£50-£67, 6,392 yards, par 72
Stoneham serves up a highly enjoyable mix of heathland and parkland golf close to the M3/M27 intersection in south Hampshire. Strategy and positioning dictate success more than brute force with mature trees framing many holes. The bunker count is not excessive, but they're well-positioned, especially the one guarding the short 16th. Many greens have run-offs and slopes, so the course is a good test of your short game too. After your round, fold yourself into one of the clubhouse sofas and gaze back out over a real joy of a course.

T 023 8076 9272 W stonehamgolfclub.org.uk



Buckinghamshire
BEACONSFIELD

£55-£75, 6,508 yards, par 72
Yet another Colt classic, this is where world number one Luke Donald learnt his game, winning the club championship whilst still a junior. The course runs either side of a major railway line with the first five and last five holes on the clubhouse side. The 6th is reached by a bridge which is then used to return to the 14th. Colt's trademark bunkers abound, short of the greens, frequently in a diagonal line and hiding the dead ground of the approach. The traditional clubhouse is a lovely place to relax with fine views from the dining room.

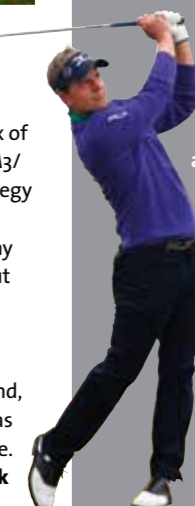
T 01494 676545 W beaconsfieldgolfclub.co.uk

Put Yourself In Their Shoes

LUKE DONALD ON BEACONSFIELD



“Beaconsfield is a great Harry Colt design in amongst the trees, that has a wide variety of holes – drivable par 4s and some reachable par 5s mixed in with some long and short par 3s. You never get tired playing it. I used to practise here a lot and the members were always so supportive. I remember winning the club championship aged 14, and again at 16. I've also had holes-in-one on the 5th and 16th, which I still remember fondly. I always loved the 4th, a par 5 that doglegged to the left, flanked by two bunkers either side of the fairway and another two at the green. A good drive and you can reach in two, but slightly off and your ball will find the woods. The 1st hole is the hardest, the longest par 4 on the course – a really tough test. A couple of years ago, I played the front nine against my brother Christian, and managed to beat him 1-up, giving him a couple of shots. Great memories.”





East Sussex
LEWES

£31-£44, 6,224 yards, par 71
T 01273 483474 W lewesgolfclub.co.uk

Once you've successfully located the narrow approach road at the bottom end of town, and clawed your way painstakingly up to the clubhouse, the rewards are many with magnificent views first of the town and then of the South Downs. Of the dozen or so courses on the Downs in the Brighton area, Lewes envelopes you more fully in the landscape than any. Wind can, of course, be a factor, but there are many chances to score mixed among sterner tests such as the 18th, where the slope threatens to kick your ball right into trouble the full length of the hole.



East Sussex
COODEN BEACH

£42-£52, 6,505 yards, par 72
This hugely enjoyable and quite unusual Herbert Fowler course is on springy, marshland soil, which benefits from many drainage ditches, although the golfer may sometimes disagree. Some of these have been combined with dykes to create larger, very attractive water hazards. There are long par 4s, birdie opportunities at some of the shorter par 5s, and great variety as the gently rolling course twists and turns. The club celebrates its centenary next year and along with the spacious clubhouse it defines 'fun' golf.

T 01424 842040 W coodenbeachgc.com

Middlesex
FULWELL

£40-£55, 6,446 yards, par 71
Whilst some courses leap out and grab your attention, others are more subtle and reward repeated examination. Fulwell fits very well into the latter category, situated as it is on flat land just a few miles from Heathrow. The narrow, tree-lined course was redesigned by John Morrison, a long-time architectural partner of the great Harry Colt, in 1958, and is a fine test that plays every inch of its length. The standout hole is the lovely 9th; a par 3 played over a pond to a well-bunkered green.

T 0208 977 2733 W fulwellgolfclub.co.uk

Cornwall
MULLION

£35 per day, 6,053 yards, par 70
Mullion is the archetypal hidden gem and Holy Grail for the holiday golfer. It's a rolling, picturesque clifftop/links layout on the Lizard Peninsula with wonderful views out over Gunwalloe Church Cove beach and the eponymous place of Christian worship. It is relatively short, supremely well-bunkered and imbued with an inherent sense of fairness. Gazing out of the clubhouse lounge over a spot of lunch, it's the kind of place where someone will pipe up, "Shall we go out again?" and instantly get three takers.

