

Kent: The Crown Jewel of English Golf



By Mike May



THE
LODGE
at Prince's



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Kent: The Crown Jewel of English Golf

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When you start preparing for your next golf trip to Great Britain, give strong consideration to England's county of Kent as your main destination. When comparing Kent to all other British golfing 'hot-spots,' Kent will 'check more boxes,' so to speak, than any other place on your British golfing radar screen. Seriously!



An aerial view of Dover Castle.

First of all, Kent is easy to reach as it's very close to both of London's two major international airports (Heathrow and Gatwick). Weatherwise, Kent has some of Great Britain's best weather since it is in the southern part of England and Kent also has the driest weather in Britain. Kent is filled with history as it has a number of historic castles, such as Dover Castle, Hever Castle, and Walmer Castle. For lovers of

Christian history, Kent is the home of the world-famous Canterbury Cathedral. If you are a foodie, you need to know that the quality of food served in Kent is probably the best in Britain as Kent is known as the Garden of England.



Kent is a perfect place for golfers as it has three British Open golf courses, one of which is still in the Open rota (Royal St. George's Golf Club). Kent is also the launchpad for a day trip or an excursion to France, which you can see from many parts of Kent. And Kent is a beer lover's delight as it's the home of the oldest brewery in

The White Cliffs of Dover are an iconic image in Kent.

Britain (Shepherd Neame). There are daily tours of the Shepherd Neame Brewery in Faversham. They are delightful and include taste-testing at the end. And, there are more historical places to visit than you'll ever have time to see, many of which are pubs, such as The George & Dragon pub in Sandwich which opened its doors in 1446.



The world-famous Canterbury Cathedral is one of Kent's most popular attractions.

With that being the case, get ready to take and enjoy a short editorial tour of Kent's finest golf courses, many of which are championship links courses, which have either hosted an Open Championship or an Open qualifier. Without further delay, let's visit the bunkers, fairways, rough, tees and greens of Kent.

ROYAL ST. GEORGE'S: THE CENTERPIECE OF GOLF IN KENT



If you are searching for an English links golf experience that is royal (but not pretentious) and old (but not ancient), choose the **Royal St. George's Golf Club**, which is also a classic and traditional members club that has volumes of history for you to absorb. This championship links course is located at Sandwich Bay with stunning views of Kent's iconic White Cliffs, just outside the charming medieval coastal town of Sandwich in a county (Kent) that is in the extreme southeast of England. Geographically, Royal St. George's (Clubhouse Flat, Sandwich, Kent; www.royalstgeorges.com) is less than a two-hour drive from London's Heathrow Airport and even closer to London's Gatwick Airport, making it easily accessible to international golfers.



The green of the 3rd hole at Royal St. George's Golf Club in Sandwich, Kent, England. (photo: Royal St. George's Golf Club)

Opened in 1887, the Royal St. George's Golf Club quickly established itself as not only one of the greatest golf courses in England, but one of the best golf layouts in the world. It has retained that lofty ranking since the day it opened. Believe it or not, the Royal St. George's Golf Club was designed to be the St. Andrews (Scotland) of the South. That mission was accomplished, though, in my opinion, 'Sandwich' -- as Royal St. George's is often referred to -- is a more demanding and visually appealing venue for golf than its Scottish 'ancestor.'

CANDID CAMERA

There were two other interesting moments at Royal St. George's that took place in the 1960s, both, of which, involved a camera. In 1964, the club was immortalized forever by one of its most famous members, Ian Fleming, when he used it as the setting for that classic match between James Bond and his rival Auric Goldfinger in the *Goldfinger* novel and movie of the same name. Though the course was referred to as Royal St. Mark's, it was very much based on Royal St. George's. At that same time, Fleming was about to become Captain of his beloved club when he sadly died. As a tribute to one of its most famous members, the club has the full set of Bond paperbacks on display in The Writing Room. And, in 1967, Tony Jacklin's ace at the 16th hole during the Dunlop Masters was the first ever hole-in-one seen on live television. Jacklin ended up winning the tournament that year.

PLACES OF DISTINCTION

‘Sandwich’ is characterized by its unusual thatched roof shelters dotted around the course, by the red cross of St. George on its pin flags, and also by many quirky names given to a number of the course features and holes which add to the allure and appeal of this championship links design. It all starts with The Kitchen at the 1st hole, the Valley of Sin on the 4th green, Campbell’s Table in the 5th fairway, the Tennis Court on the left-hand side of the 9th fairway, the Suez Canal which crosses the 14th fairway, and Duncan’s Hollow on the 18th green. This golf course also has The Maiden, which is the term given to describe the entire 6th hole.



The 7th tee at Royal St. George’s Golf Club. (photo: Royal St. George’s Golf Club)

One of the obstacles which you will have to negotiate at Royal St. George’s is the massive Himalaya bunker, considered the tallest one in England, which you must attempt to avoid when striking your tee shot on the 4th hole.

DOGS ARE WELCOME AT SANDWICH

There are other interesting aspects of ‘Sandwich’ worth sharing. For instance, members of the club are allowed to bring their dogs on the course whilst playing. And, golfers must be wary of the right-of-way to walkers on the public footpaths – closed during the staging of The Open – crossing the 1st, 9th, and 18th holes. Can you imagine taking your dog for a walk while playing Pebble Beach or going for a late afternoon stroll through the grounds of Augusta National? This public-private aspect of Royal St. George’s is a foreign concept to many visiting golfers from outside England.

Another feature worth experiencing is the ‘The Hut,’ which sits alongside the 12th green and the 13th tee where a wide variety of snacks and drinks – such as Bovril with chili sherry – are available, as well as hot sausages and water for your dog.



The view of the 5th hole at the Royal St. George's GC. (photo: Royal St. George's Golf Club)

GREENSIDE TACTICS

One of the idiosyncrasies of Royal St. George's is you must be willing to use an iron or your putter from off the putting surface in order to reach the pin on many holes. The decision to challenge the pin with a chip-and-run shot is a necessity. On five or six occasions, I successfully used my eight iron to give myself makeable par putts. My greatest success story was the eight-iron chip-and-run from the left side of the 436-yard, par four 15th, which is listed as the most difficult hole at Royal St. George's. After a strong drive followed by a three-wood approach, I was left with roughly 25 yards to get up and down for my par. A well-executed chip-and-run left with me with a three-footer for par, which I successfully converted.

When playing golf at Royal St. George's, having two golf balls in play with either a two-ball or foursomes are required to play this course, except on Tuesday's when you can play a fourball. The emphasis on two balls keeps the pace of play moving along at a respectable pace.

I have a vital piece of advice to share with you when you drive down Sandown Road on your way to the club. Keep your eyes peeled for the small white sign with red lettering for the Royal St. George's Golf Club. If you don't pay attention, you'll miss it! When you make the correct turn onto Guildford Road, that road will take you directly to the club's car park, aka parking lot.

Despite being a private club, tee times are available for the general public at various times during the week and can be booked online at www.royalstgeorges.com. Yes, getting access to Royal St.

George's is that simple. While booking a tee time can be done online, it's important to make a point of getting 'offline' when you arrive on the first tee so that you can soak in the moment.

CADDIES: A DIFFERENCE-MAKER

When playing Royal St. George's, hire a local caddy. It will be an investment which will yield an amazing experience. The local caddies at Royal St. George's will offer sound advice on where to hit your next shot and then explain why. The caddies' numerous stories about the course will make it one of the most memorable rounds of golf that you will ever play -- anywhere. It was that way for me and I know that it will be for you.

Prior to my round, Sean Meleady, the caddiemaster at Royal St. George's, said our two-ball would play 'millionaire's golf' that day. By that, he meant nobody would be in front of us and nobody would be behind us and so it was.

My caddie, Gary, affiliated with Royal St. George's for more than 50 years, hugely enhanced my round at Royal St. George's and gave me an unforgettable experience, indeed one of the most memorable rounds of golf that I have ever played. Throughout my round, he gave me advice on where to hit my tee shots, approaches and pitches. He also lined up my putts on the tricky greens. And, he shared anecdotes about the club and told me the history of the course which is fascinating for avid golfers.

While standing on the 18th tee during my inaugural round at Sandwich, my caddie (Gary) told me, tongue in cheek, "You need a par four in order to win The Open." While standing on the 18th tee, with my driver in my hands, I couldn't help but start dreaming of playing for the Claret Jug and possibly being announced as The Champion Golfer of Year. I'm delighted to admit that I concluded my round at Sandwich with a par, but, sadly, there was no Claret Jug for me or anybody proclaiming me as the Champion Golfer of the Year, as I walked off the 18th green toward the clubhouse. But, I felt like a champion!

