

10 best golf courses

Keith Fergus takes us on a tour of some of Scotland's best loved golf courses

1 Turnberry South Ayrshire KA26 9

The Ayrshire Coastline is home to several world-class golf courses and Turnberry is no exception. Opened in 1902 on lands owned by the Kennedy's, it surprisingly did not hold its first Open Championship until 1977 where Tom Watson and Jack Nicklaus played out their memorable Duel in the Sun. The course and spectacular hotel were established by the Glasgow & South Western Railway Company and the railway line running from Glasgow to Girvan was dubbed 'the Golfer's Line'. Furthermore land on the course was used as an airbase and landing strip during World War One. The 9th tee provides a spectacular viewpoint of Turnberry Lighthouse which was built to the plans of Thomas Stevenson (father of Robert Louis Stevenson) in 1873 and was also erected on the site of Turnberry Castle, and it is argued that Robert the Bruce was born here in 1274.

2 St Medans Wigtownshire DG8 9LJ

St Medans is the most southerly course in Scotland and sits in a superb position near to the small village of Monreith on the wonderful Galloway Coastline. The golf course is named after St Medan who, according to legend, arrived in Galloway in the 8th century having fled from Ireland. St Medan's Golf Course was opened in 1905 at a cost of £160, which included the outlay for a clubhouse, and it enjoys an unrivalled position looking out across the Irish Sea.

Although the course only has nine holes it has eighteen different tees which provides different challenges for each hole.

