

GREAT GOLF HOLES OF NEW ZEALAND

Photography and text by John Morris

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Foreword



In recent years many excellent books about New Zealand golf courses have been published and I welcome this new edition of "Great Golf Holes". As a long serving NZPGA Golf

Professional and host to overseas golfers with my inbound golf tour operation Golfers Dream Destination New Zealand, I can see this book becoming a valuable guide to local and overseas travellers whose itineraries revolve around golf.

For almost as many years as I have been teaching golf, John Morris has specialised in appraising and photographing golf courses, always with the average golfer in mind.

Believe it or not, most players are not knocking nine iron seconds to par four greens, despite the fact that they spend megabucks on the latest equipment!

John has travelled all over New Zealand to capture the character of his selected holes - mostly with players in the pictures. To my mind his message is clear: golf is a scenic experience, the score being secondary to the serendipity.

It's an invitation to enjoy our country via golf.

Ray Houghton

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Cover photograph by John Morris
Lance Murray tees off at Kauri Cliffs

Scenic shots: John Cobb and John Morris

Art Direction: John Morris

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INTRODUCTION

Thirty five years represents a mere moment in the grand scheme of things. But in 1971 there were no PCs, CDs, DVDs, I Pods, cell phones or those ubiquitous suburban SUVs.

The almost exclusive gentleman's golf world was devoid of driving ranges, electric golf carts, titanium heads, carbon-fibre shafts, GPS course plotters, weird-looking putters and " hybrid" golf clubs. The maximum men's handicap was 24 and running a clubhouse bar could get the perpetrator fined.

At that time the first edition of "Great Golf Holes of New Zealand" was published. Although this new edition has been so long in gestation, its birth has been eased by modern technology and my fifteen years as editor and feature writer of three golf magazines. So there was a vast storehouse of knowledge to draw from, not only about our classic clubs, but also the ten stunning resort courses that have emerged since Wairakei International was opened in 1972. At a green fee, by the way, of two dollars and fifty cents a round.

The golf boom also spawned a frenetic upgrading of the better courses among the 400 odd layouts in this country. Membership nation-wide is over 200,000 but casual golfers and oversea visitor golfers add thousands of rounds. Liberalised women took to golf in their hundreds because of its ideal social magnetism and undeniable challenge as a game which requires no great athletic prowess.

Settling on what constitutes a great golf hole is a matter of opinion. My criteria are: "scenically stimulating and mentally challenging". Some excellent holes are not really photogenic and they could belong to any layout anywhere. The problem was to capture the character of the course with one key photograph. Not all these possess a "risk and reward" factor to test the better player. The only risk is getting there and the reward is simply being there. Some appear before you as " easy" (prevalent in par threes) but they can rear up and bite you like a sneaky snake. Others, like some beautiful film stars, are

brehtaking to look at but impossible to live with.

American golfer and broadcaster Gary McCord was asked, in his opinion, which were the ten best golf courses in the world. Among them he named Kauri Cliffs (see cover) and Cape Kidnappers. His number one choice was Pebble Beach on the Monterey Peninsula which he described as " Elle McPherson covered in glue and then rolled in finely chopped grass." Personally, I believe that Wairakei International qualifies for that description.

Golf is funny game. In spite of the revolutionary advances in balls and equipment the average stroke score among registered club players remains in the mid nineties. There may be two reasons for this phenomenon. One: the upgrading of courses has made many holes more difficult. Two: an ageing population has raised the average stroke score to balance out the young guns who hit the golf ball into orbit.

In any case the mid to high handicap golfer to whom this book is dedicated obviously realises that the planet's best golfers belong in a galaxy far, far away. Although we are light years away from attaining such a standard we are all capable of the occasional miraculous golf shot.

Be not dissuaded. While you remain on the right side of the grass you will be able to take out from golf exactly what you are prepared to put into this endlessly exasperating game, whether or not you play socially or competitively.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publishers would like to thank all the secretaries, managers and golf professionals who helped the author to find the feature holes. Also many thanks to John Cobb for his contribution of New Zealand landscapes depicting the various districts near where these golf courses lie.