POST-ROUND PLANS

After playing 18 holes at Royal St. George's, you should definitely stay for lunch, dine outside on the garden patio, weather permitting, or don your jacket and tie and enjoy a full blown roast lunch in The Dining Room.....and then simply soak up the atmosphere and tradition. For me, there is no better location and atmosphere for golf and lunch than Royal St. George's, the jewel in the crown of Golf in Kent.

PAST CHAMPIONS @ SANDWICH

Not surprisingly, Royal St. George's was the first golf course outside of Scotland to host The (British) Open Championship when it was held there in 1894, when England's J. H. Taylor won the title. Over the years, it has also attracted golf's most prestigious events and many of the game's great players have walked away triumphant. To date, the club has hosted 14 (British) Open Championships, 13 British Amateur Championships (most recently in 2017), five British PGA Championships, two Walker Cups, and one Curtis Cup. As an amateur, Jack Nicklaus won the 36-hole Grand Challenge Cup at Royal St. George's in 1959 -- see his scorecards, with rounds of 73 and 76, on display inside the clubhouse; Sir Nick Faldo and Seve Ballesteros each won the British PGA Championship on this course; and a strong group of international golfers like

American Walter Hagen, Englishman Henry Cotton, South African Bobby Locke, Scotsman Sandy Lyle, Australian Greg Norman, and Irishman Darren Clarke have departed 'Sandwich' as winners of The Open Championship, with the Claret Jug in their hands.

P.S. By the way, The Open Championship will return to Royal St. George's in 2021. And, you should, too. For more information on Royal St. George's, visit www.royalstgeorges.com and for more on Golf in Kent, go to www.golfinkent.co.uk. (MM)

THE LODGE AT PRINCE'S:

A LAUNCHPAD FOR PLAYING GOLF IN KENT



Golfers who make the trek to play links golf in England's county of Kent will be well served by making camp, so to speak, at **The Lodge at Prince's**. Simply put, this 38-room destination – which opened for business on May 12, 2012 – truly caters to the needs of the avid and passionate golfer. By staying at The Lodge at Prince's (Prince's Drive, Sandwich Bay, Kent; www.princesgolfclub.co.uk), you are just a few minutes away from the first tee of both the Royal St. George's Golf Club, site of 14 previous Open Championships, and the Prince's Golf Club, which hosted The Open Championship in 1932. And, it's less than a 10-minute drive to the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club in nearby Deal, which hosted The Open in 1909 and 1920.



The Lodge at Prince's overlooks the English Channel.

THE LODGE: PERFECTLY SITUATED

The geographic location for The Lodge at Prince's is priceless and worth the price of admission, so to speak. The Lodge has an unobstructed view of the English Channel, the banks of which are a stone's throw away from this property. If you want to begin your day with a morning walk along the English Channel before enjoying a full English breakfast at The Lodge, opportunity awaits.

The Lodge at Prince's was designed with the needs of golfers in mind. The rooms are clean, comfortable, and spacious with enough room for luggage and golf clubs. Each room has a view of either the English Channel or portions of either Royal St. George's GC or Prince's GC. At Royal St. George's, the 13th green and 14th tee are separated from The Lodge by fencing, while the 5th green on the Shore course at Princes is just a few steps away from the back patio at The Lodge.

After golf, guests have everything they need in order to enjoy the evening at The Lodge – a fully stocked bar, comfortable seating, and a diverse menu to choose from at The Brasserie on the Bay, that serves Kentish fare using in-season, local produce.

“Make sure you dine at the Brasserie during your stay,” said Ali McGuirk, business development manager, Prince's. “Head Chef Ricky has created a wonderful menu featuring locally sourced produce. His lamb dish is not to be missed!”



The rooms at The Lodge at Prince's are spacious, quiet, and comfortable.

On any given afternoon or night, guests can enjoy an early evening drink and spend some time on the first-class practice putting green which sits adjacent to The Lodge. This practice putting green is a wonderful place to begin your day with some pre-round practice putts or a great place to

conclude your day following your round at one of the nearby golf courses. After all, you can never spend too much time practicing your putting, right? And, if you need some extra gym time to stay fit, there is a fitness center on site, as well.

Before departing The Lodge at Prince's, inquire about the possibility of booking a guided tour of The Gallery, located at The Lodge. The Gallery is a mini museum which contains a number of videos, letters, pictures, trophies, old clubs, and memorabilia that are connected to the growth of golf at Prince's. The focal point of The Gallery is the original sand wedge which was created by Sarazen, who, of course, won the '32 Open at Prince's.

ACCESS TO THREE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP VENUES

As for the local golf opportunities when staying at The Lodge at Prince's, you are just minutes away from the first tee of both Prince's Golf Club, Royal St. George's Golf Club, and Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club. You can see parts of Prince's and Royal St. George's from The Lodge.

Many locals simply refer to Royal St. George's by the name of the local historic medieval town, Sandwich. Founded in 1887, this championship links course is one of England's most mesmerizing golf courses, as it offers stunning views of Sandwich Bay and the world-famous white cliffs along the coast of Kent. The tallest and deepest bunker in Great Britain is located on the 4th hole at the Royal St. George's Golf Club, which will host The Open Championship for a 15th time in July 2021. Royal St. George's has hosted The Open more than any other golf course in England.

Prince's boasts 27 holes of championship links golf in three nine-hole loops: The Shore, The Dunes and The Himalayas. Prince's hosted The Open in 1932. That year, Gene Sarazen won the Silver Claret Jug.

Less than 10 minutes down the coastal road from The Lodge at Prince's is the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club, which five-time Open champion James Braid once referred to as "the best course in England." Royal Cinque Ports hosted The Open in 1909 and 1920.

Suffice it to say, it won't be easy leaving The Lodge at Prince's and the golfing opportunities in the greater Sandwich area, but it will be easy making plans for a return trip to this championship links strip of coastal Kent. (MM)

THE GALLERY @ THE LODGE AT PRINCE'S: GOLF'S TREASURE CHEST

Besides the many amenities that guests get to enjoy by staying at the Lodge at Prince's, a big fringe benefit is your access to some of golf's greatest treasures – all affiliated with the Prince's Golf Club. While staying at The Lodge, you must book a guided tour through **The Gallery**, where those great golf treasures are on display.

GOLF'S HISTORICAL MEN & WOMEN



The Gallery is filled with golf memorabilia, historic clubs, and golf artifacts.

The Gallery is a boutique-like mini museum, located on the top floor of the Lodge, which contains a number of trophies, medals, cups, videos, hand-written notes, pictures, typed letters, golf clubs, and memorabilia that are connected to Prince's GC. The prestigious awards include the Gene Sarazen Trophy, Lady Bridgland Bowl, Laddie Lucas Spoon, and Lady Astor Cup. If a historical moment took place at Prince's, then it's been documented and is on display inside The Gallery.



The Gallery chronicles the history of golf at Prince's.

THE FAMOUS WEDGE

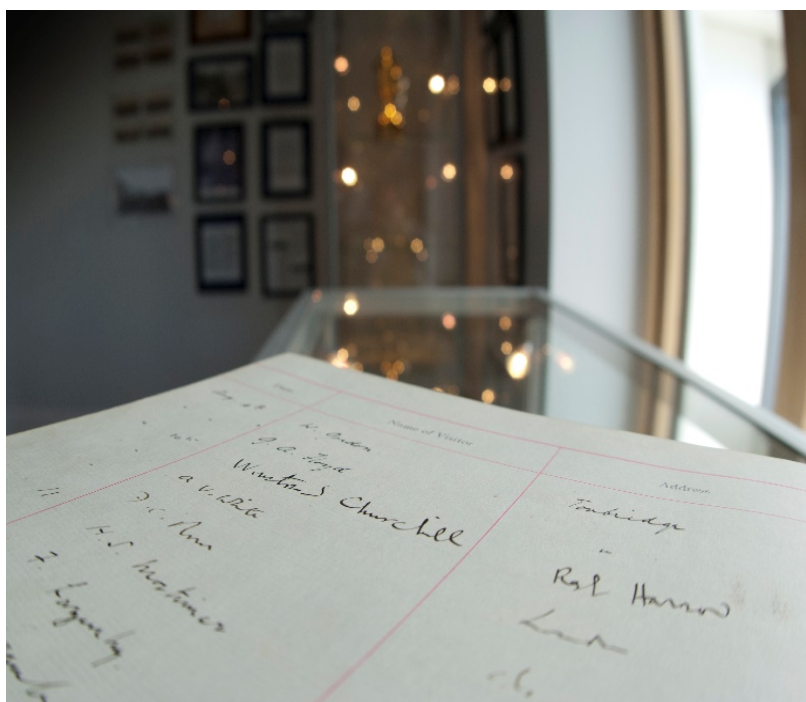
The focal point of The Gallery is the original sand wedge created by Gene Sarazen, who used it to help him win the '32 Open at Prince's. It's also worth noting that Francis Ouimet played Prince's on April 8, 1914; Sir Winston Churchill played golf at Prince's in 1923 (his signature appears in the directory for visitors); Bobby Jones was at Prince's in 1930; the Curtis Cup matches were held at Prince's in 1956; and Sarazen's last visit to Prince's was in 1992, 60 years after winning the Open at the Prince's Golf Club.



