

Concierge Golf's course guides to three of top Irish golf links courses Royal County Down, Ballybunion Golf Club & Lahinch Golf Club



16th Hole at Royal County Down

Concierge's golf guide Royal County Down

The following are my thoughts on how I would suggest to play Royal County Down golf course.

- The bunkers are deep and the heather growing in the rough is thick & nasty. There are a number of blind shots off the tee and trust your caddy tee shot lines.
- Hit the ball to areas that you can see and this should reduce the amount of possible lost balls. I recommend hiring a caddy playing golf at Royal County Down.
- In general the greens are pretty good and not really undulated for a golf links course. I would suggest looking at both sides of the hole before identifying the line of the put. But play quickly and avoid slow play when doing so.

1st Hole Par 5, 539 yards

Smash your tee shot up the right side of the fairway and play for a 100 – 75 yards 3rd shot to the green

2nd Hole Par 4, 424 yards

Play for a right centre of the fairway tee shot and hit for the centre of the green. The green is narrow at the front and it's an easier shot to hold the green whilst playing for the centre of the green.

3rd Hole Par 4, 475 yards

Lay up to the approx. 180 yards out from the green and the left centre of the fairway is good – a good solid second shot is needed to hit the green

4th Hole Par 3, 215 yards

Just hit for the centre of the green

5th Hole Par 4, 429 yards

Tough tee shot and aim for the left side of the fairway.

6th Hole Par 4, 369 yards

Play for the lower tier or the front part of the green with your second shot.

7th hole Par 3, 135 yards

The trick here is play for the front part of the green. There is a shape slope down from the back of the green where your ball will roll and roll on a number of yards if you hit long.

8th Hole Par 4, 424 yards

This hole is straight away but up a gradual hill. A good tee shot up the left of centre and even better shot is required to hit the green in regulation.

9th Hole Par 4, 427 yards

I love this tee shot and there is a bit more room on the right than the left side of the 9th fairway. The green is raise up and club up for your second shot.



On course looking back at the Mourne Mountains

10th Hole par 3, 180 yards

Play short to bounce the ball onto the green and roll up to the hole and please note the green break a little from right to left.

11th Hole Par 4, 430 yards

Tough line with this blind tee shot, but trust the caddy's line off the tee.

12th Hole Par 5, 478

Trust your caddy line off the tee... I like a right centre tee shot followed by a layup shot to the 100 yard marker and attack the flag position from there.

13th Hole Par 4, 423

A dog-leg right type of hole and your tee shot is very important to hit the left side of the fairway. The green is big but it depends on how good your tee shot is.

14th hole par 3, 202 yards.

If you are down wind play for the short right hand side of the green and play for the bounce and roll. The green side bunkers are nasty here.

15th Hole par 4, 454 yards

A very tough tee shot and the idea line off this tee is a left centre tee shot. The bad news is if you miss right the ball may not be found again. The second shot to the hole is not easy either.



The 5th Hole at RCD

16th Hole par 4, 318 yards

Take out your driver and lash that ball onto the green!

17th Hole par 4, 416 yards

Avoid left off the tee on the 17th, right centre is a good line and check you distance to the pond before hitting your tee shot. You don't want to end up wet either. Add an extra club to your second shot for the raised green.

18th Hole par 5, 548 yards

There is heavy rough left and 18 deep bunkers littered left and right along the 18th hole. Therefore a good tee shot up the middle followed by another two straight shots would be ideal!

Final Dooley Note: Why not play this course again and map out how you would like to play the course.

Lahinch Golf Club



This is a brief hole by hole about how I like to play golf at Lahinch Golf Club.

Hole 1, Par 4 MacKenzie

A left centre tee shot is good on the 1st and play for the centre of the green and avoid the green side bunkers on the left, a par is a good score to start with.

Hole 2, Par 5 Village

I like to try a sling shot a left to right shot off the tee to gain as much distance as possible to give me a chance of hitting the green in two.

Hole 3, Par 4 Cillstifinn

Tough tee shot and tougher 2nd shot. Left centre tee shot and gauge the wind and green elevation to suit your club selection. I find that the second shot club selection can be tricky on the 3 hole.

Hole 4, Par 5 Klondyke

Downwind this par 5 becomes really easy and when this hole plays into the wind, the hole is a monster. My favourite shot here is the tee shot; a good tee shot no too close to the dike makes the rest of the hole comfortable to play and score.

Hole 5, Par 3 The Dell

The Dell, measuring approx. 150 yard from the medal tee and I'd suggest to you playing an extra club so you can ensure that you hit the ball over the dune. This hole really appeals to me when I am playing the shot against a soft breeze, so I can punch a 6 iron over the white stone on top of the hill and head for a famous hole in one!

Hole 6, Par 4 Paradise

The second shot on the 6th hole is probably both the most scenic and certainly my most favourite hole to play at Lahinch. My plan here is to hit a tee shot to a distance of 180 yard shot to the green, then it depends on the wind what to do next, however I really like the idea of nailing a 5 or a 4 iron at the flag.



Hole 7, Par 4 Blind Hockey

Good tee shot to the right centre of the fairway and what out that you don't over hit the fairway. Always consult your caddy or yardage book before tee shot club selection.

