

## Atlantic Links

Text: Miroslava Dulova [www.mdgolfphoto.com](http://www.mdgolfphoto.com)

Photographs: Miroslava Dulova and Igor Dula

Links golf is generally associated with Scotland and Ireland, but on this occasion we decided to visit the Atlantic Links courses in south west England which are all easily comparable in terms of variety, history, tradition and prestige.

England's Atlantic Links are accessible via the international airports of Bristol, Exeter, Newquay, Birmingham and all London Airports via the M4 & M5 motorway and A39 "Atlantic Highway". We selected direct flights from central Europe to Birmingham, continuing from there by car, bringing with us exceptionally good weather with no rain or wind during the entire trip.

We arrived at the first golf course, **Burnham & Berrow**, after a drive of almost three hours. Founded in 1890, Burnham & Berrow has evolved over the decades but today's layout is largely the work of Harry Colt. This course is particularly noted for its distinct sand hills that form such stubborn, natural obstacles, along with the buckthorn. The club's first professional was the legendary JH Taylor, five times an Open champion, who described the course as "one



of the most sporting courses conceivable". Burnham & Berrow has hosted the 2011 Brabazon Trophy and The R&A British Boys Championship. During our visit, the course was in very good condition, and as with most links courses, it required exacting play in order to avoid the demanding rough. We enjoyed a very good dinner

in the charming clubhouse.

Our first night was spent in **Battleborough Grange Country Hotel**, not far from the main



road but in very quiet environment. There were not too many guests in the hotel but we would recommend booking dinner in advance.

The next day we played Cornwall's **St Enodoc**, founded in 1890 and designed by James



Braid. This is a fantastic course with the dunes overlooking the River Camel estuary and far-reaching views over the Atlantic. Indeed the course offers breathtaking views from the majority of holes. The Church course, so called because of the Norman Church that was uncovered in the

middle of the course, is renowned for its towering Himalaya bunker that entirely blocks golfers' view of the 6th green from all but a slither of fairway. This is reputedly the tallest bunker in Europe. In 2014 St Enodoc hosted the English Women's Amateur Championship. It was not easy to play blind shots and the course was even more demanding because of more difficult roughs created especially for the championship.

Our next stop was the **Woodlands Country House B&B**, a very high quality accommodation



with an excellent breakfast and a broad selection of quality restaurants nearby - Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant, Rick Stein's Café & Stein's Fish & Chips - in nearby Padstow. We recommend booking your dinner as these restaurants are famous and extremely busy. However Woodlands Country House is well located for the highly-recommended Cornish Arms in Churchtown which is not far away and no reservation is necessary!



**Trevoze Golf & Country Club** offers a brilliant links that in 2008 staged the celebrated Brabazon Trophy (English Amateur Stroke Play Championship) and in 2012 hosted the McGregor Trophy (English U16 Open Stroke play). The golf course was designed



by Harry Colt and provides fantastic views mainly from the first nine holes. We were told that the course can be quite difficult when the wind blows in from the sea. Trevoise also offers a variety of high quality accommodation.

**Royal North Devon** or Westward Ho! is the England's oldest links course (1864). The golf



course has hardly changed over 150 years and to play it is like taking a step back in time and seeing how golf was played in Victorian England. The golf course is set on common land on which livestock still graze on the first two holes during play. The play is even more demanding because

of many quite difficult bunkers. There is a public road crossing the golf course with very high traffic to the beach including pedestrians and dogs which have priority! Golfers particularly need to pay attention over the last two holes when crossing the road again. We were obliged to wait for a quite a while thanks to the many cars and pedestrians returning home from the beach.

The clubhouse serves as a treasure trove of golf memorabilia second only to the R&A. In 2014 the golf course celebrates its 150th anniversary.

We then spent a night in **Culloden House B&B** in north Devon, offering fantastic sea views. It can be difficult to find parking on the nearby streets, but it does have some good restaurants nearby within walking distance.