Former Open champ Padraig Harrington has tried and tested the famous Sarazen wedge.

“The Gallery attracts golfers with a general interest in this wonderful game,” said John Gardner, curator, The Gallery. “They have a keen interest in the history of our golf club. They are always enthusiastic to learn that they are playing in the footsteps of Winston Churchill, Francis Ouimet, Bobby Jones, Gene Sarazen and many others. I think the founding fathers can rest easy that their beloved Prince's will still be making history in another hundred years.”

HISTORY ON DISPLAY



See Winston Churchill's signature prior to his visit to Prince's GC.

“We take great pride in our club's history and its epic tale of survival. Prince's, however, as you have discovered, is always looking to the future with the recent major upgrade to the Himalayas demonstrating this vision,” said John Gardner, archivist, Prince's Golf Club. “I think the founding fathers can rest easy that their beloved Prince's will still be making history in another hundred years.” (MM)

LITTLESTONE GOLF CLUB: THE CHAMPIONSHIP LINKS



When people start talking about playing golf in Great Britain, the conversation always seems to focus on those historic layouts in Scotland such as St. Andrews (both the Old Course and the New Course), Turnberry, Carnoustie, Muirfield, Royal Dornoch, Royal Troon, Gleneagles, and others. While those courses deserve to be on everybody's 'must play' list, there are a number of great golf courses in England that will satisfy your craving for the classic, British links golf experience.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

One of my personal favorites is the **Littlestone Golf Club** which is located along the south coast of Kent. I played Littlestone Golf Club (St. Andrews Road, Romney, near Romney Marsh, Kent; www.littlestonegolfclub.org.uk) in June 2018. My memories of the experience are profound, clear and vivid.

The scorecard for England's Littlestone Golf Club says it all: "The Championship Links." Those three words accurately describe what the Littlestone Golf Club is now, always has been, and always will be. What you want is what you will get when you play Littlestone – true links golf, as seen on TV! After all, it's "The Championship Links."



The view of the 4th hole from the rough at the Littlestone Golf Club. (photo: Littlestone GC)

LITTLESTONE'S ATMOSPHERE

There's an appeal to playing Littlestone that's easy to describe. If you conjure up images of what a true links course would look and play like, Littlestone fits the bill. It's a course that is as fun to play as it is demanding to handle. Even Littlestone's actual address -- alongside St. Andrews Road -- is very appropriate for a classic British links golf destination.

When you play Littlestone for the first time, your high expectations will be exceeded. The pleasure that one gets by playing golf, especially good golf, at Littlestone is further complemented by the magnificent setting -- adjacent to the English Channel and not far from the white cliffs of Folkestone and Dover. And, on a clear day, you can just see images of the French coastline in the distance.

Opened in 1888, you sense the historic atmosphere at Littlestone, as soon as you step foot into its clubhouse. A degree of excitement and anticipation rushes through your body as you catch your first glimpse of the Littlestone Golf Club clubhouse, which marks your arrival at one of England's finest and most unheralded championship links courses.



The early morning mist at the Littlestone Golf Club, which overlooks the English Channel.

GREAT 'NEIGHBORS'

When golfers talk about visiting England's county of Kent for golf getaways, the Littlestone Golf Club can get overlooked, but it's a course that deserves as much praise and respect as the other championship links courses in the county -- the Open trio of Royal St. George's (in Sandwich), Prince's (in Sandwich), and Royal Cinque Ports (in Deal).



The 8th green at the Littlestone Golf Club. (photo: Littlestone Golf Club)

While the three aforementioned courses have all hosted The Open Championship, Littlestone should be in the same conversation as it has hosted Open Championship qualifiers on more than five occasions, as well as many England Golf events over the years. Indeed, it will host The Junior Open (conducted by the R & A) in 2020, which will be held just before The Open Championship, which will be held nearby at Royal St. George's. Littlestone is located about an hour's drive from the Open trio.....and is a must-play experience to finish off what is the most enticing tour of championship links golf in the south of England.

Littlestone's current layout is a reflection of the design expertise of three experienced golf course designers – the original architect William Laidlaw Purves, James Braid, and then Alistair McKenzie. Braid was hired to insert strategic bunkers on the course and McKenzie wanted to improve the look and feel of two par-three holes – the 6th and 17th. He also modified the greens on the 5th, 8th, and 18th holes. With the exception of some tee boxes at the 4th, 7th, 9th, 11th and 12th which were built in 1997, the course has remain unchanged since McKenzie's ideas were incorporated back in the mid-1920s.

LITTLESTONE'S STAR APPEAL

You also can't help but feel the need to make time after your round for a tour of the old traditional two-story, brick clubhouse which has a slightly weathered, yet distinguished, look to its exterior. As you stand on the 1st tee, the clubhouse is right behind you. As walk off the 18th green, the clubhouse is on your right.

In fact, as you stroll along the grounds and walk around the old brick clubhouse, you can sense the latent presence of some of golf's major champions, who have played at Littlestone such as Sergio Garcia, Justin Rose, Darren Clarke, Retief Goosen, Ben Curtis, and Tony Jacklin. Other prominent golfers who have played at Littlestone include Jeff Maggert, Lee Westwood, Nathaniel Crosby, and Dai Rees.



The Littlestone Golf Club is the epitome of true links golf. (photo: Littlestone Golf Club)

When Garcia first played at Littlestone, it was in 1996 when he participated in the Boys Amateur Championship. While he did not win, Garcia did receive the John Garner Trophy for the best player under the age of 16. Rose also played in that event in 1996. Clarke has the course record at Littlestone – a 65. Maggert once played in an Open qualifier at Littlestone, as did Westwood when he attempted to qualify for the Open as an amateur. Another interesting Littlestone story involves Curtis, who won the Open in 2003, when it was played at nearby Royal St. George's. Just prior to that Open, Curtis didn't have a caddy so officials at Royal St. George's called Littlestone which had a member by the name of Andy Sullivan who had some experience as a caddy. Sullivan agreed to loop for Curtis that week during the Open. In preparation for the Open, Curtis played a practice round at Littlestone. Less than a week later, Curtis was holding the Claret Jug and Sullivan could say that he had worked for 'The Champion Golfer of the Year.' As for Jacklin and Rees, they once played in an exhibition match at Littlestone.

YEAR-ROUND ACCESS

Golfers enjoy year-round playability at Littlestone because of the unique microclimate that exists along this section of the Kent coastline, which makes it one of the driest places in England. As a result, the firm terrain produces hard and fast fairways that are beautifully defined by the natural dunes, so typical of links golf. The temperate weather also means the course is well-manicured throughout the year. The greens are firm, true and well-paced and have the reputation of being some of the best in England.

At Littlestone, which features five sets of tees, the first and last holes are strong potential birdie opportunities. As for the other 16 holes, securing par is always a worthy accomplishment, especially on holes played into the breeze. And, rarely is not some type of breeze at Littlestone.



The view of Littlestone's clubhouse from the 18th green (photo: Littlestone GC)

MOTHER NATURE AT PLAY

The degree of difficulty at Littlestone is always impacted by the rough and the wind, which comes whipping off the nearby English Channel. The rough never really changes at Littlestone. To say it's penal is an understatement, so try your best to avoid it at all costs. Too many of your balls that stray into the rough may never be found, at least by you. Occasionally, the golfing gods will be kind to you and you'll find your ball in the rough with a great lie, but that's more the exception than the rule. The strength and direction of the wind at Littlestone changes from day to day, often within the course of your round, delivering the thrill, joy, and challenge of links golf.



The view of the Littlestone Golf Club's 16th fairway.