T 01326 240276 W mulliongolfclub.co.uk

Inspiring Views

Wiltshire
HIGH POST

£40-£50, 6,305 yards, par 70
With its chalky subsoil, this downland course is another that can pride itself on year-round playability. The gently undulating fairways are well-bunkered and there is also plenty of hawthorn and blackthorn to avoid. Whilst not especially long, it attracts a high calibre field to its annual open where winners have included Justin Rose and David Howell. In contrast to the origins of its somewhat gruesome name – the site of an old gallows on the southern outskirts of Salisbury Plain – High Post offers a warm welcome to all.

T 01722 782356 W highpostgolf.co.uk

Kent
CANTERBURY

£48 per day, 6,272 yards, par 71
Kent may be more renowned for its coastal golf, especially in the eastern part of the county and its three famous Open venues, but the Harry Colt course in the famous cathedral city is undoubtedly one of the inland highlights. The layout is a mix of parkland and woodland holes, with a memorable number of elevated tees that encourage you to really have a go, and which seem entirely in keeping for a city whose cathedral rises 236ft above street level.

T 01227 453532 W canterburygolfclub.co.uk

Kent
WALMER & KINGSDOWN

£33-£40, 6,471 yards, par 72
If there had ever actually been bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover, this scenic downland course is where golfers would have enjoyed seeing them. This most welcoming of centurions was designed by James Braid in 1909 with the specific aim of introducing more people to the game. It's no pushover, and when the wind blows you and your golf ball certainly know all about it. There are fabulous views over the English Channel, a fine mix of holes, and a warm, friendly atmosphere.

T 01304 373256 W kingsdowngolf.co.uk

Surrey
GUILDFORD

£66-£70, 6,160 yards, par 69
This long-established course on the Merrow Downs near Guildford is what hidden gems are all about – not long, but with a perfect mix of holes that either flatter you into renewed self-belief or remind you that it is indeed a tough game. The par-5 3rd and short par-4 4th fit the former mould, but emerging unscathed from the uphill 6th and difficult long par-3 7th should result in medals being pinned to your chest. The 17th provides a real sting in the tail, a tough dogleg left further protected by a small roller-coaster green.

T 01483 563941 W guildfordgolfclub.co.uk

Hampshire
HOCKLEY

£40-£50, 6,420 yards, par 71
Hockley's clubhouse lies at the foot of a course which climbs up onto the free-draining South Downs, plays along the top for a while, then descends back over the closing holes, so you get most of the climbing in when your energy levels are at their peak. Those uphill holes are gently valleyed, thus coaxing the odd slightly wayward ball back into play. The rewards for making the ascent are ample, with some wonderful holes and some splendid views out over Winchester and indeed across to the Isle of Wight on the clearest of days.

T 01962 713165 W hockleygolfclub.com

Interesting Routing

Nottinghamshire
WORKSOP

£35-£50, 6,628 yards, par 72
With its sandy soil and excellent drainage, this gently rolling course offers top-quality golf throughout the year. In places quite narrow and with its fair share of dogleg holes, there are also times where you can let loose from the tee. The par-3 closing hole will unnerve those who suffer from the occasional slice as they may well end up back in the clubhouse rather sooner than they were expecting. Lee Westwood, of course, learnt his game at Worksop and remains a life-long supporter of the club (see below).

T 01909 477731 W worksopgolfclub.com

Put Yourself In Their Shoes

LEE WESTWOOD
ON WORKSOP



"As many people know, Worksop is where I grew up playing golf. The greens are always in great condition, with plenty of speed, and I think that

helped me develop my imagination for the game tremendously. I remember having my first hole-in-one here when I was 13. I hit a driver to the par-3 3rd, which was playing about 180 yards if I remember correctly. I went on to win plenty of club competitions there as I moved up through the ranks. The best hole for me is the 9th – a very long, tight par 4 with a two-tier green that's very quick from back to front. With gorse on the right and trees on the left it's a great-looking hole too. I'd say it just pips the 12th – another tight par 4 – for toughness. I still play the course regularly when I'm back home."





#1 SHOE AND GLOVE IN GOLF

Dorset

CAME DOWN

£40-£44, 6,255 yards, par 70

Samuel Ryder, of Ryder Cup fame, was a frequent visitor to this genuine off-the-beaten-track gem in the 1920s, the same time that Harry Colt was engaged for a major redesign. Colt's hallmarks are still very much in evidence today around the free-draining, chalky, downland course. Feature holes include the 16th, which is a tough par 4 to a green with OOB beckoning right or long, and the 17th – Polly's Pit – a drivable par 4 with a deep gully to the right of the target.