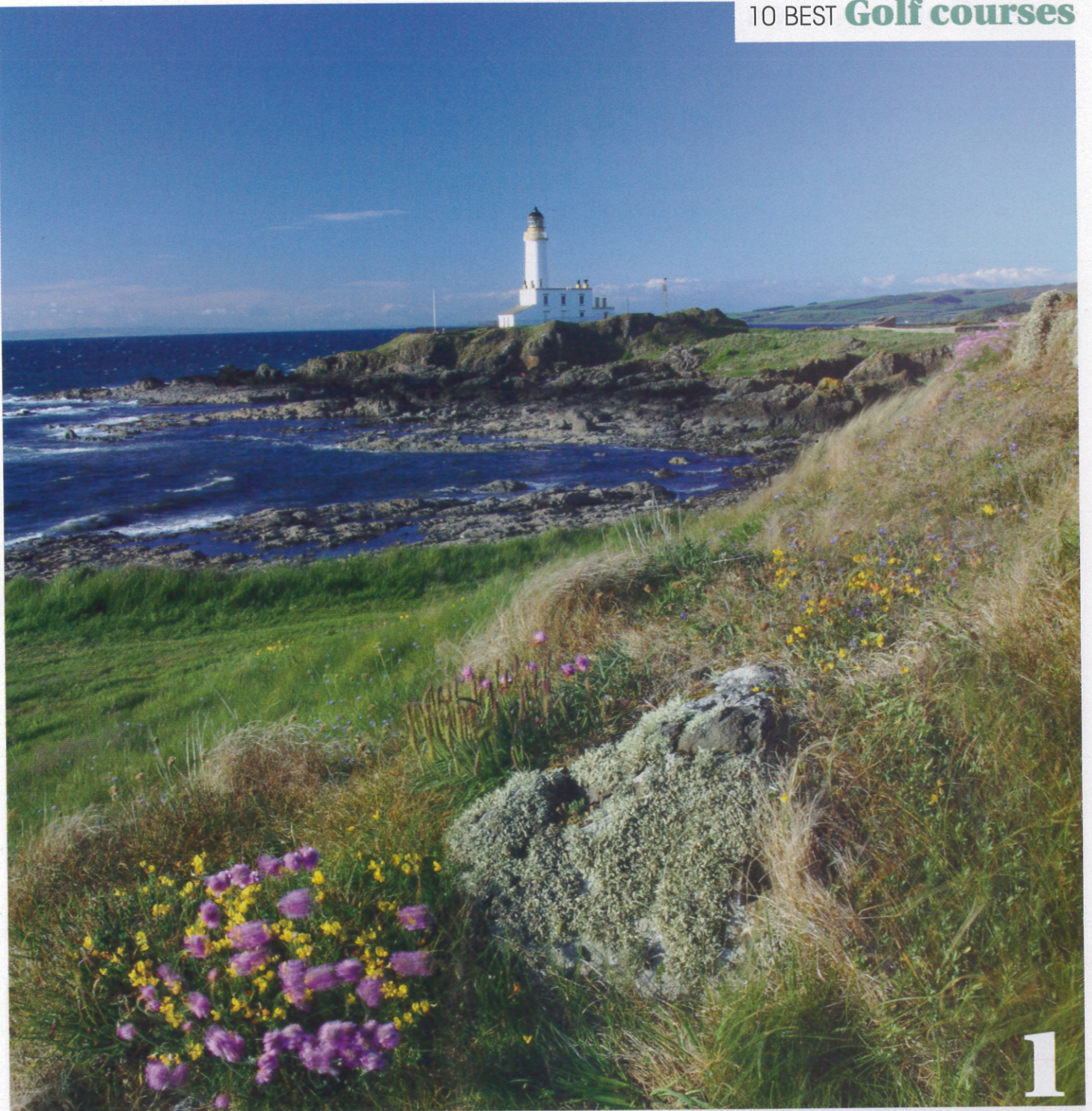
3 Shiskine Isle Of Arran KA27 8HA

Situated at Blackwaterfoot on the magical Isle of Arran, Shiskine Golf Course holds the unique status of being the only twelve-hole golf course in the world. But don't view this as a novelty course as Shiskine has been ranked in the top 100 of Britain's golf courses for the past two years. Like many of Scotland's courses the location is part of the golfing experience and Shiskine is no different. Sitting at the base of Drumadoon Point the views across the Kilbrannan Sound to Kintyre are breath-taking whilst the course travels back and forth along the glorious coastline of Arran – even the names of the holes (Crows Nest, Himalayas, and Paradise for instance) conjure up images of golfing rapture. As Andrew Grieg writes in his faultless book, Preferred Lies, 'Most golf courses, however fine, have some fairly anonymous holes that resemble each other. There is no such hole on Shiskine'.

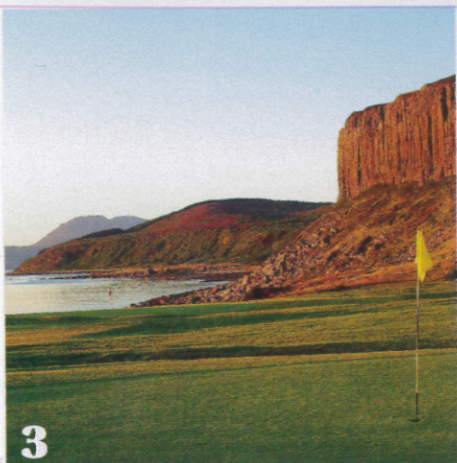
4 Prestwick Ayrshire KA9 1QH

Although not having the same prestige as Turnberry or neighbouring Troon, the history of Prestwick Golf Course is of equal importance to any other course in Scotland as it held the very first Open Golf Championship in 1860. The course was designed by Old Tom Morris in 1851 and it held the first 12 Open Championships and 24 times in total, the last one being in 1925. The quiet, attractive town of Prestwick translates as Priest's Town and was formerly an outlying religious house. Although the course is still a great test, the town does not have the amenities to be able to accommodate the vast crowds that attend today's Open Championships.





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*The Old Course is 18 holes
that every golfer would
like to say "I played it"*



5 Gullane East Lothian EH31 2BB

Gullane Golf Course, standing on the beautiful, windswept East Lothian Coastline, actually comprises of three magnificent courses. Rather than having their own distinctive names the courses are simply known as Gullane 1, 2 or 3 with one being the oldest and each course provides a distinct and demanding challenge. Golf has been played here for 350 years, but Gullane Golf Club was not established until 1882. As golf gained in popularity the village of Gullane flourished as well and by 1910 Gullane Number 3 was completed. The views across the Firth of Forth to Edinburgh and Fife are almost a distraction when trying to cope with the demands of courses that are regularly used for Open qualifying. There is also a fantastic museum illustrating the development of the game from the 15th century.