At Littlestone, the first hole is somewhat odd in that the difference between the front tees (red) and the back tees (blue) is just a few yards. At the par four 1st, the hole measures 297 yards for the pros whilst for the ladies, hitting from the red tees, it's still just 294 yards. Littlestone's opening hole ranks as the easiest hole on the golf course, but it's often played into the wind and the presence of two menacing bunkers near the entrance to the green emphasizes the importance of the right club selection for your approach. While those two sand traps at the 1st appear to hug the front of the green, there is actually lots of room between the bunkers and the front of the putting surface.

At Littlestone, when you make the turn from the 9th green to the 10th tee, that transition is done 'out in the country,' which is also the most distant part of the golf course from the clubhouse. So, at Littlestone, you literally play the 'outward' half to the 9th green and then come home by playing the 'inward' half to the 18th green.

LITTLESTONE'S SPECIAL FEATURES

At Littlestone, you'll find a few inconveniences scattered throughout the premises which add to its ever-present allure and mystique -- fairway pot bunkers are frequently found on the course; small depressions, known as bowls and hollows, are a common sight in the fairways and the rough; gorse bushes appear in the rough at the 3rd, 4th, and 5th holes; a small stream crosses the fairway at the 2nd and 7th holes, while it runs alongside the entire fairway at the 11th hole; and most of the greens have significant undulations whilst multi-tiered greens are the norm.

Because of the steadiness and intensity of the wind, trees don't really exist at Littlestone, but be on the lookout for the 'lone tree' that sits to the right of the 5th fairway and the 'lone bush' that appears to the right of the 16th fairway.

Most of the entrances to the green are bunker-free which enables you to land your approach short of the green, thereby giving the ball a chance to release to the pin. And, believe it or not, some greens at Littlestone are bunker-free, but that is the exception and not the norm.

As for the cost to play Littlestone, it's very reasonable. The green fee is just £80 in the summer and less in the winter – just £50 -- which represents incredible value for a championship links of this quality.

When you walk off the 18th green, you can't help but immediately reflect on what you just finished – an experience on The Championship Links. You will have also discovered that Littlestone is one of the most delightful and hidden gems of championship golf in the south of England. After golf, head to the clubhouse and enjoy a drink in the bar which overlooks the golf course. It will give you a chance to raise a toast to The Championship Links and to yourself for having played it. Cheers!

P.S. A final note about Littlestone worth sharing is that there is another course to play adjacent to the championship course – the Littlestone Warren course -- which is shorter, but shares many of the qualities of the Littlestone layout. The Warren – formerly named Romney Marsh – offers 'pay and play' opportunities as well as membership. Originally a nine-hole course, it was extended to 18 holes in 1993. (MM)

ROYAL CINQUE PORTS GC: PREMIER LINKS DESTINATION



The **Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club** -- founded in 1892 on the edge of the former port of Deal in Kent, England -- features an 18-hole championship links golf course, which is regarded as one of the finest links courses in the world. This course presents a classic links golf experience and aptly deserves its championship description. This club -- featuring excellent practice facilities, a driving range, putting green, chipping green and pitching greens -- is open to visitors 12 months a year. It's worth noting that the Royal Cinque Ports GC (Golf Road, Deal, Kent; www.royalcinqueports.com) is often referred to as Deal, the same name of its local town.

MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS @ DEAL

Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club has been the scene of many of golf's biggest championship events, including two (British) Open Championships in 1909 (won by J. H. Taylor) and 1920 (won by George Duncan). Deal has hosted the British Amateur Championship on three occasions -- in 1923, 1982 and 2013. The club was also one of four final Open qualifying venues from 2014-2017. Also, every year since 1924, this club has hosted the Halford Hewitt Public Schools Championship, the world's largest amateur golf tournament.



The opening tee shot at Royal Cinque Ports, with the clubhouse to the right. (photo: James Lovett)

Royal Cinque Ports also boasts Karen Stupples, the winner of the 2004 Weetabix Women's British Open, as one of its members.

It is safe to say that the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club is the real 'deal,' no pun intended.

THE DEAL APPEAL

Royal Cinque Ports head professional Andrew Reynolds says the setting for this golf course and the mindset of local residents help add to the allure and appeal of Deal.

"After 40 years here as head pro, I reckon I know what makes this place tick," states Reynolds. "We know we have a good course that is pretty much always in good condition, but it's really the whole atmosphere of the area that helps create the love that both members and visitors seem to appreciate."



The 6th green, in the distance, at the Royal Cinque Ports GC.

Reynolds says the weather at Deal is conducive to year-round play. Plus, the local members don't mind playing in adverse conditions -- when the wind picks up and the temperatures begin to drop.

"East Kent is the area with the best -- sunniest and driest -- weather in the U.K. and the town of Deal is a wonderful old place with a cosmopolitan group of people from every conceivable background," added Reynolds. "Like all seaside towns, the inhabitants are mostly 'outdoor' active people who seem to want to be outside. Those that enjoy the links are outdoor, competitive souls that really don't mind getting beat up by the course. They play all year round in every weather and just want to be out there doing whatever they can to have some fun."

According to Reynolds, the setting for Royal Cinque Ports can remind you of what you see in Montana and many parts of the wild, wild west of the United States.

“Years ago, an old member said to me the course always reminded him of the film *The Big Country* -- 360 degrees of sky,” recalled Reynolds. “So that’s really it -- a big course with a big sky and some big members battling the course. It’s a good place to relax and spend some good leisure time.”

Reynolds is quick to give credit to where credit is due. His maintenance staff do a great job of keeping the course in tip-top shape throughout the year.

“We have a terrific course manager whose team also plays golf -- proud men that do all they can to ensure the golf course is at its best nearly all the time,” continued Reynolds. “The grasses here are predominantly fescue, which is drought resistant and seems to thrive at this part of the country. We work hard collectively to keep everything up to scratch.”



Royal Cinque Ports GC has hosted the Open Championship twice – in 1909 (won by J.H. Taylor) and in 1920 (won by George Duncan).

Added to many of the appealing aspects of Deal is its close proximity to three other great links courses in the county of Kent. Royal Cinque Ports is less than an hour’s drive from Littlestone GC (to the west) and less than a 10-minute drive to Royal St. George’s GC and Prince’s GC (to the east).

DEAL: A CLASSIC TEST

Five-time Open champion James Braid once referred to Royal Cinque Ports, as “the best course in England.” At Royal Cinque Ports, all 18 holes are in close proximity to the English Channel, though you don’t get a full view of the sea until you step on the 4th tee to play the shortest par three on the course.



The 16th green at the Royal Cinque Ports GC.

The degree of difficulty of this mesmerizing layout is largely tied to the intensity and direction of the winds off the nearby English Channel. Yes, the wind – which changes daily -- is an ever-present component of the Royal Cinque Ports experience.

“We just get used to it as it just goes with the territory, golfers here don't 'not play' because its windy,” added Reynolds.

The holes are designed in a northeast-southwest type of format; basically, eight holes flow in a northeasterly direction, eight holes trend in the opposite direction (to the southwest), and two holes – the 10th and 11th – are designed like a circular U-turn, completing the transition from the 9th green to the 12th tee. The entrance to nearly every green is protected by bunkers and fiercely rolling terrain.

DEAL’S KEY HOLES

At the par-four opening hole, be aware of the small stream that crosses the front of the green, which is the biggest putting surface on the course.

The green complex at the par five 3rd hole is uniquely designed, to say the least. A two-putt on this green is a significant achievement. You have to see the size and shape of this ‘punchbowl’-shaped green in order to believe it. It has been referred to as one of Mother Nature’s masterpieces.



The Royal Cinque Port's 3rd green is shaped like a punchbowl, which is no easy two-putt experience. (photo: James Lovett)

Your tee shot from the afore-mentioned 4th tee is struck from an elevated tee box, with the English Channel in glorious full view, to one of the smaller greens on the course.

The shortest par four is the left-to-right dogleg 6th hole with a short approach to a raised, plateau-like green. Your approach to the 6th green is often struck into the wind, so the correct club selection is critical.

When you play the 7th, the back tee is actually on the shingle beach – just a stone's throw from the edge of the English Channel. As you play from tee to green, avoid the eight bunkers that are strategically placed along the edges of the hole with the middle of the fairway the only safe place to land.

The 8th is a classic links par three. Depending on the wind direction, you might only need a wedge whilst on other occasions, you may require a wood to reach the green, which is protected by six pot bunkers.

When you complete the front nine, there's a halfway hut located to the left of the 9th green. Take advantage of this chance to refuel with the necessary food and drink. The back nine awaits.

When you step foot on the 12th tee, it will represent the first of seven consecutive closing holes, which are often played into a stiff wind. Of those final holes, six of them are par fours with the long par-three 14th the exception.



The 16th tee at Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club.