T 01305 813494 W camedowngolfclub.co.uk

Gloucestershire

PAINSWICK

£15-£20, 4,831 yards, par 67

And now for something completely different... this short, bunkerless course presents an array of blind shots and tricky lies. It sits along the ridge that is Painswick Beacon, one of a string of pre-Roman hill forts constructed in the Cotswolds, which date from the Bronze Age. There are great ramparts of earth and stone, which enclose all or part of the 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th and 11th holes, and lead to some fabulous views. Genuinely unique, this is the kind of course that will revitalise the most jaded of golfing palates.

T 01452 812180 W painswickgolf.com

Isle of Wight

FRESHWATER BAY

£35-£38 per round, 5,725 yards, par 69

At the western tip of the beautiful Isle of Wight, Freshwater Bay Golf Club is set on striking clifftop downlands overlooking the English Channel. The ground on which the course sits is owned by the National Trust and is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. The views are stunning and the club is proud of its boast that you can 'see the sea from every tee'. It's a fine out-and-back links-style layout with an eclectic selection of holes including six par 3s and three par 5s.

T 01983 752955

W freshwaterbaygolfclub.co.uk

Devon

THURLESTONE

£35-£42, 6,230 yards, par 71

If football is a game of two halves, so too is golf at this charming linksy, clifftop hybrid. The front nine is near enough 1,000 yards shorter than the back with the outward par of 33 dwarfed by an inward 38. Happily, this in no way means that it becomes an unrelenting slog; you would never get that from a Colt design. Instead, four par 5s in the last seven holes offer the chance for points. From the far end of the course there are glimpses of tidal Burgh Island and its very distinctive Art Deco hotel.

T 01548 560405 W thurlestonegolfclub.co.uk



Fantastic Clubhouse

Gloucestershire

BROADWAY

£35-£42, 6,228 yards, par 72

Rising to 850ft above sea level in the Cotswolds, outstanding views are clearly one reason Broadway features on our list. On a fine day it is a marvellous place to play and a fun course too. There are beautiful holes, enhanced by the odd drystone wall, and also some stern tests. But perhaps above all, it is the healthy smattering of risk-reward par 4s that stand out – holes like the 2nd, 11th, 12th and 15th where you pay your money and make your choice between ambition and prudence.

T 01386 853683 W broadwaygolfclub.co.uk

Somerset

BATH

£36-£60, 6,505 yards, par 71

It sometimes seems as though Harry Colt must have franchised his expertise, such is the proliferation of first-class courses bearing his design stamp. Here, he was called in to upgrade the downland course which overlooks the city and which had already benefited from the attentions of Taylor and Braid. Feature holes include the 14th, where you tee off from an ancient quarry, and the 17th, a short dogleg with a drystone wall lining the right and a string of hidden hollows short of the green.

T 01225 463834 W bathgolfclub.org.uk



Cornwall

PERRANPORTH

£36-£47, 6,296 yards, par 72

James Braid got about a bit during golf's original course-building boom. And thank goodness he did, for the links at Perranporth perched high above the town and golden beach is a true Cornish treasure. There are humps and hollows everywhere, towering sandhills, a healthy dose of blind shots over them such as the drive on 13, and the kind of ocean views that make you a) glad to be alive and b) glad that golf happens to be your pastime of choice.

T 01872 572454 W perranporthgolfclub.co.uk



Devon

DARTMOUTH

£42-£50, 6,637 yards, par 72

A comparative fledgling that has been in existence for less than 20 years, this roller-coasting and, in places, demanding test enjoys a glorious setting in the unspoilt Devon countryside. Water features quite heavily, and the large greens undulate to mirror the surrounding terrain, thus making club selection vitally important. The hilly environment makes a buggy a serious consideration. The accompanying nine-hole course is also great fun.

T 0845 564 3708 W dgcc.co.uk



#1 SHOE AND GLOVE IN GOLF

Berkshire

EAST BERKSHIRE

£45-£60, 6,236 yards, par 69

If ever there were a course that confirmed golf is not all about power, this is it. Despite its overall lack of length, there are still seven par 4s over 400 yards and the tree-lined fairways, difficult doglegs and abundance of heather provide a constant challenge that will keep you thinking from start to finish. East Berkshire is very much a course for the patient golfer where clear-thinking and straight-hitting are keys to a good score.

T 01344 772041 W eastberkshiregolfclub.com

Bedfordshire

BEDFORD & COUNTY

£34-£42, 6,420 yards, par 70

Bedfordshire may not be renowned for its courses, but this near-centurion just a couple of miles from the county town is a real gem, offering peace and tranquillity beyond what you might expect so close to one of the country's major north-south routes. This is parkland golf at its best, blessed with Scots pines, other mature trees, small greens and a craftily placed brook on the 7th, 10th and 15th. All the holes are named, with many requiring little explanation. But the 14th – ‘Three Threes’ – is not so immediately obvious, referring to the hole's original length of 333 yards.