Hole 8, Par 3 Crater

I would suggest to hit you tee shot to the right centre of the green as most of the green slopes right to left and left on this green is not good!

Hole 9, Par 4 Burke's Corner

The tee shot is the key to getting a chance to hit ball close to the hole and try to avoid getting blocked by the flag position. If the flag is on the right hand side of the green, hit the ball on the left of the fairway and vice versa.

Hole 10, Par 4 Goats

A beast of a par 4, a good tee shot on left of centre and an even better second shot is required. Its a raised green so club up and don't be shy give the ball air miles.

Hole 11, Par 3 Liscannor

I like hitting a punch shot into this green and there are nasty green side bunkers that would be nice to avoid.

Hole 12, Par 5 Castle

I like to give the tee shot a right hard whack and hit that ball as far down the right side of the fairway with a left to right ball flight to maximise distance. Then try and hit the green in two!



Hole 13, Par 4 Mine

Take out the diver and lash the ball onto the green! If not, there is nothing wrong with playing straight down the middle of the fairway. Avoid the mine on the right of the hole!

Hole 14, Par 4 Twins

Another beast of a par 4, straight away hole and finding the green with your second shot is important. I play straight for the flag on this hole.

Hole 15, Par 4 Brud's Vision

The last really tough par 4 to play, I like to play the tee shot to the right centre of the fairway and avoid the fairway bunker that can gobble up your tee shot if you are too long on that line. The fairway bunker is approx. 270 yards out from the white medal tee, but when your tee shot carries 230 yards, you might have an unexpected 40 yards of carry. Then the bunker can come into play.

Hole 16, Par 3 Old Tom

Love this hole and I typically play for the front right part of the green

Hole 17, Par 4 Pons Asinorum

Tee shot for the right centre of the fairway and I find the 17th a hard green to hold. I like to hit a medium ball flight that holds into the wind and the ball magically sits down on the green and rolls up to the hole!



Hole 18, Par 5 Shaw

Roll your shoulders, free up your body of all muscle and hand tension, then lighten your grip on the club a little bit more, place more weight (65%) on your back foot and hit the ball as hard and as far as you can up the 18th fairway as you can. I really like trying to hit the right side of the fairway on 18th

Dooley noted:

Lahinch Golf Club is certainly one of my top three golf links courses to play in Ireland. There are a number of blind shots on the golf course and I strongly recommend working with either a caddy or a fore caddy. In fact I like the mix of a caddy and a forecaddie in the group. This will save you a lot of time looking for balls, misreading greens and the caddies may turn out to be comedians too.

Ballybunion, Old Course

Yardages measured from the Medal or white tee box



Hole 1 Par 4, 380 yards

Start with a boom tee shot down the right side of the fairway is the line off the tee and play the yardage for the second shot.

Hole 2 Par 4, 397 yards

Left centre of the fairway is a good line on the 2nd as there is plenty of trouble with bunker on the right side of the hole. Depending on the wind, add two clubs to your club selection to deal with the elevated green. There is not really anywhere around this green to bail out and it's a really tough up and down if you missed the green at any side.

Hole 3 Par 3, 214 yards

The green is lower than the tee box and I like to play from the front right portion of the green, take two putts and leave happy with a par.

Hole 4 Par 5, 508 yards

Missing the fairway left and right is not good! A good tee shot can either set you up for a good layup shot or hit for the green in two. The line off the tee is left centre and you could consider hitting a 200 yard shot off the tee followed by another 200 yard shot. The green is raised, however with a relatively flat surface.

Hole 5 Par 5, 529 yards

A left of centre tee shot is fine here too, play the approach shot towards the green and ensure that you give yourself enough club to hit the green as this green is raised up about ½ a club.

Hole 6 Par 4, 376 yards

Left centre tee shot and check you distance of the tee if the wind in at your back. There is out of bounds that can be reached. The green is quite narrow at the front so I typically aim for the centre of the green.

Hole 7 Par 4, 410 yards

A fairway left centre tee shot is needed to avoid the big mound in the centre of the fairway and hit for the centre of the green. It's a raised green, so don't forget to club up.

Hole 8 Par 3, 146 yards

Depending where the flag is located, aim for landing the ball off the bank of green side bunkers on the right. It's a short par 3 and why not have fun with your tee shot?



Hole 9 Par 4, 437 yards

There is nothing wrong with a straight shot down the middle followed hitting for the second plateau centre of the green. Playing to the front of the green is another way to play the hole and let your putter do the talking. If you miss the green long left or long right or over the back, you could end up with a very awkward pitch shot back to the green.

Hole 10 Par 4, 331 Yards

A tee shot 200 to 230 yard shot left centre of the fairway would be perfect here followed by a pitch shot. Missing the fairway left is not the end of the world. The hole normally plays down wind, so a 3wood or a 4 iron is not a bad play off the tee.

Hole 11 Par 4, 402 yards

Hit your tee shot to the second fairway plateau, anything longer is at risk to finding a really bad lie hanging on a serve slope. A good second shot is required to hit the green.