The design and contours of the 12th green have never been modified by mankind. On the 13th, avoid the three large cross bunkers that stretch across the fairway, 100 yards short of the green. As you play the par-four 16th, take notice of the defense shelter in the right rough, left over from World War II. When hitting your tee shot on the 17th hole, aim for Vardon's Parlour, located in the right-center of the fairway. From there, it's a short distance to one of the smaller greens on the course, but make sure you avoid two of the bigger and deeper fairway bunkers that are placed short of the green. The 18th hole is a slight right-to-left dogleg par four. Your approach shot must carry over a small ditch that crosses the fairway. Take one more club than you think you need on your approach to the 18th green.

DOWN THE STRETCH @ DEAL

If you can play bogey golf over Deal's final seven holes, that's acceptable. Anything better is impressive, especially when the wind is in your face.

"If the prevailing wind is blowing, there is no tougher back nine anywhere in golf," said Neil Hodding of Carbis Bay, Cornwall, England.

Throughout your round at Deal, do your very best to keep the ball in the fairway. Finding your ball in the knee-deep rough and then having to hit your ball out of the rough are two totally different experiences. Avoid the rough at Deal. The fairway is pleasant and the rough can be penal.

So, if you are seeking a true links golf experience on a course that truly has championship caliber, then make the trek to England's Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club.

"We want everyone that comes here to have an urgent desire to return and we hope, too, that they will spread the word on what we have here," said Reynolds.

You won't be disappointed at Royal Cinque Ports because it's the real deal.



The view of the 18th hole – tee to green – at Deal, with the white clubhouse off to the right.

P.S. Before departing Deal for your next links golf experience along the coast of Kent, take a tour through the original clubhouse (opened in 1892). The interior of the clubhouse exudes golf history and the terrace on the first floor offers spectacular views over the golf course and the English Channel, where on a fine day, you can see France. If only the walls of Royal Cinque Ports could talk! (MM)

PRINCE'S GOLF CLUB: STEEPED IN HISTORY



The **Prince's Golf Club**, which hosted the British Amateur in 2013, boasts 27 holes of championship links golf in three nine-hole loops: The Shore, The Dunes and The Himalayas. Each loop has its own unique characteristics that have recently benefited from substantial investment and redevelopment, including a reimagined Himalayas by architects Mackenzie & Ebert, consultants to several Open Championship courses. Prince's features an impressive array of 97 revetted bunkers -- including the now-famous (Gene) Sarazen Bunker, which sits near the 9th green of The Himalayas. The ever-present seaside breezes always add a degree of difficulty to the golf experience at Prince's (Princes Drive, Sandwich Bay, Kent; www.princesgolfclub.co.uk).

It's worth noting that Sarazen once referred to Prince's as "Britain's finest course" and three-time Open champion (1934, 1937, and 1948) Henry Cotton referred to Prince's as "The finest links course." Frankly, it's tough to disagree with either assessment of Prince's by both gentleman.



The 4th green of The Dunes course at Prince's (photo: Kevin Murray)

Golfers who are war historians should be aware of the fact Bloody Point is one of the geographic locations at Prince's. It's so named because it's "believed to be the site of a vicious and bloody naval battle in AD 851," according to a sign that currently sits on the golf course.



The 2nd hole of the Himalayas at the Prince's Golf Club (photo: Jason Livy).

“Guests always enjoy our unique location, with the three fantastic neighbouring championship links courses and great coastal views,” added McGuirk. “Guests always comment on our friendly, welcoming and professional staff. The rough style bunkers, wetlands areas and grass paths really enhance the true links credentials of Prince’s. Golfers benefit from our layout which features three loops of nine holes which all start and finish at the clubhouse.”

P.S. When you play Prince’s, you can walk, use a pull cart/trolley, or rent a golf cart/buggy.

THE HEVER CASTLE GOLF EXPERIENCE: A REGAL FEELING

Would you like to experience royalty without the responsibility of wearing the crown? If so, head to England’s county of Kent.

Historic castles are a somewhat common sight throughout England, but very few of them are both inhabitable and affiliated with golf clubs. One of the exceptions can be found in southeastern England – near Edenbridge in the county of Kent. There, you’ll find the historic **Hever Castle** (Hever, Edenbridge, Kent; www.hevercastle.co.uk) and the nearby **Hever Castle Golf Club** (www.hevercastle.co.uk/golf/). Yes, you can sleep in luxury inside a real English castle.

BREAKFAST @ HEVER CASTLE: A FEAST



At Hever Castle, the day begins with a breakfast that is beyond compare. It’s the Full Hever Breakfast – eggs (fried, poached, or scrambled), grilled back bacon, Speldhurst Cumberland sausage, grilled tomato, and a field of sautéed mushrooms, which can be accompanied by baked beans, black pudding, Castle baked croissants, toast with Southdown butter, porridge, and classic English breakfast tea. You can also order Eggs Royale or Eggs Benedict, grilled kippers or Scottish smoked salmon. Clearly, breakfast is the real deal at Hever Castle.



In the distance, you see the Astor Wing, where guests spend the night at Hever Castle.

“I’m not too sure how many castles where you can stay in the United Kingdom, but I can say with every certainty that there are none offering such beauty and history as ours and certainly none with such a terrific breakfast!” said Kate Rowbottom, Sales Manager, Hever Castle.

HEVER CASTLE: WOW!

This story about the Hever Castle-Hever Castle Golf Club affiliation is filled with as many superlatives on Hever Castle as there are on its golf course, which is one of the finest, well-maintained, scenic, and cleverly designed golf courses in England. It’s not a stretch to say that this stay-and-play experience will definitely rank as one of the highlights of your trip to England. It was for me and it will be for you.



There are interesting things to see inside Hever Castle (photo: Mike May)

The actual Hever Castle has been in existence far longer than the golf course. The castle was completed in the year 1270, more than 700 years ago. To put things in their proper perspective, it’s important to remember that golf was not invented in Scotland until the 1400s. It’s worth noting that Hever Castle was the childhood home of Ann Boleyn, the second wife of the late King Henry VIII. When you take a tour through Hever Castle, you’ll get a chance to visit Ann Boleyn’s bedroom, as well as other parts of the castle where her family dined, read, slept, listened to music, and entertained guests.

THE GARDENS @ HEVER CASTLE: SIMPLY SPECTACULAR

Besides getting a chance to tour Hever Castle, the gardens at Hever Castle are another alluring attraction of this destination. It's quite possible that you will spend more time walking through the gardens at Hever Castle as you will be playing the Hever Castle Golf Club. While touring the gardens, make sure that you enjoy the fragrance from the 4,000+ roses in the Rose Garden, stroll through the Italian Garden, visit Blue Corner, allow your children to play in the Tudor Towers, make the trek to the Japanese Tea House, and pet the miniature horses. But, please, don't get lost in the Water Maze or the 100-year-old Yew Maze.

By the way, if you stay at Hever Castle, you get 24-hour-access to the gardens. And, the front desk will let you borrow a torch (aka, a flashlight) for any evening tours.



Every room at Hever Castle is designed differently and is unique. (photo: Mike May)

When you spend the night at Hever Castle, you'll discover that every room is different and every room has its own name. I slept in the Pippin Room of the Anne Boleyn Wing. Many of the rooms overlook the castle gardens and the apple orchard, which sits adjacent to the castle moat, and no expense was spared in designing each bedroom at Hever Castle. With all that you expect in a modern accommodation, it's designed in keeping with the Tudor look and tradition. Both the

actual castle and the gardens are magnificent displays of historic preservation (Hever Castle) and artistic agronomy (the gardens).

GOLF @ HEVER CASTLE: IT'S GREAT



HEVER CASTLE GOLF CLUB

Golf arrived at Hever Castle in the 1920s when a private nine-hole course was built north of the Hever lakes where today's championship course now lies. It was created for the personal enjoyment of the then American owners (the Astor family) their friends and business contacts. The Hever Castle Golf Club, featuring an impressive Tudor-style clubhouse, is less than a mile from the entrance to the grounds of Hever Castle. The golf course features the 18-hole Championship Course, a nine-hole Princes course, and a nine-hole Express course, which is less than 800 yards long, which is designed for new golfers. The Championship Course, which opened in 1992, truly deserves the championship moniker.



The clubhouse of the Hever Castle Golf Club.

There's a certain amount of symmetry to the Championship Course at the Hever Castle Golf Club, as this 18-hole, par-72 design opens and closes with a par four. And, par fives mark the end of the front nine and the beginning of the back nine. The first five holes at Hever are all par fours whilst the front nine concludes with a par 3-par 5-par 3-par 5 combination, all four of which are birdie possibilities, especially the short par-3 6th hole.



