

RANKED

THE 25 BEST GOLF

We name the top destinations in Britain and Ireland for a golf holiday – and it's

BREAKS IN GB&I

not as predictable as you might think. By Chris Bertram (who's done them all!)

1 SURREY

T100 courses 11 Next 100 courses 6

A clear winner. Even if Wentworth's uber-private, inaccessible pair were taken out, it still wins. Stunning depth, with an entry in all of the 10s except the 50s. Sunningdale's duo, St George's Hill, the three Ws, Walton Heath's pair, Hankley and The Addington also have sensational back-up with four really strong contenders for the list (close to the top of the Next 100) in Wentworth (East), New Zealand, Hindhead and Tandridge. Stylish Camberley Heath and Coombe Hill complete the picture. If money is no object, head for Surrey.

2 FIFE

T100 6 Next 100 5

The Old and Kingsbarns give Fife two of the top 11. Then it's a jump to 69 to Dumbarrie, but Elie, St Andrews (New) and St Andrews (Castle) follow. Add five terrific Next 100 entries – Lundin, Leven, Ladybank, Craig and Scotscraig – as well as the ambience of the Home of Golf.

3 EAST LOTHIAN

T100 4 Next 100 5

Has fewer big guns than you think, with the superstars of No.5 Muirfield and No.10 North Berwick 'only' followed by Gullane (No.1) and The Renaissance Club in this Top 100. But then East Lothian shows its class, with five courses – Dunbar, Luffness, Gullane (No.2), Kilsplindie and Archerfield (Fidra) – in the Next 100. After those there is The Glen, Craigielaw, Gullane (No.3)... Plus, it's all incredibly convenient. Could be No.2.

4 THE HIGHLANDS

T100 5 Next 100 6

Royal Dornoch, Skibo Castle and Castle Stuart are in the first 26 of the list, then Nairn and Brora follow in the 70s. Boat of Garten, Moray (Old), Fortrose & Rosemarkie, Golspie, Moray (New) and Spey Valley are a bewilderingly good supporting cast. It's also magical and characterful. So why isn't it higher? Unlike those above it, there's a bit of driving between the courses; in fact, it is arguably a two-base trip – Dornoch and Inverness.

5 SOUTHPORT

T100 5 Next 100 1

We could add Hoylake and Wallasey on the nearby Wirral to make this entry even better, but it doesn't need it. Top-10 Royal Birkdale is backed up by Formby, Hillside, West Lanes and S&A, with Formby Ladies in the Next 100. You can walk between all of the courses other than West Lanes, too.



Broadstone, England



The Machrie, Scotland



Pennard, Wales



Sherwood Forest, England

6 DONEGAL

Top 100 4 Next 100 4

Surprised? Don't feel naive if you are. This is the coming destination in GB&I; fact. You have four Top 100 entries across Rosapenna and Ballyliffin, then add in Portsalon, Rosapenna (Old Tom), Donegal and Narin & Portnoo – all offering something a little bit different. Oh, and cute North West and the epic nine-holer Cruit Island. A bit of driving involved, but if you don't mind that, it's perfection. In our view, Ireland's top destination now.

7 WESTERN ISLES

T100 4 Next 100 3

The most soulful golf break in the world. Ardfin is the new pricey bucket-listener, Machrihanish and The Machrie the ancient links (the latter renovated), and Machrihanish Dunes the funky newcomer. Add in Shiskine, Dunaverty and even Askernish, jaw-dropping scenery, sensible prices, fun on the ferries and a glad-to-be-alive feeling that nowhere else can match.

8 AYRSHIRE

T100 4 Next 100 3

Three Open venues in Turnberry (Ailsa), Royal Troon and Prestwick are the superstars, with Western Gales also in the top 50. Next 100 Dundonald is unlucky not

to be in the main list and there is also Gales Links, Turnberry (King Robert the Bruce), West Kilbride, Barassie and Irvine.

9 ENGLAND'S ATLANTIC COAST

T100 4 Next 100 3

Yes, we are joining three counties here – but, crucially, all within acceptable driving distance. You genuinely can play St Enodoc (Church) in Cornwall, Saunton (East) and Royal North Devon in Devon, and Burnham & Berrow in Somerset comfortably on the same trip. We exclude East Devon as it's on the south coast but Trevose, Perranporth and Saunton (West) offer superb depth. An exhilarating break.

