

FEATURED IN THE PRIVATE JOURNEY[®] MAGAZINE

MOST OF THE HOLES HAVE VIEWS OF THE SEA — “I INSISTED ON THAT,” SAYS TRUMP —

AND IT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF GAINING THOSE VISTAS AS YOU WEAVE THROUGH THESE
BRAUNY HILLS, COVERED WITH SWAYING HEATHER AND MARRAM GRASS, THAT YOU WILL REMEMBER.

But for his first effort in Europe, Trump wanted even more. Something epic. Something for the ages. He instructed his team and their extended contacts to scan the continent for a virgin territory by the sea where he could build a course that would truly rival the greatest layouts in the world.

And after reviewing more than 100 locations, by god, they found it.

Initially Trump refused to believe it. When he was first shown photos of the site, an otherworldly dunesland just north of Aberdeen on Scotland's northeast coast, “I thought they were doctored,” he tells me during an interview in his Fifth Avenue office. When he gets up from behind his desk to show me the pictures in question, it's easy to understand his disbelief. The dunes look surreally dense and high, extending in close formation at length along the North Sea shoreline.

Trump had to see it for himself, and when he did, “I fell in love,” he says. “We were about to close on a property in Ireland — a great, spectacular property — but once I saw this, I said, ‘Forget it. This is my course.’”

It was especially gratifying for Trump to land in Scotland since his mother, Mary MacLeod, was born in Stornoway and took her son to visit her homeland a number of times. That family connection made Trump especially determined to win the pitched battles he would face once he purchased the property. No doubt you've read some of the coverage: the environmental challenges, the farmer who wouldn't sell at any price, and now the proposed offshore wind farm that Trump believes will spoil the views from his course. Hassles all, but he is well aware of the upside. “You can't believe the publicity it's gotten,” he says with a smile. (Trump believes the key moment in the court of public opinion came when Sir Sean Connery, unsolicited, spoke out about how the course would be a win for Scotland, an act for which Trump says he is “eternally grateful.”)

For an architect, Trump asked Peter Dawson, Chief Executive of the R&A, whom he should hire. “Peter said, ‘I recommend Martin Hawtree,’” says Trump, referring to the esteemed and pedigreed architect (his grandfather worked with J.H. Taylor and James Braid) responsible for updating many courses on the British Open rota. “And when I asked him for a second

choice,” Trump continues, “he said, ‘I recommend Martin Hawtree.’”

So Hawtree it was, and the choice turns out to have been inspired. The course he and Trump have created seems likely to be one of the most memorable you will ever play. Trump says they moved as little earth as possible, largely leaving the towering sand hills alone and placing the fairways between them, mostly in the north-south continuum that the dunesland describes. Although laid out in two American-style loops of nine, it is actually a proper long, narrow, out-and-back links that starts in the middle, rather than at one end. (Imagine the Old Course at St Andrews if it began on the fifth hole.)

After my interview with Trump, I get a course description from Hawtree. Surprisingly, the prevailing wind here does not come off the North Sea but quarters in from the southwest, and it is almost directly into that breeze that the player will tee off on the first, a 541-yard par-five (all yardages listed here are from the tips, but each hole has up to seven tees from which to play). The first fairway, like most of the landing zones, is actually wider than it appears, as the dunes that flank it create an illusion of narrowness. (Hawtree claims that the fairways are among “the widest in links golf,” but the space between the dunes is not so broad as to accommodate double fairways or, for that matter, double greens.) Happily the course is not over-bunkered — there are fewer than 100 — and none challenge off the first tee, though a number of classic pots are peppered on the approach to the green, a two-tiered affair that will test the putting prowess of anyone who lands in the wrong hemisphere.

Continuing south, on the second hole, a 443-yard par four, the ocean heaves into view on the player's left; then follows the third, a 202-yard one-shotter that angles into the sea. The fourth is a tough par-five that escorts the player to the course's southern extremity, from which views of the city of Aberdeen are offered.

At this point the course turns abruptly about and for the next seven holes heads north with the prevailing wind at the player's back. The first three of these holes (five, six, and seven) look to be an especially fun time, as they feature a gorgeous little par-three and two pretty little par-fours (to my mind, the resurrection of the short par-four is the best aspect of modern course design). Then the business turns more serious: eight

and nine are longish par-fours that, even wind-aided, will test the player's mettle before the turn.

Although, as previously noted, there is no actual “turn.” The back side opens by continuing north, starting with the challenge of the par-five tenth's split fairway. Uniquely, going right here is the longer option but presents the better opportunity to get home in two — go left off the tee and you'll have to send your second shot blindly over the dunes.

I should interject here, however, that it is not the strategy or the shot values but the *setting* that will surely define this course, much as it does at, say, Ballyunion and Lahinch (indeed, many observers have already noted that Trump Scotland plays more like an Irish links than a Scottish one). Most of the holes have views of the sea — “I insisted on that,” says Trump — and it is the experience of gaining those vistas as you weave through these braunly hills, covered with swaying heather and marram grass, that you will remember. Indeed, as much as any course I can think of, and that includes Pebble Beach and Cypress Point, the distraction of the natural beauty here may be one of this layout's best defenders of par.

Holes twelve through sixteen form a neat little circle at the course's northern end, and then the day concludes with a stout two-hole march back south, dead into the prevailing wind. Should you navigate the 466-yard, par-four seventeenth and the 651-yard, par-four eighteenth in level par or better, you will have well earned the Highland single malt of your choice that will doubtlessly await in the clubhouse bar.

A few final notes: You will encounter no cart paths, for I am pleased to report that this will be a walking-only course (medical exceptions allowed, of course) and a new stomping ground for one of Scotland's greatest treasures: the caddie. A hotel and residences are planned, though not yet underway. And international memberships are being offered, but individual tee times (£150 weekday; £200 weekend) are also available at selected times; reportedly, and not surprisingly, I guess, thousands have already been purchased. The course is scheduled to open in the summer of 2012, and more information can be found at www.trumpgolfscotland.com.

Trust me. On your next trip to Scotland, make your way to Aberdeen. This is one you do not want to miss.

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STROKE OF GENIUS

TRUMP INTERNATIONAL GOLF LINKS, SCOTLAND

BASED ON AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH DONALD TRUMP
FOR THE PRIVATE JOURNEY MAGAZINE
BY JOHN ATWOOD

Say what you will about Donald Trump, he is inarguably golf's Man With the Midas Touch. While other developers cry into their golf towels, Trump is building new courses and reinventing old ones, and promoting them all with his signature verve. His recent purchase of the Doral Resort in Miami (he paid \$150 million; its last owner surrendered \$500 million) is just the latest in a string of smart golf investments he's made in the last decade around the U.S. and the Caribbean. Chances are you've played one or more of his layouts, such as Trump International in West Palm Beach, or Trump National Philadelphia in Southern New Jersey (which rubs shoulders, to Donald's delight, with Pine Valley). They are widely well-reviewed courses — modern, exciting, well-maintained showpieces.

6th hole green, 4th hole tee box in the background.

3rd hole green, overlooking the North Sea.