



Emerald Fairways and Foam-Flecked Seas: A Golfer's Pilgrimage to the Courses of Ireland

James W. Finegan

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Every golfer dreams of making a pilgrimage to the British Isles, to play the exhilarating game to be found on the ground that links land and sea. Increasingly, golfers on this side of the Atlantic have discovered that some of the most magnificent courses in the world -- and some of the most beautiful countryside -- are to be found not in Scotland, but in its near neighbor, Ireland.

From the opening drive at Lahinch, just thirty miles from your arrival point at Shannon International Airport, to the spectacular dune-framed holes at Ballybunion, Ireland boasts an extraordinary collection of seaside links. Royal Country Down, Royal Portrush, Portmarnock, Portstewart, Waterville and the Island, the European Club and Baltry -- any one of these would be reason to cross an ocean, and the concentration of all of them on a land mass smaller than the state of Maine makes for a golfer's paradise limited only by your budget and your time.

For the tourist or the dreamer, there can be no better guide than James W. Finegan. A passionate advocate and a charming storyteller, Finegan combines a writer's eye, a historian's knowledge, and a golfer's sense of wonder and apprehension to provide an impossibly ambitious grand tour of this beautiful land. In a loop that begins in the West at Lahinch and continues clockwise through both the Republic and Northern Ireland, Finegan covers more than fifty courses, visiting those that have become true shrines of the game, the courses that are well known and respected, and the little-known gems you might otherwise pass right by. He shares the history of the courses, and writes marvelously about the scenic and strategic charms to be found as you play them yourself. And he provides all the information you need to make your arrangements to do just that -- because unlike most championship courses in the United States, the great courses of Ireland are available to the public.

In addition to his delightful descriptions of the golf to be found there, Finegan gives us his recommendations for places to stay, ranging from the most modest bed and breakfast to the most magnificent palace -- some thirty accommodations in all. He describes the pleasures to be found off the beaten track: the spectacular views from a country road, or the ancient cathedral that's worth a stop on the way to the first tee. And because all the travel within the country is done by car, he spells out the actual route from town to town and course to course, as he lays out an itinerary that will surely encounter almost all of the fabled "40 shades of green."

Emerald Fairways and Foam-Flecked Seas is a book to be read, to be savored, and to be tucked away in your suitcase when you finally undertake the journey of your dreams.

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