The view of the par-three 12th green at the Hever Castle GC (photo: Mike May)

Combined, the 11th, 12th, and 13th holes are called ‘Amen Corner’ because water and slick greens are the focal point of those three holes. If you can emerge from that trio of holes with three pars, it’s worth saying “Amen.”

The 11th hole at Hever Castle, a downhill par four measuring less than 400 yards from the tips, can best be described as tropically exotic. The presence of a greenside pond is accentuated by a variety of leafy trees and flowering plants which make it very appealing to the eye as you approach the putting surface.



Looking back from the 13th green at the Hever Castle GC (photo: Mike May)

The short par three 12th hole has the look and feel of the 12th at the Augusta National GC in Georgia. Like its Georgia ‘cousin,’ reaching the putting surface at Hever Castle’s 12th requires a short iron shot to a shallow green whose sentry is a small pond, very similar to Rae’s Creek, that protects the entrance to the 12th green at Augusta. And, just like the 12th at Augusta, there’s a significant amount of plant growth behind the 12th green at the Hever Castle GC.

Water impacts play from the beginning to the end at the short, par four 13th hole. Avoid water along the left side of the hole on the tee shot. Your approach to the green must cross a small canal, just as the approach to the 13th at Augusta must cross a narrow strip of Rae’s Creek. Concentration, focus, and club selection are the keys to avoiding a watery grave in the final leg of Hever Castle’s own ‘Amen Corner.’

HEVER CASTLE’S CONVENIENT LOCATION

Ideally located, the Hever Castle-Hever Castle GC stay-and-play destination is very close to London and its two major airports -- about a 90-minute drive from Heathrow and a 30-minute drive from Gatwick Airport.

After a day playing golf at the Hever Castle GC, which is either followed or preceded by a day visiting everything there is to see and do at Hever Castle, it really is a two-day experience and one worth repeating in the not-too-distant future, as one can never get enough of Hever Castle and its golf course. It truly is a regal feeling as you experience royalty without the responsibility of wearing the crown. (MM)

VISITING LEEDS CASTLE: A TOTAL CASTLE EXPERIENCE

If you are looking for a place to spend an evening (or two) in a spacious, comfortable, affordable B & B, play golf, experience world-class dining, and partake in a tour of a famous castle, then



head for England’s **Leeds Castle** (Broomfield, Maidstone, Kent; www.leeds-castle.com). Located on the outskirts of Maidstone in England’s county of Kent, the Leeds Castle ‘complex’ is a classic four-in-one getaway go-to. The four focal points of interest for this true ‘bucket-list’ destination are the 900-year-old Leeds Castle, the nine-hole **Leeds Castle Golf Club**, the elegant **Castle View Restaurant** and the quaint **Castle Courtyard Bed & Breakfast**, which has been built adjacent to the castle.

The Gate Tower entrance at Leeds Castle.

Not surprisingly, Leeds Castle pre-dates the golf course, the Castle View Restaurant, and the Castle Courtyard Bed & Breakfast. First built in 1119, Leeds Castle was a Norman stronghold and it has been the home of six of England’s medieval queens. Leeds Castle was later used by King Henry

VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. It's now one of the most visited historic buildings in Great Britain. The moat which surrounds Leeds Castle is expansive and formidable.

PLAYING GOLF @ LEEDS CASTLE

The most memorable part of your nine-hole Leeds Castle Golf Club experience is when you play the 5th and 6th holes. When you stand on the 5th tee at the Leeds Castle GC and look downhill to the green in the distance, you see an absolutely stunning view of Leeds Castle and its vast moat,



Leeds Castle is clearly in sight from the 5th tee of the Leeds Castle Golf Club.

perched directly behind the 5th green. It's a powerful and imposing visual. In fact, that view of



Leeds Castle in the distance may well be one of the most amazing backdrops for any golf hole in the world, let alone all of Great Britain. Eye-opening and attention-getting are actually understatements when it comes to describing the magnitude of the beauty of what you will see – the actual Leeds Castle -- from the 5th tee at the Leeds Castle GC. As you play this downhill par four, the image of Leeds Castle and its vast moat expand before your own eyes. It's almost too good to be true. And, when you play the 6th hole, from tee to green, off to your left, you'll see another side of Leeds Castle, as well as the widest part of the castle's moat, which is the home of many traditional black swans. The view of the Leeds Castle is one of the most breathtaking visuals in Kent, but it's not the only castle in the county. Some of the other prominent castles in Kent include Hever Castle, Dover Castle, Deal Castle, Canterbury Castle, Rochester Castle, and Walmer Castle. Kent is a real castle county!!

DINING @ LEEDS CASTLE

While eating at the Castle View Restaurant, Leeds Castle is next door and is clearly visible at all times of the day and night. After sunset, a number of spotlights bring the castle to life for interested onlookers.



Leeds Castle at night, looking from the Castle View restaurant.

When you dine in the Castle View Restaurant -- www.leeds-castle.com/restaurant -- you will be sitting in a timber-framed structure which dates back to the 1600s. The views of the adjacent Leeds Castle are spectacular -- an '11' on a scale of 1 to 10. You can enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner at the Castle View Restaurant. The food is well prepared, delicious and is sourced from many local farms and market gardens, which is to be expected since Kent is known as the Garden of England. Dinner is the featured meal at the Castle View Restaurant. Drinks at the bar are served at 6:30 pm. Dining can begin at 7:00 pm.



One of the great aspects of the menu at the Castle View Restaurant is that every starter/appetizer and main course has a suggested wine match for each item. The wines at the Castle View Restaurant come from Italy, Spain, France, New Zealand, Argentina, Australia, Chile, California, and England -- a Chapel Down Bacchus White, produced at a local winery in Kent.

The Leeds Castle moat has black swans.

A great starter/appetizer is the local asparagus poached eggs Benedict.

Three locally produced main courses which are tasty and delicious are the braised beef, slow cooked pork belly, and the lemon sole. The chef also produces daily specials such as Curry Tuesdays, Prosecco Thursdays, Fish Friday, and the Sunday Roast.

An ideal local dessert is the assiette of Kentish apples, which is apple mouse, apple crumble and mini toffee apple. The praline brulee, which features hazelnut caramel shards and vanilla shortbread, is another great choice for dessert. As you would expect, the service at the Castle View Restaurant is personable, prompt, and courteous.

SLEEPING @ LEEDS CASTLE

The accommodations at the Castle Courtyard Bed & Breakfast are spacious, clean, comfortable, and well-maintained. The tea service in the room is a welcome sight, especially after a long day playing golf and sightseeing at Leeds Castle. The shower/bath facilities are modern, the water is hot, the water pressure for the shower is perfect, and the bed will deliver a perfect, quiet night's sleep. Just outside the entrance to the Castle Courtyard B & B is a series of beautifully designed gardens which adds to the peace and tranquility of this accommodation experience.

P.S. As you can see, any visit to Kent should include a long pitstop/layover at Leeds Castle. Don't forget to bring an overnight bag, golf clubs, comfortable walking shoes, a camera, binoculars, a healthy appetite, and a credit card. **(MM)**

LONDON GOLF CLUB: MANICURED AND METICULOUS

The pursuit of perfection. That's the mindset and attitude of those who work at and maintain the **London Golf Club** (Stansted Lane, Ash, Nr Brands Hatch, Kent; www.londongolf.co.uk), which is based in the community of Ash in rural Kent. It's fair to say that no expense has been spared to design and build the two American-style golf courses which are the centerpiece of the London Golf Club. This 36-hole venue helps make American visitors feel at home when they play golf here. Conversely, it's a refreshing change of pace from what many British and European golfers are used to playing in both Great Britain and continental Europe.

FAVORABLE FIRST IMPRESSION

As soon as you go past the front gate at the London Golf Club, you will drive for a mile before you reach the clubhouse complex. That one-mile drive will allow you to soak in the beauty of the two golf courses that complement Kent's rolling, scenic, and pastoral countryside. The anticipation of what you are about to see is palpating.



When you visit the London Golf Club, there's a relaxed atmosphere throughout the clubhouse – which houses the pro shop, a bar and the restaurant, which includes comfortable seating inside and outside on the patio. When you walk around the clubhouse, you are catered to and pampered.