10 KENT

T100 3 Next 100 2

If you've got only two days, this is your trip. It's all so close that when you stay at Prince's Lodge you are looking out on Sandwich as well as Prince's. Deal is one of the list's high risers too. Play Littlestone or Knole Park on the way to or from the coast.

11 KERRY

T100 3 Next 100 1

We told you it wasn't obvious, because while the Ring of Kerry is rightly famed, a lot of that hangs on Ballybunion and Waterville. They are of course staggeringly good, and

Tralee is an incredible clifftop experience. Dooks is also really good and Ballybunion's wild Cashen would be your fifth option.

12 ABERDEENSHIRE

T100 3 Next 100 2

A quietly brilliant links trip and very easy to do once you're up in Aberdeenshire. Cruden Bay, Trump Aberdeen and Royal Aberdeen are top-50 certainties and all offer something a bit different. Murcar and Fraserburgh could easily be in the main list. Peterhead, Duff House Royal and Meldrum House provide super back-up.

13 SOUTH WALES

T100 2 Next 100 5

Wales' top area, with Royal Porthcawl and Pennard the contrasting headline acts while the Next 100 line-up of Southerndown, Ashburnham, Tenby, Pyle & Kenfig and Celtic Manor (TwentyTen) is as good as anything in this mini ranking. South Wales arguably does variety better than anywhere else – and is sensationally good value.

14 YORKSHIRE

T100 3 Next 100 1

OK, hands up – Ganton is a bit of a drive away from Alwoodley and Moortown, but we're allowing it because those other two are literally across the road from each other.

For devotees of MacKenzie, this is as good as it gets. Fulford and then Hallamshire are extra courses to factor in. Lindrick goes with the Notts courses for us.

15 MID WALES

T100 2 Next 100 2

We will be accused of geographical murder here, but Royal St David's is 20 minutes from Portmadog and less than an hour from Nefyn. Yes, Aberdovey is 70 minutes in the other direction, we know this. But once you're at Harlech you're not going to not also play Aberdovey. Trust us, it's do-able and it's fantastic (and great value). Borth, Abersoch and Pwllheli add more depth.

16 BERKSHIRE

T100 3 Next 100 0

You could join this trip seamlessly with Surrey, but it wins anyway so let's have a Berkshire-specific break. A day at Swinley Forest then one at The Berkshire and you're going to be happy with your lot. It's not cheap, but it is brilliant, and Bearwood Lakes is an excellent fourth option.

17 DORSET

T100 2 Next 100 2

Parkstone, Broadstone, Ferndown and revitalised Isle of Purbeck rival south Wales for giving you something different on every

round, while all being of a very similar calibre. One of our favourite trips away from the big names. Remedy Oak a fifth good one.

18 PORTRUSH COAST

T100 2 Next 100 2

Straddling Antrim and Londonderry, this break gives you Royal Portrush (Dunluce) plus Portstewart (Strand), Castlerock and Portrush (Valley). Ballycastle a fun fifth.

19 NORFOLK

T100 2 Next 100 1

One of the easiest trips around, with Brancaster and Hunstanton so close to each other yet offering very different links. Clifftop Sheringham is the third round, Royal Cromer the fourth.

20 HAMPSHIRE

T100 1 Next 100 3

Just one Top 100 course in Liphook, but the easy-to-love links of Hayling plus the pure heathland delight at Blackmoor and Stoneham give Hants plenty of appeal. North Hants and Brokenhurst Manor are also nice.

21 PERTSHIRE

T100 2 Next 100 3

Another surprise? Well, add Gleneagles King's and Queen's to the pair at Blairgowrie and Ryder Cup course PGA Centenary, plus the tranquility, and you have a very fine package.

22 DUBLIN

T100 2 Next 100 2

Portmarnock and The Island are the headliners, Portmarnock Links and Royal Dublin the very able understudies. And K Club and Carton House are not far inland.

23 NOTTINGHAM

T100 2 Next 100 1

Notts and Sherwood Forest plus long-time entry Lindrick and Coxmoor, another fine heathland. Low glitz, high quality.

24 ANGUS

Top 100 1 Next 100 2

One Top 100 entry in Carnoustie but tonnes of depth by adding Next 100 courses Panmure and Montrose, plus Monifieth and the other two at Carnoustie. It's easy to do Perthshire on the same trip and make it as good as, say, Aberdeen.

25 NORTH WALES

Top 100 0 Next 100 1

Conwy is the Next 100 entry, Bull Bay, North Wales and Holyhead are en route. It's the best-value trip in the ranking.