Hole 12 Par 3, 183 yards

Club up! The green is raised quite a lot and aim for the centre of the green. Left of the green is not good!

Hole 13 Par 5, 476 yards

Hit the driver for the left centre of the fairway and god for you if you can shoot for the green in two. Or you can layup before the water dyke that runs through the fairway approx. 80 yards out from the green.

Hole 14 Par 3, 130 yards

Left centre is a good part of the green to aim for regardless where the flag is located. Use a putter if you are slightly off the green as it's hard to hold a chip.

Hole 15 Par 3, 206 yards

This is a Fantastic par 3 and a good hole for pressing and gambling. Don't be short and use plenty of club to shoot for the centre of the green.

Hole 16 Par 5, 483 yards

To hit this green in tow a risky and long tee shot up is required to hit your ball left for the gap in the dunes. Otherwise, play straight out with a 220 - 240 yard shot, and then play for a layup shot that you would like to play that approach shot to the green short of the hole. As the green slopes a lot from back to front.

Hole 17 Par 4, 366 yards

This is a short par 4 and the tee shot is recommended to hit the right centre of the dog leg. I like to aim for the centre of the green for the second shot. Beware of the wind and don't be afraid to hit more club than you think.



Hole 18 Par 4, 376 yards

There is a fairway bunker that is reachable depending how far you hit your tee shot. I would suggest being wary of that fairway bunker. The 18th green is quite long, blind and raised. So trust your caddie's yardage to the flag.



Tips for playing links golf

We all know that how hard the wind blows can be the biggest obstacles to posting a good score on any golf course. Particularly playing golf on the links golf courses!

Playing shots into the wind or downwind can be anything between 1 club to 5 clubs yardage depending on how much you spin the ball and how high you hit the ball.

Playing shots for the centre of your stance and gripping clubs down to the same length as your sand wedge it one way for playing shots into the wind.

For down tee shots; tee the ball high, load your weight on your back foot and hit the ball high into the air as you can!

Putting... Depending on how long your putter is; centre the ball position and grip down a little and quicken and shorten your stroke..

The biggest tip!

AVOID bunker shots into the wind!

Enjoy playing golf in Ireland, Scotland or where-ever that maybe.

Accessories for Golfing in the Rain

This is a list of useful golf accessories for playing golf in the rain. You might consider packing some of the following items for your upcoming Irish or Scottish Golf vacation.

A full rain suit: (Pants & Jacket)

A rain suit lined with gortex tends to be my suggested number one rain suit to keep you dry on a wet day. If you do not have a rain suit, I would suggest top check with your local golf shop to find out what are the latest and greatest rain suit brands available. I am a Galvin green fan as the suit keeps me dry for the most part and the Galvin green brand fits my body better than other brands. There are a lot of rain wear brands available to you such as; Footjoy, Under Armour, Ping, Cross, Adidas, Zero Restriction, Kjus & etc.

Types of Rain Hats:

At the various golf shops that you visit, you can find gortex baseball hats, gortex merino wool hats or gortex bucket hats. I find that the gortex bucket hat is the best for keeping your head and neck dry, but the hat flaps a lot in the wind. Therefore I'd suggest buying the Kama branded wool gortex hat and they offer both peaked and standard wool gortex hats. This hat can cover your ears and this hat style performs great during the hard wind and rain.

Rain Gloves:

Don't leave home without them or if you do, you can buy a pair of rain gloves just about anywhere. However there are cold gear gloves also, that type of glove may not perform as good as the rain gloves during the rain.

Rain Hoods for the head.

These are perfect for the cold and wet days. It's light weight product and easy to fit into your golf bag. Under armour offers this type of product.

Waterproof golf bags:

Callaway, Nike, Sun Mountain, Titleist and etc.; these brands offer a mixed range of stand and cart bags that should keep everything dry and sheltered in any conditions. Also to be extra safe as sometimes rain water has a habit of getting all your items wet! You might consider keeping a few of the plastic pocket size zip seal bags in your golf bag. If you play a lot of golf in Ireland and Scotland, it is worth investing in a waterproof golf bag for your golf vacations.

Long peaked baseball hats:

This style of golf hat is good or better than other hats to keep the rain off your glasses in the event of losing or running out of contact lenses.

Wind Umbrellas:

Ensure that the umbrella is comfortable to hold, it has a double canopy, a double velcro closure straps and it feels a lighter weight than an ordinary umbrella. Check if the umbrella is lightning resistance?! I don't expect anyone to be playing golf in a thunderstorm to test that feature.

Golf Bags covers:

The golf bag rain cover is ideal to keep your cart bag and clubs dry when the rain is pouring sideways. Ensure you try the size before you buy as some golf bag rain covers are smaller than other brands. Ensure that the rain cover is elasticated edges for a snug fit, strong strap with some types of buckles that can be attached to your bag and that you have easy access to your clubs.

Body Warmers:

Check out a range of garments that can be worn underneath your rain jacket. Nike make a under shirt garment with sweat-wicking fabric in a long-sleeve cut that hugs the body. This is called the Nike Pro Combat Core Men's Top, this would be an ideal garment to wear for those wet and cool days on the Links.

John Dooley.

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