NORTHLAND - AUCKLAND



Auckland:
Owing to the complexity of the
Auckland district a location map
is not included

- Helensville
- Peninsula
- Muriwai
- Gulf Harbour
- North Shore
- Titirangi
- Remuera
- The Grange
- Akarana
- Pakuranga
- Whitford Park
- Formosa
- Manukau
- Aviation
- Pukekohe

KAITAIA



Does “The Drop” mean a dropped shot?

The 114metre 6th hole at Kaitaia looks a pushover from its elevated tee. The elevation is not more than 10 metres so “The Drop” a bit of a misnomer. But when the westerly gets angry, poor club selection can cost you a couple of shots. The length and height from the tee tells you it’s a short iron. A strong wind in your face reminds you that two or three clubs more would be a prudent choice. With a north-easterly behind you it’s a wedge. That’s so typical of this linksland course at Ahipara, nicknamed “The Carnoustie of the Far North”.

About ten minutes west of Kaitaia, the fairways (or mini-mountains) stretch out just over 6000 metres of bumpy quick-draining coastal land. Here is the true meaning of Country and Western; the westernmost golf course nestled at Ahipara in the southern corner of famous Ninety Mile Beach. The people here have salt in their veins and golf in their hearts ... and a welcoming smile for all visitors.

“Old Huey”, the prevailing westerly, is the real handicapper here. The number one stroke hole “Westward Ho” (where your score can go west) is a favourite of Steve Williams who used to play here before becoming famous as Tiger Wood’s caddie. Playing 369m from the back tee, it demands a thunderous drive to reach the corner of an almost right-angled left dogleg. Average players have no sighting of the green for the second shot.

The wind and the unpredictable lies - downhill, sidehill, sand patches, scruffy rough, blind shots over mini mountains - all add up to make a deceptively wide open course a tough test that’s hard to beat. But if you’re in the Far North, don’t miss the challenge Ahipara offers you.

Kaitaia Golf Club, 90-Mile Beach Golf Links
Phone: 09 409 4833 Email: kaitaia@golf.co.nz

Men: par 72, 5948m (5573m blue) Women: par 73, 4938m



Above: No 5, par 5: Plays more than the 414m (463 blue) when that wind holds you back. Three big woods and an iron is about average for the average golfer. Even very good golfers are often looking at a five wood for the third shot.



Above: No 1, par 3: Quite a feisty little opening hole with an elusive green.



A Spot-on tee shot is crucial, or you'll be crucified



Carrington, Karikari Peninsula, Matai Bay
Phone: 09 408 7222 Email: info@carrington.co.nz

Men: par 72, 6417m (Tiger tees) 5841m (blue) 5357m (white)
Women: par 72, 4654m (red)



No 7, par 3: A carry of nearly 150 metres with nowhere to go but straight over the lake. Select one club more.

This view of the testing 6th hole at Carrington does not portray the real difficulty of the approach but it does convey the character of Carrington. A hooked shot (see inset) can leave you lost in the Rush-fringed lake. A slice ends up in the scrub and a sloping lie. This is not a hole where you press for distance. Aim to right fairway and the left slope will feed the ball to the centre of an extremely narrow landing zone.

The Karikari Peninsula on the far north eastern corner of the North Island has been a camping holiday hideaway for many years. The camping grounds at Matai Bay attract motor homes, campervans, caravans and back packers. But until a few years ago, no golfers.

That entire little used wilderness was changed when the land that inspired the golf course was developed. Now you can enjoy carefree golf and unbridled luxury ... enjoy the products of a flourishing winery plus practically any other sporting or recreational activity you could wish for in idyllic surroundings. The course was carved out of the natural contours. Designed by Matt Dye, it features his signature of such steeply contoured greens you have to computerise your putts. The front nine poses the biggest problems especially from five through to nine. The back nine is wider but more bland, most of the challenge stemming from the pin placements on tricky greens.

Total luxury awaits guests who stay at the self-contained lodges, including one of the finest restaurants in the country. Carrington is a carefree place ... a place to relax and watch the sun go down while sipping a Glenfiddich in the intimate bar.

Because Carrington is "out on a limb" it is best enjoyed as a play and stay resort where quality will be remembered, whatever activity you choose.

