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THE BARWON HEADS GOLF CLUB

Proposed Maintenance Hole: Operational Need, Safety Benefits and Environmental Management Response

19 May 2026

1. Executive Summary

This submission outlines the operational, safety and environmental management reasons supporting the proposed construction of a permanent maintenance hole at The Barwon Heads Golf Club ("the Club").

The Club recognises that the proposal requires careful consideration of environmental impacts, including vegetation removal, habitat values and the long-term management of the site. This submission does not seek to minimise those considerations. Rather, it seeks to explain the operational need for the proposal and demonstrate how that need can be addressed in a planned, contained and environmentally responsible manner.

The Club considers the maintenance hole necessary to support the safe and effective operation of the course as an 18-hole facility. Modern golf course management requires the ability to temporarily remove individual holes from play to undertake turf renovation, drainage upgrades, irrigation repairs, tree management, storm damage recovery and other essential works. Without this capability, the Club is left with limited and unsatisfactory alternatives, including operating with fewer than 18 holes, requiring players to repeat a hole, or delaying necessary works.

The proposed location adjacent to the 10th hole has been selected having regard to course routing, safety, operational efficiency and environmental impact. Based on the alternatives considered to date, no other location appears to provide the same combination of safe integration into the existing course sequence, logical player movement, operational efficiency and preservation of 18-hole play.

The proposal also provides important health and safety benefits. Golf courses are active workplaces involving machinery, excavation, chemical applications, tree works and other operational risks. The maintenance hole would allow an affected hole to be removed from play, enabling maintenance works to be undertaken in a more controlled and isolated environment, reducing risk to both staff and golfers.

For these reasons, the Club submits that the proposal warrants support, subject to appropriate environmental assessment, design refinement and management controls. A permanent, well-designed and environmentally considered maintenance hole would better support course operations, worker and player safety, environmental management and the Club's ability to maintain the course responsibly into the future.

2. Operational Need

This proposal is not about expanding the golf course for convenience or prestige. It is about ensuring that the Club can continue to operate as a true 18-hole course while undertaking necessary maintenance and improvement works safely and responsibly.

Individual holes periodically need to be removed from play to allow for turf renovation, drainage works, irrigation repairs, bunker works, tree management, storm damage recovery and other essential course maintenance. These works are an unavoidable part of managing an established golf course.

Without a maintenance hole, the Club's options are limited. It must either:

- operate with fewer than 18 holes;
- require players to repeat a hole;
- delay necessary works; or
- undertake works while golfers remain in closer proximity to maintenance activity.

Each of these options creates compromise. Reducing the course to fewer than 18 holes diminishes the playing experience. Repeating a hole disrupts the structure and integrity of the round. Delaying works can increase costs, worsen course condition and reduce the effectiveness of maintenance. Undertaking works close to golfers creates unnecessary safety and operational risks.

The maintenance hole would provide the Club with the ability to temporarily remove another hole from play while continuing to operate as an 18-hole course. It is therefore best understood as course infrastructure that supports the safe, effective and sustainable operation of the existing course.

3. Site Selection and Course Routing

The proposed location has not been selected arbitrarily. It has been identified having regard to course routing, safety, operational efficiency and the need to minimise disruption to the existing flow of play.

Positioned near the 10th and 11th holes, the maintenance hole can be integrated into the round without requiring players to backtrack, cross fairways unnecessarily or disrupt the natural sequence of play. This is important from both a safety and course management perspective.

Alternative locations have been considered; however, they present limitations. These include operational inefficiencies, potential safety risks, more significant alterations to the existing course layout, or increased impacts elsewhere on the site.

Based on the alternatives considered to date, the proposed location appears to provide the most appropriate balance of:

- safe integration into the existing course sequence;
- logical routing for players;
- operational efficiency for course management;
- minimal disruption to the broader layout; and
- preservation of the integrity of 18-hole play.

For these reasons, the Club considers the proposed location to be the most appropriate option identified.

4. Worker and Player Safety

A key justification for the maintenance hole is the improvement it provides in terms of worker and player safety.

Golf courses are active workplaces. Maintenance activities regularly involve heavy machinery, excavation for irrigation works, chemical applications, tree removal, storm damage clean-up and other operational risks. These activities present hazards when undertaken in areas that remain accessible to golfers.