T 01234 352617 W bandcgc.co.uk

Berkshire

GORING & STREATLEY

£34-£50, 6,355 yards, par 71

Goring and Streatley's clubhouse nestles at the foot of a course which climbs to the top, meanders around for a while, then drops back down. The climb is sharp enough to really get the heart pumping, especially on the 3rd, which is mercifully not overly long. After some wonderful holes, views and scoring chances on top, a large percentage of the inevitable drop comes via one hole – the spectacular dogleg par-5 17th, where you may require surprisingly little club to attack the green with your second shot if you get the drive right.

T 01491 873229 W goringgolf.co.uk

Buckinghamshire

CHILTERN FOREST

£36-£50, 5,760 yards, par 70

The Chiltern Hills is a beautiful and unspoilt area with a very rural character despite its proximity to London. No-one seems sure of the exact origins of this club, but it is believed that golf has been played here for more than a century with an early six-hole layout having been designed by the Rothschild family. It has subsequently evolved into today's friendly and busy club with a tree-lined and in places hilly course, that offers up some excellent vistas that plays every inch of its modest yardage.

T 01296 631267 W chilternforest.co.uk



Cambridgeshire

GOG MAGOG

£47-£67, Wandlebury: 6,366 yards, par 72

Old: 6,398 yards, par 70

In an area not over-endowed with highly-regarded courses, it is possible that the two at Gog Magog are the best in the county. Happily, they are also remarkably different from one another. The Old dates back 110 years and has evolved with the help of Willie Park Jnr, James Braid, and Martin Hawtree who returned 12 years ago to design the Wandlebury. This is longer and has been used for regional qualifying for the Open for the last five years.

T 01223 247626 W gogmagog.co.uk

Hertfordshire

BERKHAMSTED

£50-£60, 6,605 yards, par 71

Not too many proper tests of golf have no bunkers; Berkhamsted is a notable exception. James Braid's offering is instead tree-lined and protected by some lengthy carries over heather, bracken and gorse. Assuming you avoid all this, when you approach the greens, you will find they are quite small. Grim's Dyke, an ancient earthwork, crosses the course in a number of places. The 9th is an excellent two-shotter that usually plays more than its length, with a drive, hopefully, over a road.

T 01442 865832 W berkhamstedgolfclub.co.uk



Oxfordshire

HUNTERCOMBE

£52-£83, 6,301 yards, par 70

Shortly after winning his two Open Championships, Willie Park Junior, architect of Sunningdale Old, bought this property and designed a heathland jewel where little has changed in over 100 years. Gorse is a constant hazard, and the easy-walking course is well protected by fast, subtle greens. Ian Fleming was a member for more than 30 years; in the *Goldfinger* film, James Bond tells his rival that he plays off nine at Huntercombe, oddly enough the same handicap as Fleming.

T 01491 641207 W huntercombegolfclub.co.uk

Oxfordshire

TADMARTON HEATH

£40-£60, 5,936 yards, par 69

This beautifully compact course in the North Oxfordshire Cotswolds is blessed with exemplary get-away-from-it-all credentials, and a pretty cottage-style clubhouse that's entirely in keeping with its surroundings. There are tight holes, open holes, ones that make you think, 'I've got a chance', and others that command real respect. Two par 3s stand out – the 7th across a gully, and the short 10th whose defences make you doubt your ability to hit the target, even with a wedge.

T 01608 737278 W tadmartongolf.com



#1 SHOE AND GLOVE IN GOLF

Lincolnshire

BELTON PARK

£27.50-£50, Brownlow: 6,427 yards, par 71; Ancaster: 6,227 yards, par 70; Belmont: 6,016 yards, par 69

Set across a wonderful swathe of parkland within the National Trust estate of Belton House outside Grantham, Belton Park Golf Club offers 27 holes of golf organised in three nines. Each nine begins from the clubhouse and a combination can be played to give three distinct 18-hole options. They all have their own character so a day's golf here offers great variety. Fallow deer roam the parkland providing a distraction if your golf is off.

T 01476 567399 W beltonpark.co.uk

Essex

THORNDON PARK

£55-£70, 6,511 yards, par 71

Classic Design

This is one of Colt's surprisingly less well-known classics. The two, well-balanced loops of nine run through an old deer park with a lake and network of streams which offer both visual appeal and challenge. The standout holes are the dogleg par 4s, particularly the 3rd and 13th. Along with a strong quartet of short holes, the course provides variety, test and natural beauty. The closing hole has the grand Palladian mansion of Thorndon Hall, once the clubhouse, as a striking backdrop.