6 The Old Course, St Andrews Saint Andrews KY16 9XL

It would be remiss not to include The Old Course, the home of golf, in a list of Scotland's best golf courses. Such is the iconic status it holds even people who have absolutely no interest in the sport will be aware of The Old Course and the incredible standing it has in the game worldwide. Although St Andrews links consists of several courses, The Old Course is the eighteen holes that every golfer would like to say "I played it". It may not be the toughest golfing test in the world but the sense of history, the stunning scenery, and the familiar pictures that have been beamed into our living rooms over the years make The Old Course almost feel like an old friend. Who can forget Seve Ballesteros's fist pumping when winning The Open in 1984 or Constantino Rocca's monster putt on the 18th green to force a play-off eleven years later.

7 Bruntsfield Links City of Edinburgh EH4 6JH

In 2011 Bruntsfield Links will celebrate its 250th anniversary making it the fourth oldest golf club in the world. Its original setting lay near Edinburgh Castle and Bruntsfield Links soon proved to be extremely popular, so much so that during the 19th century many members headed east to play at Musselburgh such was the congestion on the course. The course moved to its present location, overlooking the Firth of Forth near Cramond on the outskirts of Edinburgh, in 1898 and was designed by the great Willie Park junior. Park was born in Musselburgh in 1864 and won The Open twice but, realising a living could not be made from golfing alone, branched out into many golf related business's including golf course design. Whilst Bruntsfield Links may not be the first Scottish golf course many would think of, the sense of history that surrounds the place is palpable and it has hosted the likes of British Seniors and British Boy's Open Championships.

8 Crail Fifeness, Crail, KY10 3XN

If there were a brawl between the Ayrshire and Fife Coastline's (figuratively speaking of course) who would win? Well for me the Fife Coast may just edge it if only for the delights of Crail and the two links courses (Balcomie and Craighead) that nestle along the fantastic East Neuk of Fife and make perfect use of the wonderful landscape and weather this part of Scotland provides. The Crail Golfing Society was formed in 1786 (making it the 7th oldest in the world) although the first recorded match did not take place until 1839. The Old Tom Morris designed Balcomie course was opened in 1895 and Craighead in 1998 and both offer a magnificent, and stern, test to any golfer with the cliffs and bays of this fantastically rugged stretch of coastline utilised to full effect, all the while having to deal with the wind that whips off the sea. But to play here on a warm summer's evening, watching the shadow's lengthen as dusk approaches is worth all the lost golf balls.

9 Traigh, Arisaig Inverness-Shire PH39 4NT

To my mind a golf course does not need to have 18 holes to be classed as great (see Shiskine above). The history and quality of the course do have a bearing but sometimes the setting is crucial to its success. This is certainly true of Traigh Golf Course near Arisaig which must surely rank as one of the most picturesque courses in the world. And that is not to say that the views are the only reason for visiting as it is a fantastic little course which makes use of all the contours within the landscape and is maintained to extremely high standards. Traigh translates from Gaelic as 'beach' and there are several amazing white, sandy beaches nearby and once on the course you truly appreciate what a stunning location this is.

10 Royal Dornoch Sutherland IV25 3LW

The historic Royal Burgh of Dornoch sits beside the gorgeous Dornoch Firth and has a fantastic sandy beach and an abundance of wonderful wildlife. The great Donald Ross, seen by many as the world's greatest golf architect, was born in the town in 1872 leaving for America in 1899 to design such renowned courses as Pinehurst No.2 and Oakland Hills. But Dornoch is also home to the exquisite Royal Dornoch Golf Club, a course held in high esteem by the great Tom Watson who is an Honorary Member. The club was formed in 1877, the course consisting of nine holes, with a further nine being added a few years later and in 1906 it was granted a Royal Charter. A round of golf over Royal Dornoch is played out in a breath-taking setting and there is an incredible sense of space and light. For many it may be a long journey to reach Dornoch but the setting, the wonderful sea air and incredible golf course are well worth the effort. ■

