

LAYOUTS TO LOVE

Big-name designers and beautiful settings ensure the latest crop of new and revamped golf courses raise standards across the board

By Peter Swain





With more than 30,000 golf courses spread across over 200 countries, it's no surprise that new investment is focused primarily on quality rather than quantity – which is great news for the nomadic player. Take ADARE MANOR (adaremanor.com) in Ireland, where renowned golf architect Tom Fazio has transformed the 18-hole layout into one of the most captivating challenges on the Emerald Isle. The 7,509yd parkland paradise, southwest of Limerick, features water on 14 holes

and a new SubAir system on every bent-grass green to ensure firm, fair conditions. Complemented by the opulent Manor House Hotel, plus other notable nearby courses at Lahinch, Ballybunion and Doonbeg, this is now a golf destination of distinction.

Farther south on the wild Atlantic shoreline, another legendary American designer, Robert Trent Jones Jr, has crafted a bluff-top masterpiece at HOGS HEAD (hogsheadgolfclub.com) in Waterville. The club motto, “Built by friends, for friends”, belies the dramatic test of golf facing players standing on tees with either the churning ocean 30 metres below or the salmon-filled Finglas River to negotiate. It's a truly scenic affair, as is the same designer's new TERMAS DE RÍO HONDO GOLF CLUB (termasgc.com) in Santiago del Estero, Argentina. Wide fairways running between and over

ravines, the Río Dulce and endless bunkers favour ambitious play, with the 7,510yd course designed “someday to host a world championship-level golf tournament”, says its architect. The nearby MotoGP racetrack, a new airport and national museum of art and history underscore the potential of the region, which sits some 1,000 kilometres northwest of Buenos Aires.

The game in Latin America is certainly on a roll: witness the new TWIN DOLPHIN (twindolphinloscabos.com) course designed by Todd Eckenrode and one-time Masters champ Fred Couples at Los Cabos on Mexico’s Baja California peninsula. Playable by guests staying at the chic Montage Los Cabos resort, the 7,156yd layout weaves through rugged *arroyos* and rocky outcrops, with stunning ocean views throughout. Couples has been a regular, if unsuccessful, worshipper at the cathedral of golf that is PINEHURST (pinehurst.com) in North Carolina. A three-time US Open venue, Donald Ross’s dazzling No 2, restored to its 1907 majesty by Crenshaw & Coore, is one of the most venerated – and difficult – courses in America. The club has nine 18-holers in all, including the 7,226yd No 4, newly refurbished by Gil Hanse, who also crafted the new nine-hole par-3 Cradle Short Course. Pinehurst is simply nirvana for the golfing purist.

Ross’s contemporary, Harry Colt, created the venerable course at STOKE PARK (stokepark.com) in the rolling English countryside, 40 kilometres west of London, back in 1908. In memory of the club’s founder, the set-up’s third nine-hole loop, the Lane Jackson, has just reopened after a notably successful overhaul following similar work on the other 18 sublime holes. The same pursuit of excellence is a hallmark of the innovative JCB GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB (jcbgolfandcountryclub.com), created

by the eponymous construction company’s chairman Lord Bamford in Staffordshire. The parkland track’s epic 462yd 18th features a split fairway leading to a Lion’s Mouth-like bunker biting into the front of the green – a memorable finale to a new venture.

As the old world consolidates its golfing heritage, the game is expanding rapidly in markets relatively new to the game. Greg Norman’s KN GOLF LINKS (kngolflinks.com), on the Cam Ranh Peninsula in Vietnam, meanders through sandy dunes and plays from 5,348 to 7,152yd depending on the choice of tee. “You can make a course difficult, but you can also make it so people can get around on their own skills,” says its creator. Norman’s fellow Australian major winner, Geoff Ogilvy, is responsible for another new Southeast Asian enterprise, YANGTZE DUNES at the Lanhai International Country Club (lanhaigolf.com) near Shanghai. A rare walking-only course in this part of the world, it is a strategic test with an ornate Tuscan-style clubhouse at its heart – all in the shadow



As the old world consolidates its
golfing heritage, the game is expanding
in markets relatively new to the game



of the mighty Yangtze River Bridge. Another body of water, this time in Africa, dominates the LAKE VICTORIA SERENA GOLF RESORT (serenahotels.com), Uganda's very first international-standard golf property. South of Kampala, with its own sparkling new marina, travellers can play Kevin Ramsey's 7,262yd course in the morning, then see the big five on an afternoon safari drive before taking a sunset cruise on the lake.

Another country relatively new to golf, Russia has just gained a Jack Nicklaus Signature course 50 kilometres west of Moscow. RAEVO GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB (imgprestige.com) meanders 7,245 tricky yards through ancient woodland with play just about guaranteed between mid-May and mid-October. There are no such weather limitations at the much-lauded new DUBAI HILLS (dubaihillsgolfclub.com), designed by Gary Johnston in the lee of the majestic

Burj Khalifa. Out of the barren landscape, the designer has conjured up a masterpiece to rival anything in the UAE, with desert, water, bold bunkering and elevation changes creating a genuine diversity of challenge.

While Dubai Hills is open to passing international golfers, CHÂTEAU DU COUDRECEAU (cducestates.com) near Orléans, 90 minutes south of Paris, is a rather more private proposition. The historic château boasts seven soigné guest suites decorated in classic 18th-century style, an indoor pool and spa and a 250-year-old cellar holding notable vintages to accompany the chef's Loire regional cuisine – but, best of all for the golfer, 14 new holes of exclusive golf. It all makes for a mouthwatering prospect, which like so many of the new courses, combines top-quality golf with amenities and opportunities that might just be worth the trip themselves.



Shannon to Adare Manor: 26miles/42km;
Kerry to Hogs Head: 45miles/72km;
Raleigh-Durham International to Pinehurst: 72miles/116km;
Northolt to Stoke Park: 12miles/19km;
East Midlands to JCB Golf & Country Club: 33miles/53km; Moscow Vnukovo to Raevo Golf & Country Club: 29miles/46km; Paris Le Bourget to Château du Coudreceau, 79miles/127km