Without the ability to remove a hole from play, maintenance staff may be required to work in proximity to players. This can expose both staff and golfers to unnecessary risk. It can also require works to be delayed, staged inefficiently or undertaken in a manner that is less than ideal.

The maintenance hole provides a practical safety benefit. It allows an affected hole to be removed from play, creating a more controlled work environment. This enables maintenance to be undertaken more safely and efficiently, while reducing potential interaction between golfers and maintenance operations.

This safety benefit is a central part of the proposal and reflects the Club's duty of care to both staff and golfers.

5. Why Existing Alternatives Are Not Practical

The Club has considered whether existing course infrastructure could address the operational need. In particular, it has been suggested that a hole from the Par 3 course could be used as a substitute.

The Club does not consider this to be a practical or appropriate solution.

The Par 3 course is a distinct facility designed for a different purpose. It caters to beginners, families, casual players and those who may not wish, or may not be able, to play the full course. Its design, length and strategic intent are fundamentally different from those of the main course.

It is also an important community asset, accommodating up to 15,000 rounds annually, largely from the local Barwon Heads community. It plays a key role in accessibility, participation and social connection within the area.

Using a Par 3 hole as a substitute would disrupt this function, introduce safety and operational complexities by mixing different player groups, and compromise the flow and integrity of both courses.

Most importantly, a short-form Par 3 hole cannot replicate the role of a full-length hole within an 18-hole sequence. It does not resolve the underlying operational issue.

For similar reasons, requiring players to repeat a hole or reducing the course to fewer than 18 holes are not satisfactory long-term solutions. They may be used occasionally in exceptional circumstances, but they do not provide the Club with a planned, safe or sustainable approach to ongoing course maintenance.

6. Environmental Management Response

The Club has demonstrated a strong and ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship. This includes the development of a Land Management Strategy, restoration of native vegetation communities, control of invasive Coast Tea Tree and the protection of biodiversity across non-playing areas.

The Club recognises that environmental impacts associated with the proposal must be carefully assessed and appropriately managed. The proposal does not seek to diminish those impacts. Rather, it seeks to resolve an operational requirement in a planned and contained manner, consistent with the Club's broader land management objectives.

Contemporary golf course management increasingly recognises that active intervention — particularly the control of invasive species — can be important in achieving positive ecological outcomes. In this context, vegetation management should not automatically be viewed as inconsistent with environmental stewardship. The relevant question is whether the intervention is appropriately planned, justified, offset where required, and aligned with long-term biodiversity objectives.

Comparable coastal courses demonstrate that course quality and environmental stewardship can be pursued together. In *Australian Golf Digest* on 23 April 2026, the Club's immediate neighbour, 13th Beach Golf Links, was recognised for its management of coastal dune vegetation within an environment directly comparable to Barwon Heads. The publication specifically referred to the management of invasive weeds and the control of tea tree before it closes in on golf holes.

This example is relevant because it demonstrates that:

- the ecological context is comparable, including proximity to coastal dunes and the high tide environment;
- active management of tea tree can be appropriate within this type of setting;
- biodiversity outcomes can be enhanced through thoughtful and ongoing intervention; and

- course quality and environmental stewardship can be pursued together.

The Club submits that the proposed maintenance hole should be assessed in this broader context: as part of a planned land management response that seeks to balance operational need, safety, course quality and environmental responsibility.

7. Conclusion

The proposed maintenance hole is not sought as an additional golf hole for convenience or prestige. It is proposed as practical course infrastructure to support the safe, effective and sustainable operation of the existing 18-hole course.

The maintenance hole would allow the Club to temporarily remove another hole from play while continuing to operate as an 18-hole course. This would support essential maintenance and improvement works, reduce safety risks to staff and golfers, and avoid repeated short-term compromises such as reducing the number of holes available or requiring players to repeat a hole.

The Club recognises that environmental impacts require careful consideration. It also submits that those impacts should be assessed alongside the operational, safety and course management need for the proposal.

A permanent, well-designed maintenance hole would allow the Club to maintain the integrity of 18-hole play, protect staff and golfers, support essential course works, and manage its land responsibly over the long term.

For these reasons, the Club respectfully submits that the proposal warrants support, subject to appropriate environmental assessment, design refinement and management controls.



Why better vegetation and improved biodiversity is the logical new ground for golf courses.

