

## Golfing in Ireland

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It is probable that there is no country in the world with a higher proportion of great golf courses to available acreage than Ireland. It is certain that there is no country in the world that offers the golfer a greater welcome. "Cead Mile Failte"--a hundred thousand welcomes--is Ireland's motto, and for once it is born of fact, of experience, of ancient tradition, not of a public-relations man's pen. It is not an accident that the path beaten to Ballybunion in the late '80s by Tom Watson has been followed to that wonderful golf course and many others by Tiger Woods, Mark O'Meara, David Duval, Phil Mickelson and that honorary Irishman, the late Payne Stewart. They went not just to prepare themselves on links for the British Open, but to experience great, natural golf and, afterward, the craic, a term for which there exists no single word in English. It means the telling of terrible truths, of great lies, of having a good time, of reminiscences--all done with friends you may have known for years, or hours or even minutes, preferably while sharing a drink or two or three. It was said that the craic was responsible for more late arrivals than the whole of Europe's air-traffic controllers put together.

Payne Stewart, a great enthusiast of the craic, used to dive into the Butler Arms Hotel at Waterville and emerge many harmonious hours later, blinking and saying, "The great thing about Ireland is, it's always daylight." (Well, it was when he went in, and it was as he came out.)

Ireland isn't just a place of great golf courses, it is full of great places to play golf, and the two aren't necessarily synonymous. In fact, when it comes to Irish golf there are too many "musts," and only a proportion of them possibly could be played in one visit. Therefore, it's necessary to impose limitations, and the most obvious is to stick to what the country does best, namely links golf, the finest form of the game.

It's best not to try to "do" Ireland. Aside from the fact that having played some of these courses once, you will want to play them again--immediately and to the detriment of your schedule--there is the small matter of the Tractor Factor. Anyone who has driven an Irish road will know immediately what this is, and anyone who has not, and is proposing a holiday involving car travel, needs urgently to know.

No country in the civilized world has the variety and vintages and variations thereon of tractor than does Ireland. And you can depend on three things: (1) they will be going very slowly

### **Short note about the author**

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View their website at: <http://www.getawayireland.com>

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