T 01277 810345 W thorndonparkgolfclub.com

Suffolk

FLEMPTON

£35-£50, 6,184 yards, par 70

This nine-hole inland links in the backwaters of Suffolk is both a delight and a real find. JH Taylor re-designed and extended the course in 1906 and time has stood still here ever since. The bunkering is very pretty, and the two short par 4s at 7 and 8 are both great fun. Inside the small, intimate clubhouse, you will find a warm welcome. If you want to step back in time and enjoy good, old-fashioned, quintessential English golf, Frempton is an absolute delight to play.

T 01284 728291 W flemptongolfclub.co.uk

Norfolk

ROYAL NORWICH

£30-£48, 6,506 yards, par 72

Situated on the outskirts to the northwest of the city, Royal Norwich is an attractive parkland course. The current layout dates from 1923 and is the work of prolific designer James Braid. Now surrounded by urbanisation, the course utilises the valuable swathe of land over which it travels effectively. Off the back tees it measures an exacting 6,506 yards with nine holes on each side of Drayton Road. The greens at Royal Norwich have a reputation for being among the best in the area.

T 01603 429928 W royalnorwichgolf.co.uk



Norfolk

THETFORD

£40-£55, 6,849 yards, par 72

Many a course is on this list courtesy of its quaintness, charm and indeed, relative shortness. Not so Thetford, which strikes a blow for Norfolk golf away from its renowned north coast. This is one for the golfer who likes a decent test of length as well as accuracy, for unlike many traditional members' clubs, it stretches to just shy of 6,700 yards even off the yellows. Yet it retains immense charm, wending its way challengingly through the scenic Breckland Forest.

T 01842 752169 W thetfordgolfclub.co.uk

Derbyshire

CHEVIN

£40, 6,083 yards, par 69

Chevin boasts a delightful course of manageable yardage, with the sharp ascent onto the Chevin Ridge and the occasional blind shot bolstering its defences. The lower holes are mature parkland, while the upper ones have a rugged, moorland feel and a five-county vista on a haze-free day. The 8th – aptly named Tribulation – lives long in the memory with its narrow, hog's back fairway and steep climb to a green where OOB lurks right and long – though going long takes a bit of doing.

T 01332 841864 W chevingolf.co.uk



Lincolnshire

MARKET RASEN

£30-£40, 6,239 yards, par 71

The trees lining almost every fairway at Market Rasen & District Golf Club make it a very secluded and peaceful golfing venue. The diverse selection of specimens do, though, also mean it's a testing track with accuracy from the tee of paramount importance. The sparkling River Rase provides an extra hazard as it meanders through the course. The club began life in 1912 with play over a nine-hole layout to the west side of the town and the move to the present site came in 1922.

T 01673 842416 W marketrasengolfclub.co.uk

Essex

SAFFRON WALDEN

£45-£51, 6,632 yards, par 66

The very name Saffron Walden conjures up fragrant images which whet the appetite, and this delightful parkland course delivers plenty of enjoyable golf. It is situated in the landscaped Capability Brown grounds adjacent to the hugely impressive Audley End House. The 193ft spire of nearby St Mary's is a regular reference point, but the changes in elevation and strategically placed hazards will mean you need to stay focused on the more immediate surroundings.

T 01799 52276 W swgc.com



#1 SHOE AND GLOVE IN GOLF

Derbyshire
MATLOCK

£35-40, 5,996 yards, par 70

On the southern fringes of the beautiful Peak District, this undulating course is surrounded by glorious scenery with rolling hills, far-reaching views, rocky crags and glimpses of the ruins of Riber Castle. It plays much longer than its modest length with some cracking par 4s. The feature hole is the short 10th which requires a confident shot over a ravine of ferns, heather and gorse. This is golf that is scenic, natural, varied, testing, at times quirky, but above all, fun.

T 01629 582191 W matlockgolfclub.co.uk

Derbyshire
CAVENDISH

£30-£40, 5,721 yards, par 68

When talking about design greats like Dr Alister MacKenzie, it's easy to get wrapped up in their flagship projects – such as Augusta National in MacKenzie's case – and forget that much of their legacy is of more humble stature. But humble is, to a degree, what we're after here, and Cavendish in the Peak District allows every golfer to pit himself against, and appreciate, the great man's design mind. It's an enchanting, undulating course of modest length, where good shots are rewarded, and poor ones lead to added difficulties – just as the maestro would have wanted.

T 01298 79708 W cavendishgolfclub.com

Leicestershire
LONGCLIFFE

£40-£50, 6,625 yards, par 72

Travelling through the ancient trees of Charnwood Forest, Longcliffe is one of the most attractive courses in the East Midlands. Just outside Loughborough, it's a heathland track with gorse and heather a factor on a number of holes. It's a challenging and relatively lengthy layout with a number of testing holes, some tough par 4s in particular. The straightaway 7th and the dogleg 12th both measure over 450 yards and are treated as virtual par 5s by many of the members.