Assuming all goes to plan in your round of golf, you don't often venture into the parts of the course this column addresses. I'm talking about the out-of-play areas – the thick stuff, or as a friend of mine refers to it, “the boonta” (a phrase that might confuse our South Australian readers when applied to golf).

In appraising golf courses, we tend to focus heavily on the playing corridors between tees and greens, and comparatively little on the rest of the property. But that's changing.

In this issue, we present our biennial Top 100 Golf Courses ranking. Officially spanning 2026-2027, it was compiled throughout 2024, 2025 and the early part of this year. It marks the 40th anniversary of the ranking initiated by the late Phil Tresidder in 1986 and

will once again spark discussion and debate at golf clubs across the country. However, it might be only the second most important feature of the issue.

A few pages on, Evin Priest delivers a comprehensive summary of the “Untold story of vegetation in golf”. He outlines how indigenous vegetation can unlock greater harmony between Australian golf courses and their surroundings.

I’ve long felt that golf doesn’t do enough to share its positive biodiversity stories with non-golfers. It’s easy for those outside the sport to assume golf courses are environmental menageries. They’re wrong, but the reason for the misconception is partly our fault. One area where we can shift perceptions is biodiversity.

Beyond being a veteran course architect, Harley Kruse, whom Priest spoke with in compiling his feature, has become a go-to figure in caring for the parts of golf courses many overlook [see panel]. He is fond of saying the maintenance onus for golf clubs extends well beyond the 18 playing lanes to include “everything inside the fencelines”. Kruse gave me a guided tour of this philosophy a few years ago during a stop on the PGA Tour of Australasia.

As the field tackled the course, Kruse and I traipsed through foliage behind one tee near the club’s boundary. “See that?” he asked, pointing out a particular species. “That’s exotic,” he’d add before marching on to identify another genus he felt didn’t belong. He pointed his finger often that afternoon, though not at the layout. Instead, Kruse used the happenstance of our location to illustrate how golf clubs – even the most well-resourced ones – can do more.

Doing more in this space has been a theme across leading Australian golf courses in the two-and-a-half years since that ‘expedition’. Consider Royal Sydney, Huntingdale and Mount Lawley golf clubs – to choose just three examples from three different cities. Each one is returning to our Top 100 ranking after a deliberate absence during their redesign projects and each is now a more biodiverse property as a result and will only become more so. At Royal Sydney’s Bay course, for example, Kruse is overseeing an extensive vegetation program that is set to be completed by the end of this year but will flourish forever.

Elsewhere in this issue, we hear from Richard Forsyth, who will leave his post as Royal Melbourne’s director of courses at the end of June. At even the pinnacle of Australian golf courses, there is still work to be done.

“Vegetation restoration is a big focus – trying to restore the plant community that belongs to the land here is what we want to promote and preserve,” Forsyth says.

In what feels like a timely convergence in a period when rising fuel prices are a concern, it’s intriguing that golf’s new focus lies in areas where operating machinery isn’t a prerequisite.

Where this new trend leads remains to be seen. Yet I'm reminded of Richard C. Blake's words from 1971, when the then-president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America said, "Golf courses are proof that mankind can improve upon nature." He was right 55 years ago, and that sentiment holds up today. More people outside our sport should know it.

Top 4 Australian golf courses for biodiversity

4. 13th Beach (Beach): From the fifth hole, adjoining a large saline wetland, through the dunes to the 18th hole, this course is a fine example of coastal sand dune vegetation. The club is committed to its management, which is largely managing any invasive weeds and controlling the tea tree population before it closes in on golf holes.

3. New South Wales GC: An accidental burn (perhaps due to lightning strike) was initially thought to be devastating. But in fact it cleared out the wattle and tea tree and other weeds and what came back was a profusion of endangered plant community called Eastern Suburbs Banksia Heath (ESBS). Less than 16 percent of pre-European settlement of ESBS remains and some of the very best ESBS is between the fairways of NSW Golf Club, which now works together with National Parks and the Rural Fire Service in conducting controlled burns as a tool to manage and promote ESBS.

2. Royal Melbourne (West): The best piece of golf course architecture in this country also has amazing pockets of rare and endangered heath plant species, including plants that exist nowhere else. The latent seedbank in the ground allows for natural regeneration of the heath by fire.