Further down the Devon coast is **Saunton**. The club was inaugurated in 1893 when the



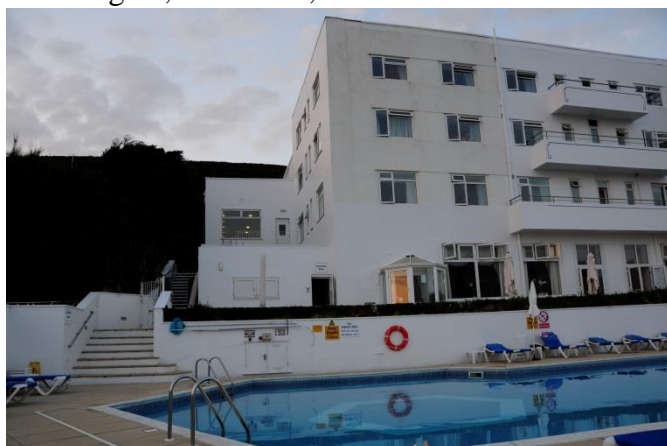
clubhouse doubled up as the local post office. There are two championship courses, East and West, which are among the greatest links in the world. England's most successful post-war golfer, Nick Faldo, has said, "I've no doubt if the East Course were located on the coast of

Lancashire or Kent it would have hosted an Open Championship by now." Although the West course is an exceptional challenge in its own right, it is a mistake to consider it second best. Both golf courses, East and West are demanding but it is exceptional golf.

We had the advantage on both golf courses of playing with club members and getting advice and first-hand information on the more complicated holes. We've experienced snakes and alligators in different parts of the world, but Saunton offered a very special encounter – a fox asking for food!

In 2014, Saunton was given the honour of hosting the English Amateur Championship, the blue riband men's event on England Golf's calendar that year.

The elegant, luxurious, four-star art deco hotel **Saunton Sands Hotel** provides excellent



accommodation and a broad selection of wellness treatments with catering of the best quality. It is perfectly located to the Saunton golf courses and the beach at Saunton Sands.

### Places to discover

**Clovelly** in North Devon is a timeless village with many cottages from the 14th century. Having parked the car, we climbed up the steep, cobbled streets and then down past white cottages to the small deep-blue harbour. There are no cars in Clovelly, instead you can hire a donkey. In the past Clovelly was a fishing port, famed for herring and mackerel but now more famous for its delicious crab! A visit to the Charles Kingsley Museum is a must as it was here in Clovelly that he wrote Westward Ho!



**Ilfracombe** is another of Devon's most picturesque villages with steep cobbled streets & an ancient harbour.

**Carnewas and Bedruthan Steps** is another famous attraction with cliff tops walks and views over the giant rock stacks on the beach.

**Tintagel Old Post Office** is one of the oldest houses in Cornwall, dating from 14<sup>th</sup> century.



**Tintagel Castle** is a place of magic and myths where the legend of King Arthur was born. It's a long walk to the castle or you can make use the four wheel drive service.

**Padstow** is a bustling harbour town offering excellent food with three



celebrity chefs in one town (two Michelin starred restaurants). Paul Ainsworth at Number 6. Rick Stein with nine outlets in Padstow and Nathan Outlaw's The Hake at the St Enodoc Hotel.

**The Eden Project** showcases 100,000 plants from around the world in two giant transparent domes, each recreating different climate conditions, in what is one of the world's largest greenhouses.



**The Lost Gardens of Heligan** in Megavissy is a world-renowned, restored garden & pleasure ground from the early 20th century.

**Agatha Christie** was the village of Greenway's most famous resident and her extensive collections fill the house. With beautiful views of the river, it is

easy to see why she called it the "loveliest place in the world".

**Conan Doyle** between 1882 and 1923 visited Devon on no fewer than ten occasions and he resided there for some four months in total. During 1882, Dr. George Turnavine Budd employed Doyle as a junior physician at his surgery in West Devon.

**Rosamunde Pilcher** was born in 1924 in Lelant, Cornwall. Her books are especially popular in Germany because national TV station ZDF has produced more than 100 of her stories for TV starting with "Day of the Storm". Both ZDF programme director Dr. Claus Beling and Rosamunde Pilcher were awarded the British Tourism Award in 2002 for the positive effect the books and the TV versions have had on tourism in Cornwall and Devon.