T 01509 239129 W longcliffegolf.co.uk

Worcestershire
BLACKWELL

£65-80, 6,260 yards, par 70

Quite private and traditional with a capital 'T', Blackwell has been host to Open Regional Qualifying a number of times and is blessed with a top-drawer Herbert Fowler course that is a joy from start to finish. There is an abundance of mature trees, ponds and ditches, and you feel that you are in the heart of the countryside even though the M42 and Birmingham are close by. An unusual feature, especially for an old course, is the 200-yard bunker that runs up the right-hand side of the 12th.

T 0121 445 1994 W blackwellgolfclub.com



Shropshire
LLANMYNECH

£30-£45, 6,036 yards, par 70

Woosie learned the game here at Llanymynech on the Welsh-English border. It's an intriguing hilltop layout blessed with rocky outcrops, breathtaking views and superb greens. Strategy holds greater merit than brute force, especially on early doglegs. The views really come alive on the back nine where a sweeping panorama over the hills of both Wales and England makes it all worthwhile however well you're playing. If you can't enjoy your round here, you're possibly playing the wrong sport.

T 01691 830983 W llanymynechgolfclub.co.uk

Staffordshire
TRENTHAM

£50-£60, 6,622 yards, par 72

There are two distinct loops of nine at this beautifully manicured parkland course where the outward half completely encompasses the homeward nine. Both contain a well-balanced mix of short and long holes, doglegs and occasional water, with the green at the tricky short 12th protected by a large depression to the front and bunkers at each corner. A day at Trentham typifies all that is good about visiting one of our respected, traditional and well-established members' clubs.

T 01782 658109 W trenthamgolf.org



Shropshire
CHURCH STRETTON

£20-£25 per day, 5,024 yards, par 66

Looking at the modest yardage, and playing the opening three, frankly quirky, par 3s, you might be forgiven for wondering if we've slipped up here. But from here on the experience is breathtaking both literally and figuratively as you head up into the Long Mynd hills and become immersed in a 360° panorama the like of which you never knew existed outside the Lake District. Add design touches from both Vardon and Braid and you have an enviable hidden gem recipe.

T 01694 722281 W churchstrettongolfclub.co.uk

Worcestershire
FULFORD HEATH

£38-£50, 6,263 yards, par 70

James Braid designed this parkland course in 1933 and it opens with two short par 4s as well as another at the 4th, which can lull the first-timer into a false sense of security. From the 6th onwards the test increases without ever becoming too intimidating. Easy on the legs, the level ground is home to three lakes and has the River Cole crossing a number of the holes. Fulford Heath is a prime example of a friendly members' club with a strong and enjoyable course.

T 01564 824758 W fulfordheathgolfclub.co.uk



#1 SHOE AND GLOVE IN GOLF

Herefordshire
KINGTON

£22-£36, 5,961 yards, par 69

Kington Golf Club deserves its place on this list for a number of reasons. Firstly, it's the highest course in England at 1,284 feet above sea level; secondly, the hilltop layout offers spectacular panoramic views over the Brecon Beacons, the Black Mountains, the Radnorshire, Malvern and Cleve Hills; thirdly, it's one of the few inland courses that can truly claim to have the playing characteristics of a links. It's exposed and windswept, with firm and fast-running, gorse-lined fairways leading to speedy greens.

T 01544 230340 W kingtongolf.co.uk

Yorkshire
BROUGH

£35-£60, 6,064 yards, par 68

Founded in 1891, the course at Brough became 18 holes in 1905 and was extended and modified in 1933 and again in 1955. It's a tough layout that places an emphasis on strategy, especially from the tee. It may look fairly innocuous on the card measuring just over 6,000 yards, but the par is only 68. When you factor in the changes in elevation, the stream that bisects the course, a number of difficult dogleg holes and the trees that encroach on many of the fairways, you're presented with quite an examination.

T 01482 667291 W brough-golfclub.co.uk

Cheshire
RINGWAY

£48-£58, 6,482 yards, par 71

Any club that has benefited from the design genius of both Harry Colt and James Braid must stand a chance of making a list like this. Ringway boasts both, with Colt involved early on and Braid being drafted in shortly before his death in 1950 to tighten things up to such a degree that all members' handicaps were increased by four. Today's layout is invariably in good condition and offers a very pleasant parkland test, which, after a gentle opener, boasts a healthy number of 400+ yard par 4s to give your game a good workout.