THE NICKLAUS PERSPECTIVE

The two golf courses at this 36-hole venue are a pair of par-72 layouts, the International and Heritage courses. Both golf courses are Jack Nicklaus Design creations – masterful layouts, very well maintained, and appealing to the eye. It's not a stretch to call them both spectacular. Truth be told, there's not a blade of grass or grain of sand that's out of place at the London Golf Club. Frankly, you can't help but fall in love with both golf courses as you stand on the tee of every hole. You can see where the tee shot needs to be hit and you can see yourself hitting that shot. These two courses have to rank among the best courses that Nicklaus has designed during his career. It's fair to say that this cross-section of the Kent countryside was always better suited for golf than agriculture. It's worth noting that while Nicklaus' greatest achievements in British golf were his three (British) Open Championships on links golf courses – 1966 at Muirfield and twice at St. Andrews in 1970 and 1978 -- the two courses at the London Golf Club are inland, parkland golf courses.



The 13th green on the International is protected by a large pond. (photo: James Lovett).

“We have two goals in mind when we design a golf course,” said Nicklaus. “One is to design a course that best serves the membership and provides them a challenging, enjoyable, and memorable golf experience each and every day it’s played. At the same time, we want to be able to provide a stern test of golf for even the best players. We think we’ve accomplished that important balance at the London Golf Club.”

If you are a first-time visitor to the London Golf Club, take advantage of the course guides that provide a pathway to success on each course. It's up to you to follow the instructions, which provide distances from virtually every possible approach to the greens. On both courses, Nicklaus used a blend of sand bunkers, hollows/grass bunkers, mounds, trees, gorse bushes, hedge rows,

and ponds to encourage you to play with a strategic mindset throughout your journey on each course.

A TRUE ANGLO-AMERICAN CLUB

When playing the London Golf Club, the English and visiting Europeans get to experience an American-style championship golf courses which they are used to seeing on television and visiting American golfers get to play a golf courses which they are used to playing on a regular basis back home.

It's worth noting that the European PGA Tour thinks so highly of the London Golf Club that it staged the 2008 and 2009 European Opens on the Heritage course and the 2014 Volvo World Match Play Championship on the International course.

THE INTERNATIONAL COURSE

The International course, which is the course played by non-members and guests, has more water hazards – four, to be precise -- than the Heritage course. The presence of the water can be penal at times, but it can also increase the level of excitement when you challenge the liquid hazard and your ball remains dry.



The only bailout on the International's downhill, par-three 8th is left of the green. (photo: James Lovett).



The 16th green of the International course at the London Golf Club.

Of the International's 18 greens, at least one greenside bunker appears on 15 of the 18 holes. The three exceptions are the 1st, 5th, and 12th holes. While the 1st green is 'bunkerless,' a pond protects the entrance to the putting surface of this dog-leg, right-to-left par five. On the 5th, since the green is long, narrow, and raised, reaching the putting surface in regulation is stern enough so a sand trap is not necessary. At the par-three 12th, you must carry a pond in order to reach the green. The safe miss on that tee shot is left, where two grass bunkers await your arrival. Since the tee shot on the 12th is hit from a raised tee, the actual distance to the green is less than the distance on the scorecard. If you feel a boost of confidence by clearing the water at the 12th, your confidence will be tested on the very next hole as you must negotiate a large pond which complicates the approach to the green of the par-five 13th. There's a strong degree of symmetry and balance on the back nine of the International as it features three par threes, three par fours, and three par fives.

THE HERITAGE COURSE

The Heritage course is reserved for play by members of the London Golf Club. On the Heritage course, at least one sand bunker protects 16 of the 18 greens. The two exceptions are the 13th and 16th. On the par-four 13th, a large pond protects the entrance and the right side of the putting surface. Many approach shots to the 13th green go long and left. At the long par-four 16th, the green's only forms of defense are a pair of hollows – greenside right and greenside left.

Instead of pinpointing any particular holes as being great holes on the Heritage course, it's better to identify particular shots of interest:

The tee shot on the par-four 2nd hole must split the eight sand bunkers – four on either side of the fairway – which border the landing area for your tee shot.

The tee shot on the par-three 7th hole is 100 percent carry from tee to green. If you airmail the green, four sand bunkers are there to gather your errant tee shot.

The approach shot to the green on the short par-four 13th must clear the water that sits between you and the putting surface. If in doubt, always take another club.

Finishing your round on the 18th green with two putts is no easy chore. This raised green is narrow from front to back. And, it slopes gently from right to left.

POST-SCRIPT: GOLF PLUS

P.S. Finally, it's worth noting that the world-famous Brands Hatch race track – the site of many past British Grand Prix Formula One races – is very close to the London Golf Club. With sufficient notice, it's possible to arrange a Brands Hatch racing experience on one day and then a round of golf at the London Golf Club the next day, followed by a trip to see one of Kent's many historic castles and then a tasting tour of the oldest brewery in England, the Shepherd Neame Brewery, in nearby Faversham. All things are possible when you visit the London Golf Club. **(MM)**

NORTH FORELAND GOLF CLUB: CLIFFTOP GOLF ALONG THE CHANNEL

When you play golf at the **North Foreland Golf Club**, get ready for some dramatic picture-postcard views of the nearby English Channel. Since 1903, golf has been played along this section of eastern Kent. What makes the North Foreland Golf Club (Convent Road, Broadstairs, Kent; www.northforeland.co.uk) experience so unique and memorable are the many views out to sea –



all from a raised, unobstructed perspective. The views never change and they never get old. North Foreland is an interesting type of golf course as it starts inland – looking and playing like a parkland course. But eventually, the nearby English Channel comes into view, which gives the course a look and feel of a links course.

North Foreland is a par-70 from the championship/white tees and a par-70 layout from the yellow tees.

The North Foreland Golf Club is also a good enough course to have served as a (British) Open qualifier in the recent past. When The Open Championship is held at the Royal St. George's Golf Club in Sandwich, North Foreland is a great escape for those who want to play some golf, as well. North Foreland is just 13 miles up the coast from Royal St. George's.

Your first sighting of the sea is when you reach the 3rd green. The English Channel remains in view while you play the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th holes. Once you reach the 10th green, the English Channel becomes visible again and stays in sight as you play the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th holes.

As is the case with many English golf courses, each hole has been assigned a name such as Nor' Ard (1st), Nepture (5th), Long 'Un (8th), Castle (12th) and Eastward Ho (16th). The 12th is called Castle because the remnants of Kingsgate Castle sit behind the 12th green.



At the North Foreland Golf Club, you can see the sea from every tee.

Don't get too carried away with the views out to sea and forget to concentrate on where you are hitting the ball and how you are playing golf, as North Foreland has some terrific holes – the toughest being the 12th hole, a right-to-left uphill par four where a rather large grass-covered hump sits directly in front of the green. The 12th is ranked as the course's most difficult hole. Very few golf courses conclude with a par three, but North Foreland falls into that category. The 18th – known as Caves – is a well-designed uphill par three that demands that you take into consideration the direction of the wind, the intensity of the wind, and the uphill nature of the shot before you select the right club.

This course is also a delightful one to walk while using a pull cart to haul your clubs.

From a historical perspective, one of North Foreland's claim to fame is its connection to the Ryder Cup. On the lip of the actual Ryder Cup trophy is a memorial to Abe Mitchell, a former professional golfer who used to work at the North Foreland Golf Club – back in the day, from a bygone era.

P.S. After golf, unwind at the club's restaurant, the Lighthouse Bar, where the relaxed atmosphere is an extension of the golf course experience. (MM)

GEORGE & DRAGON: ONE OF ENGLAND'S OLDEST & BEST PUBS

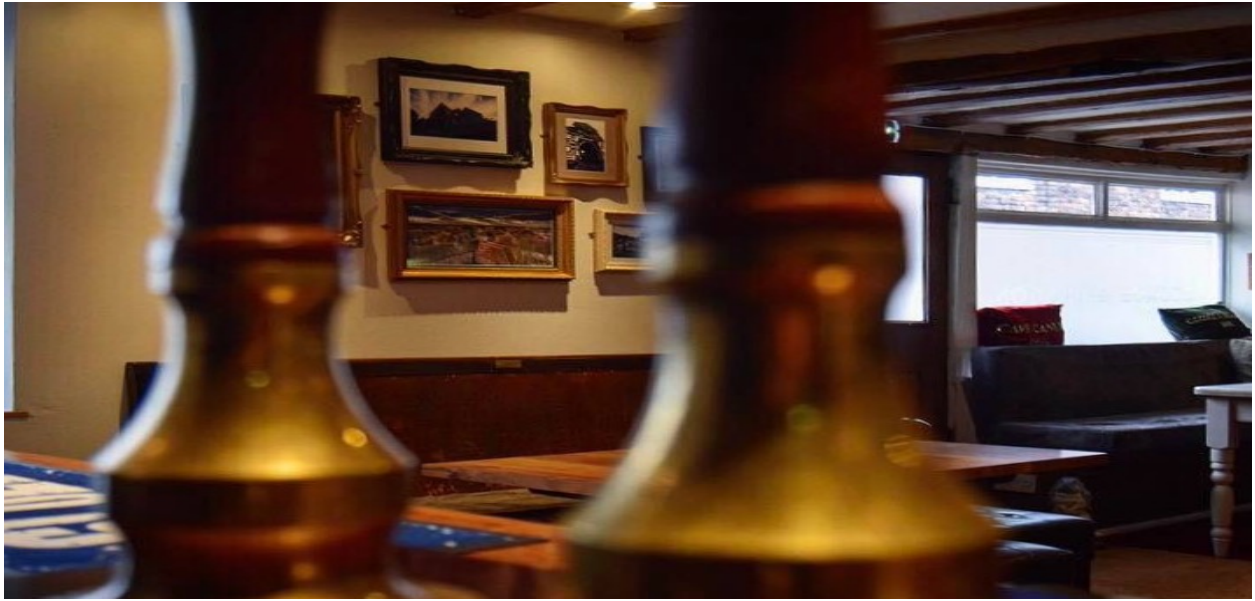
A Popular 19th Hole for Visiting Golfers in Sandwich, Kent, England

