

# TAKE

Take a swing off the beaten fairway with these quieter alternatives for golf enthusiasts. Alice Barnes-Brown marks your card

**b**ird song, sunshine, fresh air and the anticipation of that first tee – it's easy to see why golfing breaks are so popular. Since the pandemic, interest in golf has boomed among beginners: according to the R&A golfing association, participation in the sport has risen by 15% since 2020.

But planning a golf holiday can require a little more work than a regular fly-and-flop – there are tee times, green fees and the potential cost of carrying equipment to consider. But these trips can also

be lucrative, with clients that catch the golf bug returning time and time again.

Those who have already tried the world's most iconic courses – such as the windswept greens of Scotland or the fairways of Florida – may be looking for a lesser-known (and, crucially, less busy) golfing destination with not only top-class courses but ample activities beyond the clubhouse too.

Thankfully, there are plenty of under-the-radar golfing gems to suit every sort of player, each offering a truly un-for(e)-gettable holiday.



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## SCOTLAND

The 'home of golf' is right on our doorstep, with almost 600 courses to try. Advise clients to visit beginner-friendly courses such as the ones at St Andrews Links – golf has been played on its Old Course since the 15th century – or the more challenging Carnoustie Golf Links, with its numerous bunkers and ditches.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** Sometimes seen as a secondary stop on a golf tour of Scotland and Ireland, verdant Northern Ireland blends seafront links with open parkland courses. Thanks to its small size, the courses are relatively close to one another, so multiple vistas can be savoured with ease on a short break.

**WHY GO:** The British Open championship will be held at the 18-hole Dunluce course at Royal Portrush (pictured) in 2025 (for the third time), so there's due to be a lot more buzz about the region. When clients put their clubs down, there's plenty to do: they could discover where the clubhouse's local whiskeys are made on a distillery visit, or learn more about Belfast and its tumultuous history on a black-cab tour.

**BOOK IT:** Tee the World offers a four-night golf tour based at the Me and Mrs Jones hotel in Portstewart from £1,695 per person, based on two sharing. The price is based on a May 21 departure and includes breakfasts, transfers, a welcome Guinness, farewell dinner, and a round each at the Dunluce (Royal Portrush), Strand (Portstewart) and Castlerock courses. [teetheworld.co.uk](http://teetheworld.co.uk)

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## PORTUGAL

Portugal is a golfer's go-to, with around 100 courses suiting a wide range of price points and skill levels. Whether clients are searching to perfect their strokes by the crashing waves of the Atlantic, or keen to soak up the laid-back southern European lifestyle in the Algarve following a thrilling day on the fairway, Portugal is a perennially popular option.

## TURKEY

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** For a golf break with an endless choice of places to play, zoom across to the opposite side of the Mediterranean to Turkey. The coasts near Antalya are framed by the spectacular Taurus mountains, with plenty of PGA tour-standard golf facilities on offer.

**WHY GO:** In the past couple of decades, many top golf architects and former players have designed courses at this beauty spot, including British star Sir Nick Faldo, whose 27-hole Cornelia Golf Club eases its way through an ancient pine forest. Belek is also home to plenty of great-value (and, frequently, all-inclusive) golf resorts. The family-friendly Cullinan Belek (pictured) is open year-round and is home to two courses that were extensively remodelled in 2022 to include a total of 36 holes. Players who need a helping hand can take lessons at Belek's Golf Academy.

**BOOK IT:** Jet2 offers seven nights' all-inclusive at the Cullinan Belek for £2,719 per person, based on two sharing. The price includes flights from Manchester on April 12, four rounds of golf, transfers and a 22kg baggage allowance. [jet2holidays.com](http://jet2holidays.com)

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## BERMUDA

This Atlantic destination punches well above its weight when it comes to golf: it has a land mass of only 21 square miles, but seven world-class courses to its name. Taking one's eye off the ball is no bad thing, as pink-sand beaches, charming wooden seafront houses and bright-blue waters lie just beyond the putting green.

## BARBADOS

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** A Caribbean getaway with sun, sea and steel pans is a given on Barbados, but it's also a fabulous destination for golfers, with its undulating terrain and warm weather providing ideal playing conditions.

**WHY GO:** Barbados is making a name for itself as one of the Caribbean's top golf destinations. The opening of Apes Hill resort – and a major redesign of its golf course – late last year is the Caribbean's newest offering. But the island has plenty of stalwarts too, including Royal Westmoreland and Sandy Lane's world-renowned Green Monkey course (pictured). At the latter, golfers can admire views of green forest and the blue horizon as they tee off from the top of a hill, while a 'green monkey' grass sculpture supervises the 16th hole – a playful homage to the monkeys that roam freely across Barbados.

**BOOK IT:** Inspiring Travel offers seven nights' B&B in a Luxury Ocean Room at Sandy Lane Resort from £4,425 per person, based on two sharing, flying on September 2. The price includes transfers, a round of golf, a massage and a candlelit dinner. [inspiringtravel.co.uk](http://inspiringtravel.co.uk)

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