CARRINGTON



KERIKERI



Drop it on ... or drop out of the picture

The signature hole at this ever-popular golf course is an easy hole to play unless you hit a truly woeful tee shot. What makes it great is the sheer beauty of the vista below ... the bush backing, the lakes, the shape of the surrounding bunkers. You see it from the air: it features one of the most elevated tees in the country. Only an eight or nine iron dropshot with a generous green awaiting you. But the lake swallows a slice and a hook can find the left bunker, or worse, the bush-clad gully. Golf is a funny game.

Anyone visiting the Bay of Islands with golf on their mind and fun on their itinerary makes a beeline for Kerikeri. The golf course is virtually on the edge of town and it's one of the most improved courses north of Whangarei. An easy walking tree-studded layout with one hill to climb at the 4th hole allows leisurely golf and no seriously difficult problems unless you are well off your game. On the other hand the course record from the back tees was 68. I believe the main dangers lie in wait for the big guns. Five par fives, however, offer many recovery options.

Kerikeri Golf Club
Golf View Road. Kerikeri

Phone: 09 407 8776
Email: kerikeri@golf.co.nz

Men: par 73, 6101m (5800)
Women: par 73, 5308m



No 18, par 4: A great finishing hole with all the trouble around the green. A dip before the green and two big bunkers demand a high shot with brakes on.



No 11, par 3: A long par three of 170 odd metres, the pin is guarded by a long narrow bunker with little green to work with behind. The safe shot is to the right, opting for a long first putt.

WAITANGI



No 6, par 3: A surprisingly difficult hole over a bush-clad ravine to an elevated green that falls off to the left and rear. This hole demands carry of 153 metres, preferably slightly right.



No 16, par 3: It pays to play long here to avoid the traps in front. A generous green and lovely vista with the permanently beached sailing ship in the background.

Waitangi's seaside holes were seemingly imported from Pebble Beach in California but, I suspect, they are a little easier to play. The 14th hole can be a bit tricky if the wind blows in from the sea or you hook your tee shot too far left. A deep gully captures anything on that side which leaves you the task of a well executed wedge. Short and left means a big second to carry this gully. Play right and you shoot down to a smallish green bordering the ocean, trapped front right.

In general, Waitangi is a benign course ... not one to beat your brains out. There is a very difficult par three at the 14th and a peculiar dogleg to a steeply sloping fairway at eighteen. The upside is: it's great holiday golf in a world-class situation. Historic, too, the site for the signing of New Zealand's treaty and near a town with many a tale to tell of the pioneer days. Pahia is the hub of the Bay of Islands' holiday destinations. When you play this scenic and wide-of-fairway golf course you are almost sure to meet some visitors from afar. So it can be serendipity and serenity rolled into one great golfing experience.



Waitangi Golf Club, Tau Henare Drive, Waitangi
Phone: 09 402 8207 Email: waitangi@golf.co.nz
Men: par 70, 5358m Women: par 71, 4918m

Lured by the ocean... goaded by the gully



KAURI CLIFFS



Cliff climbing to be avoided at all costs

A tee shot short of this intimidating par three means a “dropped shot”. The ball drops down a cliff so steep it’s life threatening to pursue it. Play another well left to a little “bail out” fairway and wedge in. That’s what I did. The seventh at Kauri Cliffs is a great golf hole among many. Two holes back, the par three fifth is just as mind-bending at address. But No 7 from the “Tiger” tee measures 201 metres, nearly always into the north easterly wind. A three wood by pro golfers, they tell me, although Tiger himself would probably make it with a three iron. From the white tee the length is 160 metres – all carry. Still very formidable.

The brainchild of visionary entrepreneur Julian Roberts, Kauri Cliffs is a masterpiece of golf course architecture by David Harman. There’s no compromise for high handicap golfers unless they play from the green (front tees). Even from there it would be advisable to have a good supply of balls. It’s an ideal course for, say ten handicap to scratch and as tough a test of golf as you would find anywhere in the world. That being said, it features wonderfully photogenic views of the Cavalli Islands and the ocean beyond. On some greens you can look straight down at the waves collapsing on the rugged rocks below. On nearly every hole the wind can play a major role in the business of club selection.

