

ATLANTIC LINKS

FOR THE DISCERNING GOLFER, FEW PLACES IN BRITAIN CAN MATCH THE SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND FOR THE QUALITY OF ITS LINKS COURSES AND ITS SPECTACULAR SCENERY.

TRAVEL



The St Enodoc course in Rock was designed by James Braid, who also designed Singapore Island Country Club's Bukit Course.

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F YOU'RE IN SEARCH LINKS GOLF, you won't need to go as far as Scotland or Ireland to find some of the best in the world. England's South West is home to a trail of six championship links that would satiate any travelling golfer looking for a challenge – Burnham & Berrow in Somerset, Royal North Devon and Saunton (East & West) in Devon and Cornwall's St Enodoc and Trevose. All as good as Cornish cream, Devon cider and Somerset cheddar cheese rolled into one. ▶▶▶



TRAVEL
**AWAY
GAME**

The par-3 15th at
St Enodoc



Apart from its Harry
Colt course, Trevose
offers members a full
list of country club
facilities.

Within easy reach from London airports by car, the first stop is the engaging Burnham & Berrow. Established in 1890, the 6,925yd, par-71 course has evolved over the decades but today's layout is largely the work of the renowned Harry Colt. It is noted for its distinct sand hills that form stubborn, natural obstacles whilst the swirling winds that whip in from the nearby Atlantic provide a links challenge that is not for the faint hearted.

The club's first professional was one from the "great triumvirate", JH Taylor, a five-time Open Champion, who described the track as "one of the most sporting courses conceivable".

Testament to the quality of the course, Burnham has hosted a string of prestigious amateur tournaments, most recently The Brabazon Trophy and The R&A British Boys Championship in 2011.

Further down the coast trav-

elling southwest is the incomparable Royal North Devon or Westward Ho! as it is popularly known. Dating back to 1864, RND is England's oldest links and it has hardly changed in nearly 150 years. Set on common land on which livestock – cows and sheep – still graze, some say it is like taking a step back in time and seeing how golf was played in Victorian England.

Though fairly flat, the 6,650yd course is a truly challenging links. The second hole for example is a testing par four whilst the distinctive, massive cape bunker on the fourth makes for a daunting hole.

While JH Taylor may have served as Burnham & Berrow's first pro, it is here at Royal North Devon that the golfer started his career as a caddie and later finished it as club president.

With such heritage, the clubhouse serves as a treasure

trove of golf memorabilia second only to the R&A so it is definitely worth lingering over a pint of beer in the 19th hole after a round.

Near neighbour Saunton, set in the giant sand dunes of Braunton Burrows, boasts two championship courses, East and West, which are recognised amongst the greatest links in the world.

There is not a single weak hole on the East course from the drive from the raised tee at the first to the last, where five bunkers protect the final green. The lasting impression of a round over the East is of a thorough examination of your game over a series of long par fours with the pick of them being the first, fourth, 14th and 17th.

The West course is also an exceptional test and it was here in 1997 that a 17-year-old Sergio Garcia won the British Boys Championship, just two years before making his Ryder

Cup debut. Many feel the West course to be a tougher mental challenge with precision the key especially at the first, sixth, 16th and 18th to pick out just a testing quartet.

The quality of Saunton is perhaps summed up by England's most successful golfer Sir Nick Faldo who once said, "I've no doubt if the East Course were located on the coast of Lancashire or Kent it would have hosted an Open Championship."

From Devon, the next stop on the Atlantic Links lies in north Cornwall, via a gentle yet stunning coastal road that offers breathtaking views over the north Atlantic Coast.

Just up from Constantine and Booby's Bays and in the lee of the magnificent Trevose Head lies the Trevose Golf & Country Club. The main 6,973yd championship course was originally laid out by Harry Colt and remains a true test of golfing skills. Its traditionally

Coming out from
London Burnham &
Barrow is the first stop
on England's southwest
links itinerary.



quick greens throughout the year that regularly combine with a wicked wind means that Trevose is deceptively tough.

Complete with holiday flats and new eco lodges, Trevose conjures up a relaxed holiday atmosphere where the 9-hole Headland Course is an enjoyable alternative to the main course as is the par-3 Short Course, which runs around streams, over hills and detours past the ruins of the fifth century Roman Church and the second century St. Constantine's Well.

In addition, Trevose offers an outdoor swimming pool, several tennis courts, a games room, a top quality seafood restaurant, Constantine, as well as the popular Colt's Clubhouse Bar, making it popular with families as well as golfers.

Across the Camel River from Trevose is St Enodoc in Rock. Designed by James Braid, it lies in a fantastic setting amongst

the dunes overlooking the estuary and with views over the north Atlantic coast.

The 6,547yd Church Course, so called because of the Norman Church that was uncovered in the middle of the course and where Sir John Betjeman is buried, is renowned for its towering Himalaya bunker that entirely blocks the view of the sixth green from all but a slither of fairway. Whilst the Himalaya is reputedly the highest bunker in Europe, it is 10th hole, which is played down the valley to the church that is considered the course's signature hole.

The shorter Holywell Course, which has also just undergone major renovation, includes nine par threes. Though easier than the main course, this gem is totally charming.

Off the course, the Atlantic Links also have much to offer. Along the north Atlantic Highway you will be enchanted by

exquisite, picturesque coastal villages such as Clovelly and Port Isaac, bustling market towns such as Wadebridge and Barnstaple and quaint fishing ports like Rock and Padstow.

Unique attractions such as the fascinating Lost Gardens of Heligan and the impressive Eden Project, a global garden set in giant biomes built on a former clay pit, are both highlights while for historians Bath is a must with its architecture and historic Roman Baths and Spa. For the active, the region also offers trekking, hiking, surfing and cycling.

"Whilst England's Atlantic Links boasts some of the finest links golf in the country, we are also lucky enough to be located within a region that offers an enormous variety of activities and attractions off the course," says Peter McMullen, Saunton's general manager.

"Moreover the Atlantic Links offer excellent value for money – average green fees are

around UK£65 – for courses of such calibre that they are comparable to many of the Scottish and Irish links that are so popular. In addition our courses are nice and quiet and benefit from being relatively undiscovered."

The gastronomic delights of the region are not to be missed either, from the exceptional Padstow seafood restaurants of famous local chef Rick Stein, Nathan Outlaw's restaurant at the St Enodoc Hotel and Damien Hirst's 11 The Quay in Illfracombe, to real English ale and authentic pub grub in abundance.

In recent years the overall standard of accommodation in the south west has risen dramatically and there are now a host of character B&Bs like the Woodlands Country House Hotel, modern seaside hotels such as the Saunton Sands and comfortable country club apartments and lodges at Trevose. **gds**



Harry Colt's Burnham & Berrow is distinguished by its sand hills.

Saunton's East Course, together with the West, is noted to be two of the world's best links layouts.

JH Taylor, a member of the "great triumvirate", designed the Royal North Devon course.

TRAVEL

AWAY
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