T 0161 980 2630 W ringwaygolfclub.co.uk

Cumbria
SEASCALE

£35-£45, 6,370 yards, par 71

This ruggedly natural late 19th-century links on the Cumbrian coast is a worthy rival to nearby Silloth, so it's fitting that it will co-host next year's English Amateur with its esteemed neighbour. There are some great holes, some great views out to the Isle of Man and some lovely touches from stone bridges and walls to meandering burns. The raised green on the 18th is notoriously difficult to find. Yes, its vast nuclear neighbour may be far from pretty, but the layout itself possesses much inner beauty.

T 01946 728202 W seascalegolfclub.co.uk



Superb Value

North Yorkshire
SCARBOROUGH SOUTH CLIFF

£30-£40, 6,493 yards, par 72

This friendly club's mix of parkland and clifftop holes make for a fascinating whole, even after enforced changes following improvements to the A165. For views, the clifftop holes take some beating, starting from the 4th – played straight towards the sea – and the standout par 5 that follows. But the parkland holes probably make you think more, especially the 5-3-5 finish, the middle element of which is devilishly tricky with a green set into the slope.

T 01723 360525 W southcliffgolfclub.com

Cheshire
WILMSLOW

£50-£65, 6,635 yards, par 72

The club prides itself on being a mixture of the old and the new, and this applies to the course itself which has evolved over the last century with input from a variety of leading architects ranging from James Braid in the early days to more recent input from Donald Steel. The Moberley stream runs across the course which twists and turns over quite undulating and very pretty woodland. The par 3s are particularly interesting with the final two crossing a ravine in opposite directions.

T 01565 872148 W wilmslowgolfclub.co.uk



North Yorkshire
HARROGATE

£45-£65, 6,241 yards, par 69

The spa town of Harrogate on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales is noted both as a tourist destination and for its therapeutic spa waters. Not far from its centre sits this mature, tree-lined course which rewards accuracy over power. Having said that, the closing four holes are all lengthy two-shotters which will test brawn as well as brain. Alister MacKenzie's trademark use of humps, dips and sloping greens is still very much in evidence.

T 01423 862999 W harrogate-gc.co.uk

West Yorkshire
ILKLEY

£43-£55, 6,235 yards, par 69

Yorkshire is the largest county in England, both geographically and in terms of affiliated golf clubs (191). It is no surprise, therefore, that it contains a good number of top courses of quite varying styles. Ilkley is a genuine one-off; a picturesque Colt/MacKenzie collaboration with the famous Moor as its backdrop and the River Wharfe flanking the first seven holes. Colin Montgomerie is an honorary member; he describes it as a "challenging test of golf with breathtaking scenery."

T 01943 600214 W ilkleygolfclub.co.uk



Northumberland
ALNMOUTH

£35-£40, 6,449 yards, par 71
Alnmouth is England's fourth oldest club dating back to 1869, though today's Colt layout hails from the 1930s. The course is right on the coast, looking out over Alnmouth and Foxton Bays, yet this is no links, but rather a stout parkland test. This seeming juxtaposition works well, with the pick of the holes – the short 5th and long, testing 6th – playing beside the beach. As you'd expect from a Colt layout, the greens are often protected by slopes and run-offs, testing both accuracy and recovery skills.

T 01665 830231 W alnmouthgolfclub.com

Put Yourself In Their Shoes

KENNETH FERRIE ON ALNMOUTH



"It's right on the coast with some beautiful views of the North Sea, but has parkland turf, which makes it a little unusual for a coastal course. I was a member at Alnmouth for many years and after winning the 1996 British Boys Championship I was awarded Honorary Life Membership, which was a huge thrill. The best hole in my opinion is the 16th, a downhill par 5 with out-of-bounds all the way down the right and trees on the left. The backdrop is the North Sea so it's the prettiest hole on the course too. With a sloping green and out-of-bounds just a couple of yards from the putting surface it is a classic risk-reward hole. The toughest hole is the 6th, a long, straight par 4 that plays uphill and finishes with a small, well-bunkered green. Par is always good here. I always enjoy

the course and the friendly welcome I receive. Last time I shot 61!"



Lancashire
ST ANNES OLD LINKS

£45-£65, 6,689 yards, par 72
T 01253 723597 W stannesoldlinks.com

Great Test of Golf

Several holes flanking an international airport doesn't bode well for hidden-gem aspirations, even if said airport is merely Blackpool's grandly titled terminal. Somehow, this doesn't detract from the enjoyment and challenge of St Annes Old Links, a must-play course in the Fylde area, even if the temptation is to focus on its more famous neighbours. The beauty of this essentially flat links lies within, rather than outside, its boundaries, with a series of strong and thought-provoking holes, the pick of which is probably the par-3 9th near the clubhouse played to a punchbowl green that's a full 46 yards from front to back.