There is something unique to Great Britain which remains forever alluring to the American tourist. It's the British pub, of which there are more than 50,000 of them from the Isles of Scilly off the western coast of Cornwall to the tip of the Shetland Isles, well north of Scotland. The U.S. has taverns and bars, but the U.S. has not been able to consistently produce a true pub which simulates, emulates, duplicates, and replicates this traditional and centuries-old British dining and drinking destination. For those who need to know, the word 'pub' is short for 'public house,' which means the establishment is open to the general public. Everybody in Great Britain goes to pubs and they continue to do so, along with thousands of visiting tourists.



The selection of cheeses served at The George & Dragon is quite diverse and very delicious. (photo: The George & Dragon).

In Great Britain, pubs are more than just a place to drink your favorite beverage. They serve as places for people to meet for social get togethers, to escape the weather, and to eat a meal. Many of them are also open for breakfast. And, in many cases, pubs provide overnight accommodation for the weary travelers.



The interior décor at The George & Dragon in Sandwich is low-key and traditional.

IN BUSINESS SINCE 1446

One of the more fascinating pubs in Great Britain is located in the town of Sandwich in the county of Kent – located southeast of London. It's **The George & Dragon** (24 Fisher Street, Sandwich; 01304 613106 – phone), which opened in 1446 – 46 years before Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492. Though, it was not officially named The George & Dragon until 1615. The George & Dragon is a traditional pub with an open fireplace, low beams, and a range of local ales. The drinks – both alcoholic and non-alcoholic – are in plentiful supply and the food is excellent. The ambiance and atmosphere are relaxing and distinctly English. The service is superb and patrons can order a one-course, two-course, or a three-course meal. There's an item on the menu for every appetite.



On a nice day in Sandwich, those visiting The George & Dragon can also sit outside.

The current ownership makes sure that fine service is the norm at The George & Dragon, which is sometimes referred to as the G&D. Another great aspect of the G&D is that this is a dog friendly pub, as its website clearly states, “You are welcome to bring your dog with you.”

WHERE GOLFERS GATHER

One group of visitors to Sandwich who often visit The George & Dragon are golfers, many of whom are in the area to play golf at the Royal St. George’s Golf Club (site of many past British Opens and the Open in 2020), Prince’s Golf Club (site of the 1932 Open Championship), and Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club (site of the 1909 and 1920 Open Championships), which is located in nearby Deal.

The George & Dragon pub is a common referral from the staff at Royal St. George’s and Prince’s.

Open for lunch and dinner, everything on the menu is cooked to order and most of the produce is locally grown. That’s not surprising since Kent is known as the ‘Garden of England.’ You can’t go wrong with anything that you order. The chicken, bacon and leak pie with new potatoes and veg is as good as it sounds, if not better. The pan-roasted Barnsley lamb chop is tender and melts in your mouth. The monkfish & king prawn massaman curry will tantalize your taste buds. In true English spirit, any meal at The George & Dragon should be concluded with the chocolate truffle torte and an array of English cheeses complemented by chutney and crackers, which are referred to as biscuits. Americans call it cheese and crackers. The British have their own moniker – cheese and biscuits.

BRITISH BEERS & GLOBAL DRINKS

At The George & Dragon, beer drinkers will not find Budweiser, Miller, or Coors. Instead, beer lovers will find a wide variety of craft beers, ales, and lagers. The most popular are Timothy Taylor’s Knowle Spring Blonde, Harvey’s Brewery Sussex Best, Otter Bitter, Sagres, Amstel Bier, and Guinness. Try them, you will like them.

The wine list is extensive, but not overwhelming. Any wine drinker will not be disappointed by the selection of white, rose, and red wines served at The George and Dragon. They come from Romania, Chile, Italy, Australia, Spain, South Africa, Argentina, and France.

In recent years, The George & Dragon has been recognized and honored as a Cask Masque accredited pub. The Cask Marque is an independent accreditation scheme to recognize excellence in the service of cask ale. The Cask Masque logo is displayed on the premises of The George & Dragon.

Any trip to Kent, England should include a visit to Sandwich. And, any trip to Sandwich would be incomplete without a drink and a meal at The George & Dragon. It really is one of England’s best pubs. (MM)

ONE OF BRITAIN'S BEST 'BOUTIQUE' HOTELS

When you travel to and through Kent playing golf, visiting the county's many castles, checking out its multitude of quaint villages, and enjoying the fine cuisine, make sure that you spend the night at one of the small hotels that cater to each guest as if each visitor is a member of the family. One such overnight option is **The Marine Hotel** (32-33 Marine Parade, Tankerton, Whitstable; www.marinewhitstable.co.uk), which is located in eastern Kent. The staff at this small 30-room 'boutique' hotel welcome the solo traveler, couples, and families on holiday. More than half of the rooms at The Marine Hotel provide views of the nearby English Channel which is a refreshing sight to see as you wake up in the morning. Each of the rooms have complimentary tea and coffee service, as well as state-of-the-art flat screen TVs. As you enjoy breakfast in the hotel's restaurant, the view out to sea is refreshing and memorable. On some days, the sea is flat calm and on some days, it's not. The vast size of the English Channel is attention-getting and commands your respect. During breakfast, you will be impressed by the high quality of food, the restaurant's peaceful atmosphere, and the personal, first-class service. Don't rush through breakfast or any meal at this fine establishment. That's one of the treats of The Marine Hotel experience, which is a three-star (out of four) hotel and has earned the Breakfast Award from Visit England.



More than half of The Marine Hotel's 30 rooms have unobstructed views of the English Channel.

Not only is The Marine Hotel a great place to spend the night, it's conveniently located if you want to visit Canterbury Cathedral, as it's only 20 minutes down the road. Before departing for Canterbury, make time to visit the Whitstable Castle and Gardens, which opened in the 1790s. If your trip to Whitstable includes time for lunch or dinner, you should try the world-famous Whitstable oysters. Afterwards, take a stroll along the Whitstable harbour, which has been in existence since 1832.

If you crave some authentic English fish and chips while in Whitstable, visit the Whitstable Fish Bar and Kebab House (49 High Street, Whitstable). The variety of fish served includes cod, rock, plaice, haddock, and skate. Order the mushy peas as a side order. You won't be disappointed.

ENGLAND'S OLDEST BREWER: SHEPHERD NEAME....IT'S IN KENT

In addition to being the home of centuries-old castles and the oldest cathedral in Great Britain, Kent is the home of the oldest brewery in Britain. Since 1698, **Shepherd Neame** (17 Court Street, Faversham; www.shepherdneame.co.uk) has been brewing ales and lagers in the medieval market town of Faversham. And, now beer lovers get a chance to see how the beer-making process actually works. The guided tours include taste testing at the end.



As the company brochure states, these tours will allow you to “discover the secrets of the ancient art of brewing and experience the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes that contribute to the making of a great pint.” Shepherd Neame specializes in producing award-winning ales and lagers. Some of the more popular brands of ales include Spitfire, Master Brew, and Bishops Finger. Its award-winning lagers include Samuel Adams and the Whitstable Bay Collection.

Guided group tours are also available. These tours can also be booked so that they are conducted in conjunction with either a two-course meal or a six-course meal. The tours take place Monday-Saturday. Advance bookings are necessary and appropriate footwear is required. High heels, open-toed shoes, and flip flops are not appropriate and will not be permitted during the tours.

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