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Life on Vacation

A weekly look at the second-home market

Global golf getaways

Live along some famed fairways

A look at three international golf destinations:

By Larry Olmsted
Special for USA TODAY

When W.G. Tarrant purchased nearly 1,000 acres outside London in 1911, he changed real estate history. His invention? What claims to be the first golf community, St. George's Hill, with a course by designer Harry Colt. It was immediately successful — and still is, with houses running about \$5 million. By using golf to sell residences, Tarrant let a genie out of the bottle.

A century later, there are thousands of residential courses. In China, they can't be built fast enough. Mission Hills near Hong Kong has 12 courses and thousands of members. Second-home golf communities are around the globe, but the majority of North American buyers looking beyond the Caribbean and Mexico choose Western Europe.

The biggest appeal is high-quality golf.

"For decades, the U.S. residential golf market has followed a model of name-brand designers commanding higher prices, and now that model is being marketed abroad," says Michael Patrick Shiels, author of *Secrets of the Great Golf Course Architects*.

Ireland's Doonbeg is a relatively new Greg Norman course with a luxury hotel and residences. It has been one of the most successful in Europe at attracting American buyers because of its proximity to Shannon airport and world-renowned courses. Ditto for David McLay Kidd's Machrihanish Dunes, Scotland's newest links — adjacent to one of its oldest courses, Machrihanish, built in 1871.

"In today's market, people looking at property are concerned with longevity and stability, and these places have it," says Nancy Powers of Southworth Development, owner of Machrihanish Dunes.



Kohler Co.

Birthplace of golf: Even at St. Andrews in Scotland, the building behind the Old Course's 18th green will become apartments.



Courtesy of Ashley Morrison

On the market: An ocean-view suite in the Lodge at Doonbeg in Ireland can generate rental income as part of the hotel.

High price: \$1,000,000

Bedrooms: 2

Bathrooms: 2

Size: 1,453 square feet

Features: Designed in traditional Irish style, with waxed stone and wooden floors, casement windows, two fireplaces, living room, galley kitchen, deluxe bathrooms with walk-in showers, rainfall shower heads and heated towel racks.



Courtesy of Southworth Development

On the market: A new fractional-ownership cottage at Scotland's Village at Machrihanish Dunes can be rented out.

Midrange price: \$60,000

Bedrooms: 2

Bathrooms: 2

Size: 981 square feet

Features: Two bedrooms with bathrooms fitted with walk-in rain showers and radiant-heat floors, living room, eat-in kitchen with cherry cabinets, granite counters and stainless steel appliances, storage area, gas fireplace, free Internet. Sold fully furnished.

► **Scotland.** Machrihanish Dunes is located near Campbeltown in the southwest and has a new golf course and small village enclave with hotels, pub and 32 two-bedroom golf cottages sold in fractions, a popular model for such faraway properties. Four-week annual shares start at about \$60,000. At the other end of Scotland is St. Andrews, birthplace of golf and home to more than dozen courses.

► **Ireland and Northern Ireland.** The Doonbeg Golf Club, close to Shannon airport, offers both full and fractional ownership. One-tenth shares in four-bedroom cottages begin at just over \$200,000. Full-ownership hotel rooms begin around \$1 million. In Northern Ireland, the new Lough Erne resort includes a Nick Faldo course; new homes with lifetime family memberships start at about \$500,000.

► **Portugal.** The southern Algarve region is a popular second-home area for northern Europeans. Americans prefer the Lisbon area, which includes such golf communities as Penha Longa, Quinta da Marinha, and oceanfront Oitavos Dunes.