1. Peninsula Kingswood (North): It is probably the posterchild and the best example in Australia of intact heath and a contiguous vegetation (mostly free of exotic species) through the 18 holes. – Harley Kruse

Australian Golf Digest, May 2026 Edition



12 DEC, 2025

Golf resorts

Weekend Australian, Australia



Appendix 2

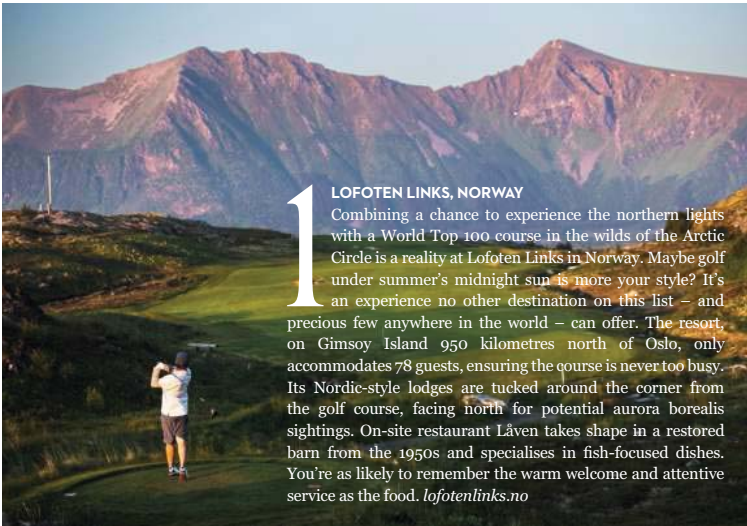
10 OF THE BEST

By Scott Warren

Golf resorts

From the tropical dunes of Vietnam to the wild islands of Scotland, the world’s leading golf getaways combine blissful scenery, zinging design and unforgettable touches. These outstanding venues have serious swing.

AVID GOLFERS KNOW Pebble Beach, Royal County Down and St Andrews’ Old Course all remain timeless bucket-list destinations, but the past decade has witnessed a boom in brand-new contenders and complete revamps of some classics. Ease of travel has unlocked remote destinations for teeing off and enabled courses to be built on unspoilt, awe-inspiring terrain. Major improvements in accommodation and dining options have also changed the game, ensuring that making birdies, bogeys and lifelong memories with your playing partners are par for the course. Here are the globe-spanning golf resorts worth travelling for.



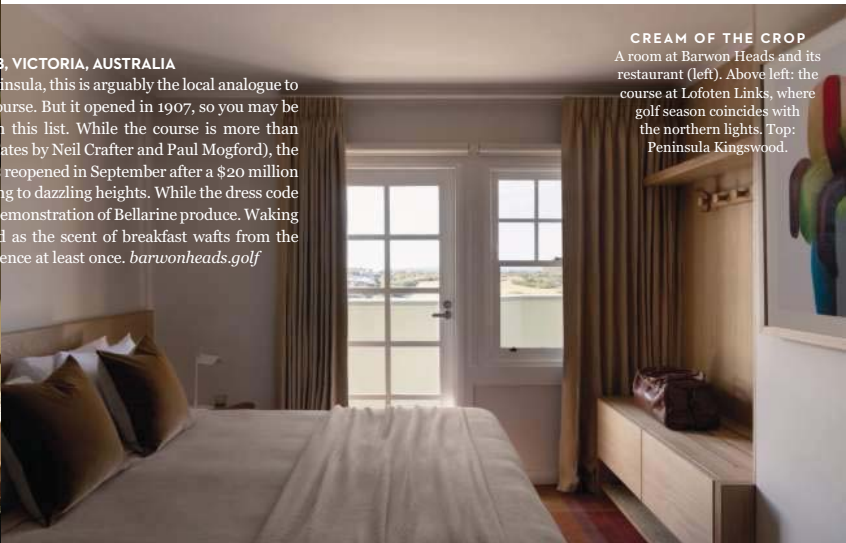
1 LOFOTEN LINKS, NORWAY
Combining a chance to experience the northern lights with a World Top 100 course in the wilds of the Arctic Circle is a reality at Lofoten Links in Norway. Maybe golf under summer’s midnight sun is more your style? It’s an experience no other destination on this list – and precious few anywhere in the world – can offer. The resort, on Gimsoy Island 950 kilometres north of Oslo, only accommodates 78 guests, ensuring the course is never too busy. Its Nordic-style lodges are tucked around the corner from the golf course, facing north for potential aurora borealis sightings. On-site restaurant Låven takes shape in a restored barn from the 1950s and specialises in fish-focused dishes. You’re as likely to remember the warm welcome and attentive service as the food. lofotenlinks.no