### **Other Attractions:**

**Port Isaac & Rock** - pretty fishing towns

**Wadebridge & Camelford** – thriving market towns

**Bath** – a world heritage site with Roman baths & fine architecture including its renown crescents

**Cheddar Gorge** – for its dramatic scenery & caves

**Glastonbury** – mystical town & home of the famous musical festival

### **Conclusions:**

Atlantic Links can be compared to the most beautiful links in Scotland and Ireland and offer excellent pricing. All the courses were in very good condition and each and every one is recommended. A great selection of accommodation of all price levels and packages are suitable for all categories of golfers. In summary – perfect golf, excellent food and accommodation and a really great selection of places to visit after golf.

### **Fact File**

#### **GOLF:**

England's Atlantic Links comprises five celebrated golf links clubs: Trevose & St Enodoc in Cornwall, Royal North Devon & Saunton in Devon and Burnham & Berrow in Somerset.

Moreover in terms of top quality golf courses, the Atlantic Links courses offer excellent value for money with green fees averaging out at just £75/Euros 93 in the high summer season.

The temperate climate of the South West allows golf to be played all year round on well-conditioned courses, even on summer greens during winter time.

For more information, click on [www.atlantic-links.co.uk](http://www.atlantic-links.co.uk)

The exclusive tour operator for England's Atlantic Links is Countrywide Golf Holidays [www.countrywide-golf.com](http://www.countrywide-golf.com) or email [info@countrywide-golf.com](mailto:info@countrywide-golf.com).

In 2012 all six Atlantic Links courses were included in the UK's Golf World magazine's 2012 rankings for the "Top 100 Golf Courses in England": The links of Saunton East in Devon and St Enodoc's Church Course in Cornwall were both ranked in the top 20, in 8th and 16th position respectively, whilst Burnham & Berrow in Somerset came in at number 33. The three other courses that complete the offering all made the top 70 with Cornwall's Trevose in 53rd spot, Royal North Devon at 62 and Saunton West in 68th slot.

All of the courses also featured in Golf Monthly's "Top 100 Courses UK and Ireland 2012": Burnham & Berrow ranked the most highly at number 37 and was closely followed by Saunton's East Course at 39 and St Enodoc up four places to 41st position. The other three Atlantic Links courses also came well inside the top 100 with Saunton West in at number 57, Trevose in 70th spot and Royal North Devon placed in 75th position.

### **ACCOMMODATION:**

Battleborough Grange Country Hotel, Bristol Rd, Highbridge, Somerset TA9 4HJ, United Kingdom, [www.battleboroughgrangehotel.co.uk](http://www.battleboroughgrangehotel.co.uk)

Woodlands Country House B&B, Treator, Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8RU, United Kingdom [www.woodlands-padstow.co.uk](http://www.woodlands-padstow.co.uk)

Culloden House B&B Fosceth Hill, Bideford, North Devon EX39 1UL, United Kingdom, [www.culloden-house.co.uk](http://www.culloden-house.co.uk)

Saunton Sands Hotel, Saunton Rd, Braunton, Devon EX33 1LQ, United Kingdom [www.sauntonsands.co.uk](http://www.sauntonsands.co.uk)

### **RESTAURANTS**

Number 6, 6 Middle Street, Padstow [www.number6inpadstow.co.uk](http://www.number6inpadstow.co.uk)

Seafood, Padstow, Riverside, Padstow, Cornwall, PL28 8BY [www.rickstein.com/The-Seafood-Restaurant.html](http://www.rickstein.com/The-Seafood-Restaurant.html)

The Cornish Arms, Churchtown, St Merryn, Padstow, PL28 8ND, no reservations, just come

The Hake, St. Enodoc Hotel, Rock Road, Rock, Cornwall PL27 6LA <http://www.outlaws.co.uk/restaurants/rock>

11 The Quay, Ilfracombe (Damien Hurst's restaurant) [www.11thequay.co.uk](http://www.11thequay.co.uk)

Jamie Oliver's Fifteen, Watergate Bay, Cornwall TR8 4AA, United Kingdom  
[www.fifteencornwall.co.uk](http://www.fifteencornwall.co.uk)