Kauri Cliffs is a resort offering luxury second to none. The lodge and separate cottages have five-star facilities ... swimming pool and private beaches, gymnasium, tennis courts and a first class restaurant.

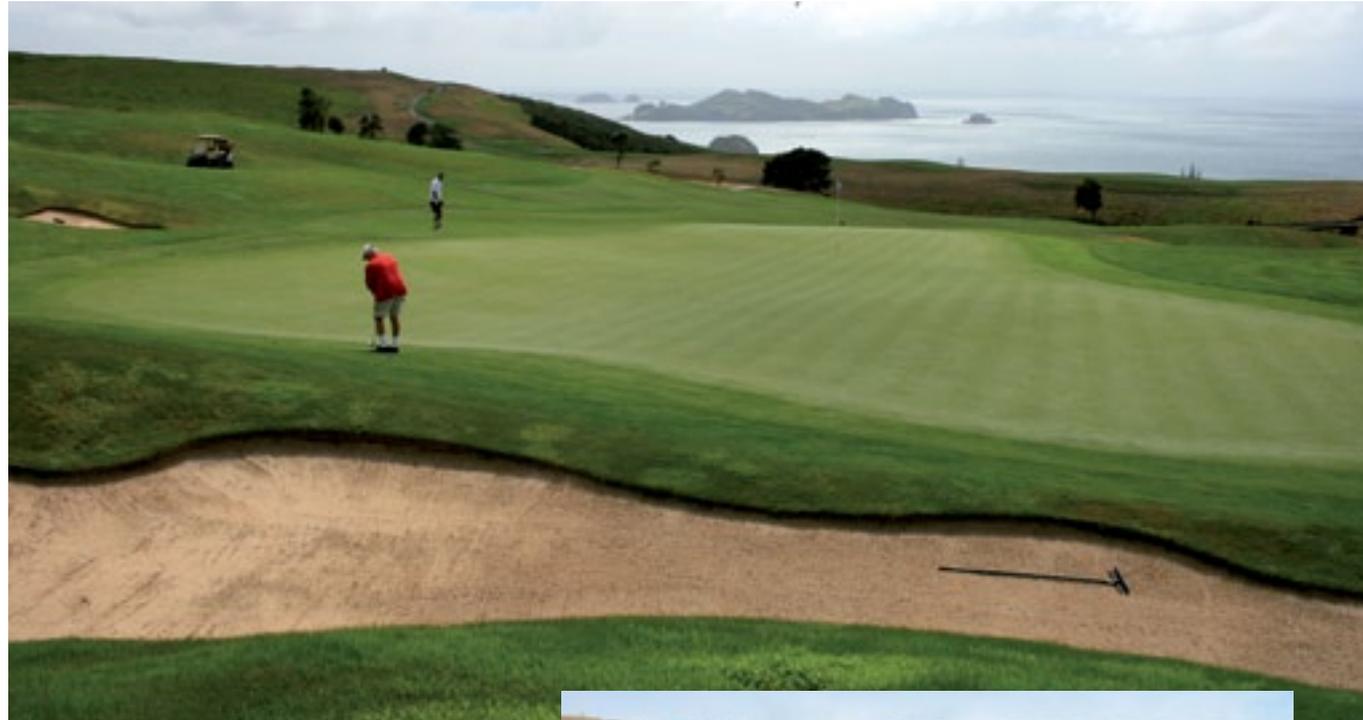


Kauri Cliffs, Matauri Bay, Northland
Phone: 09 407 0060 Email: info@kauricliffs.com

*Men: par 72, 6510m (Tiger tees) 5930m (white)
5560m (green)*

Women: par 72, 5289m (red) 4476 (yellow)





Above: No 18, par 5: To reach this generous green you must carry over 150 metres over a canyon from the tee. Then its uphill all the way... a tough finishing hole.



Right: No 5, par 3: Hitting to this elevated green with its steep faced front needs a club for 160 metres, not the 148 metres on the card.

PREVIEW ONLY

For a copy of the full book, please visit my website: greypowergolf.com

Thanks
Max