3 PENINSULA KINGSWOOD, VIC, AUSTRALIA
The most recent local developments have tended to be ultra-private (Cathedral Lodge and Golf Club in rural Victoria) or highly rustic (Tasmania’s Barnbougle, Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes), but the merger of two Melbourne clubs a decade ago led to a high-end option 50 kilometres from the CBD. Kingswood Golf Club members sold their site in 2014 and took the \$125 million proceeds with them to Peninsula Country Golf Club in Frankston, with the club’s two courses and facilities rebuilt from scratch by Australian firm OCCM. The clubhouse is among the most refined in the country, while the accommodations include clubhouse rooms and cottages along the 10th fairway of the South Course that blend urbane polish and country relaxation. There’s a swimming pool, gym, tennis, bowls and a games room to keep you entertained, and the food and drink offering has been stepped up with the arrival of Copenhagen-trained Scotsman Paul Graham. peninsulakingswood.com.au



2 BARWON HEADS GOLF CLUB, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA
Set on Victoria’s Bellarine Peninsula, this is arguably the local analogue to an English or Scottish links course. But it opened in 1907, so you may be wondering what it’s doing on this list. While the course is more than a century old (with recent updates by Neil Crafter and Paul Mogford), the clubhouse and its guest rooms reopened in September after a \$20 million upgrade that has taken the play-and-stay offering to dazzling heights. While the dress code is jacket and tie at dinner, the menu is a breezy demonstration of Bellarine produce. Waking up to the sounds of the course being prepared as the scent of breakfast wafts from the kitchen is something every golfer should experience at least once. barwonheads.golf



CREAM OF THE CROP
A room at Barwon Heads and its restaurant (left). Above left: the course at Lofoten Links, where golf season coincides with the northern lights. Top: Peninsula Kingswood.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACOB SJÖMAN (LOFOTEN)



12 DEC, 2025

Golf resorts



Weekend Australian, Australia



4 CABOT CAPE BRETON, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA
Cabot has become one of the world's most-renowned golf resort operators, with smart properties across the globe, but the story began in rural Canada in 2012 with Cabot Links, followed in 2015 by Cabot Cliffs. Nova Scotia is remote enough itself, but head even further east and you're on Cape Breton Island where these two courses, and a new 11-hole short course called The Nest, were built. The golf is classic links in nature, the first courses of that style anywhere in Canada, while the luxurious but understated lodgings are bathed in seaside views. Everything in the town of Inverness is low-rise, the sort of place where the highest point in town is the church steeple. The three on-site restaurants celebrate Atlantic seafood – chowder, lobster and local oysters alongside a range of fish options – while Whit's Public House is a combination of resort hangout and town pub. cabotcapebreton.com

TEE PARTY
Atlantic Ocean breezes shape every shot at Cabot Cape Breton in Nova Scotia, which ranks among the world's top courses.



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10 OF THE BEST

6 ROSAPENNA RESORT, IRELAND
Ireland's oldest golf resort has one of the country's newest attractions in the form of Tom Doak's (there's that name again!) St Patrick's course. The architect convinced the resort owners to use land that formerly housed two golf courses to create one barnstorming 18-hole design. The sublime result immediately debuted in 2021 at number 55 in *Golf Magazine's* World Top 100; it's currently at number 44. St Patrick's joined the resort's existing Old Tom Morris and Sandy Hills courses, giving golfers who tackle the long drive ample reward for time invested. There's also a spa, horse riding, hiking and – perhaps surprising for the northwest of Ireland – surfing to consider. Vardon is its elegant dining option – think pan-seared scallops with cauliflower purée – while Coach House Bar is the spot for seafood chowder and Guinness pints. The digs range from waterfront penthouse suites to classic rooms full of Irish charm without distracting bells and whistles. rosapenna.ie



5 TE ARAI LINKS, NEW ZEALAND
After opening the super-exclusive Tara Iti Golf Club 90 minutes north of Auckland in 2015, Ric Kayne began work on an accessible sister property five kilometres down the beach. Te Arai features golf courses by both Bill Coore (South) and Tom Doak (North). You're in for an adventure on both, with routings that take you up and over the land forms rather than around and through them, and there's no shortage of breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean and the Barrier islands. The understated accommodation is close to the amenities of both courses, overlooking several holes and the practice facilities without ever feeling like they intrude. Staying at the South option will mean you're closer to on-site restaurants, Ocean and Ric's. The former excels at polished interpretations of local meat and seafood, while the latter eatery elevates traditional fare, like beer-battered snapper, for ravenous golfers. tearai.com



MISSING LINKS
From far left: a villa kitchen at Te Arai Links; drinks up at Ocean restaurant, along with lunch. Below from left: The Magnolia Inn at Pinehurst: its No 4 course.