Durham
BRANCEPETH CASTLE

£36-£42, 6,400 yards, par 70
The Colt collection continues with this distinctly different deer park design near Durham. A deep ravine crosses the course and comes into play on a good number of the holes including the long par-3 9th which was described by Bernard Darwin as a hole of 'terrifying grandeur.' The springy turf is a joy and there are frequent and excellent views of the striking castle which is adjacent to the halfway point. Save some energy for the finish; the carry over the ravine at the closing hole is the longest on the course.

T 01913 780075 W brancepeth-castle-golf.co.uk



Cumbria
BRAMPTON

£32-£48, 6,407 yards, par 72
Take one large tract of beautiful, rolling, sprawling, gloriously unspoilt Cumbrian heathland. Add in the creative architectural flair of five-time Open Champion James Braid. Allow to gently mature for 100 years. Enjoy! The views alone warrant the visitor-friendly green fee, but on top of this you have a wonderfully varied and quite unusual design that presents a different challenge from every tee. This is unpretentious, unfussy, pure golf that will keep you smiling no matter how you are playing.

T 01697 72255 W bramptongolfclub.com

Stunning Setting



Northumberland
HEXHAM

£35-£45, 6,301 yards, par 70
Great views feature prominently among our 100 Hidden Gems and Hexham is no exception, with the course set high above the Tyne valley and surrounded by rolling parkland. Originally located at the bottom of the hill by the river, the club moved to more elevated and expansive land 50 years ago and now enjoys Grade I listed Spital House as its clubhouse. The course is very pretty, but you need to take care when you reach the greens, for they are invariably fast with some subtle breaks.

T 01434 603072 W hexhamgolf.co.uk



Northumberland
BAMBURGH CASTLE

£37.50-£55, 5,645 yards, par 68
Northumberland is renowned for its beaches and castles, and a visit to Bamburgh Castle brings stirring views of both in this north-eastern wilderness. Any club that describes its course as 'entertaining' is definitely singing from the hidden gems hymn sheet, and that description is spot on. You won't play a par 4 until the 5th: there are then several your ego will tell you you should knock it on. But there are many places where due care and attention need to be exercised. Fantastic views, a sporting layout and a friendly welcome.

T 01668 214378 W bamburghcastlegolfclub.co.uk

Lancashire
SILVERDALE

£28.50-£40, 5,592 yards, par 70
Just a few miles inland from the northeast corner of Morecambe Bay, Silverdale is set in an area of outstanding natural beauty with fabulous views to Morecambe Bay and to the Lakeland and Howgill Fells. It's an individual course, full of character with some great holes played through narrow heathland valleys. Look out for the 13th hole, 'Plateau'. It may measure just over 300 yards, but it's a little devil demanding a supremely accurate tee shot and an approach to a raised green.

T 01524 702074 W silverdalegolfclub.co.uk

Isle of Man
RAMSEY

£25-£34, 5,982 yards, par 70
With the finest clubhouse views on the Isle of Man, Ramsey is a hugely enjoyable parkland layout, which has evolved with input from Old Tom Morris, his nephew John, and ultimately James Braid. There are five tough par 3s where the stroke indexes range from 12 down to 2. Most unusually, this includes both of the closing holes. Ramsey is a seriously pretty course in a superb and tranquil setting framed and overlooked by some beautiful, tree-clad towering hills.

T 01624 812244 W ramseygolfclub.im

Channel Islands
ALDERNEY

£25, 4,964 yards, par 64
Playing golf on the small islands dotted around these shores is always memorable, and this charming links nine-hole on the third largest of the Channel Islands is no exception. It's situated at a point where the island is barely 1km across, so the views of beaches and vast waters beyond are glorious. The course is just shy of 5,000 yards, but demands plenty of game to negotiate it, with five of its eight par 3s exceeding 185 yards in an 18-hole round. If you ever find yourself holidaying in this part of the world, be sure to pack your clubs.

T 01481 823909 W alderney.org/golf

Channel Islands
ROYAL GUERNSEY

£50 per day, 6,215 yards, par 70
Golf has been played on L'Ancrese Common in the north of Guernsey since 1890. This mature links possesses a natural, rugged beauty with vast swathes of gorse, and is flanked on two sides by gorgeous white sandy beaches as the Common pinches in before a final hammerhead headland. It's not flat either, with changes in elevation adding to the challenge and enhancing the experience, along with a number of wartime fortifications. Accuracy along with a willingness to accept the odd rogue bounce is needed here.

T 01481 246523 W royalguernseygolfclub.com GM