7 PINEHURST, NORTH CAROLINA, USA
Golf at Pinehurst Resort might date back to 1898, while Donald Ross's legendary Course No 2 opened in 1907, yet the resort's last decade has perhaps been even more significant than its first. In 2018, Gil Hanse's redesign of Course No 4 was unveiled in the main resort hub, while last year brought Tom Doak's new Course No 10, a rollicking ride through a disused sand mine. At the same time, the resort's myriad hotels, villas and inns have been studiously renovated and refreshed to meet modern-day expectations. The dining options are boosted by the resort and Pinehurst township essentially being one and the same. From fluffy pancakes at The Track and brews and barbecue at Pinehurst Brewing Company to the fine dining and Carolina produce of 1895 Grille and Elliotts On Linden, there's something for every situation, taste and budget. pinehurst.com



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICKY ROBINSON (TE ARAI VILLA AND DISH), JONO PARKER (COCKTAILS) & JASON JAHNKE (SAND VALLEY)



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THE BLUFFS GRAND HO TRAM, VIETNAM
Situating outside Ho Chi Minh City and designed by Greg Norman, The Bluffs is a links-style course set amid the towering dunes of southern Vietnam. It's a great year-round destination. You have the choice of three on-site lodgings – InterContinental, Ixora and Holiday Inn – while the golf clubhouse's Infinity restaurant dishes up both local and international cuisine at their finest. The three neighbouring hotels offer more than 20 restaurants and bars in total, and combine to ensure a relaxing time whether you're travelling with kids or desperate to avoid them – the Rare Cask Room, for instance, is devoted to savouring rare whiskies. While much golf development in Asia has been private members-only clubs, Vietnam has led the way in resort offerings that still put engaging course design at the forefront. thebluffsshotram.com



SLAM DUNK
An oceanfront villa at Ixora Ho Tram by Fusion in Vietnam, with easy access to the nearby course.



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SAND VALLEY RESORT, WISCONSIN, USA
Bandon Resort on the Oregon coast is where the Keiser family mastered the art of the destination golf resort – Sand Valley is where they perfected it. It's a sea of sand rather than water that greets golfers as they arrive to play Sand Valley, Mammoth Dunes, Sedge Valley, The Lido and the Sandbox, all built between 2017 and 2024. The Lido is a particular curiosity. It's an exact replica of a 1917 Charles Blair Macdonald course on the shores of Long Island in New York, once considered one of the greatest in the world, but lost to the US Navy as training grounds. Golf historian Peter Flory spent three years building a digital model of the course based on historical photos and aerials; from there, machinery was programmed to rebuild it. Choose from family-size cottages, private suites and lodge rooms that nail the basics (great bed, strong shower pressure). The dining is as varied as the golf, with six venues that convey Midwestern charm, as well as the option to have your cottage stocked before you arrive. sandvalley.com

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ARDFIN, SCOTLAND
Australian hedge fund star Greg Coffey couldn't have ventured much further from home for the site of his golf playground in Scotland's Inner Hebrides, but he didn't look far for its designer: countryman Bob Harrison. Harrison knew the 18-hole course would see a limited amount of play, so the mission was to captivate the fortunate few who visited this sprawling and rarefied estate. Naturally, much of the menu is grown, picked, foraged and farmed on the estate's island home of Jura, while interiors maven Louise Jones added bonny touches like tartan throws, vintage bibelots and taxidermy mounts. Don't like sharing your holiday time with strangers? Perfect. Ardfin Estate's 18 guest rooms and all its facilities can only be booked in its entirety. A two-night minimum stay costs £100,000. ardfin.com



SCOT FAVOURITE
Left: The Study at Jura House at Ardfin. Below: aerial view of the property. Above left: a cottage at Sand Valley Resort.

