

Five Challenging Courses in York County Appeal to Seasoned Players as Well as Beginner Golfers

by Valerie Marier

Summertime in York County sizzles with fun stuff to do. There's whale-watching, beach time, boogie-boarding, shopping, gallery-hopping and eating some of Maine's famous culinary delights – lobster and blueberry pie.

Golfers relish our area for five key reasons: Biddeford-Saco, Cape Arundel, the Ledges, the Links at Outlook and Webhannet – five competitive, challenging and yet still user-friendly golf courses that can put the finishing touch on a southern Maine vacation.

Several are semi-private, but all offer generous public access tee times.

Biddeford-Saco Country Club

"Overall, every fairway is different in itself," says Stephanie Babin, a member of Biddeford-Saco Country Club in Saco and Old Orchard. "There are gullies or water you have to carry, then doglegs to negotiate, and often you're hitting to elevated greens – the variety of this fun course keeps you coming back for more."

The front nine was laid out in the early 1920s by Donald J. Ross. The back

nine was designed by Brian Silva in the mid-1980s. Together these two notable golf course architects created a course that was demanding enough to host three Maine State Amateur Championships.

Most players attest that the back nine is somewhat more difficult because the narrower fairways require accurate target golf. Long-hitters recognize that the par 4 14th hole provides an excellent birdie attempt – a good drive can put your ball just 100 yards from the green. The relatively flat terrain makes Biddeford-Saco enjoyable to walk.

Members and visitors give high ratings to the practice area, which features a full driving range, bunkers and putting green.

Biddeford-Saco's clubhouse is a refurbished farmhouse, complete with a full-

service bar and restaurant. A large awning covers a spacious porch where you can enjoy "excellent nachos" while watching golfers tee off on the first and ninth holes.

Biddeford-Saco Country Club

101 Old Orchard Road, Saco

Phone: 282-5883

Holes: 18

Par: 71

Rating: 70.6

Slope: 130

Yardage: 6333 (back tees)

Greens fees: \$40-50

Semi-private

www.biddefordsacocc.com

Cape Arundel Golf Club

In 1896 a group of summer residents founded the nine-hole Kennebunkport Golf Club. Twenty-five years later U.S. Amateur and British champion Walter J. Travis was contracted to redesign the newly-named Cape Arundel Golf Club and turn it into a true Scottish links style course.

Upon its completion, Mr. Travis said, "This will appeal to every class of golfer, from the 'crack' to the 'dub.'"

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Since the early 1920s, the Biddeford-Saco Country Club, located in Saco and Old Orchard Beach, has been a very popular golf club. It is known for its fun course and beautiful clubhouse in the refurbished dwelling of the farm that originally occupied the property.

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With straight-away fairways hemmed by thick fescue, shots to undulating greens over ponds and tidal inflow, plus a 210-yard par 3 on the back nine, Cape Arundel more than fulfills Mr. Travis' prediction.

Cape Arundel is known locally as "the Presidential course" because of its close association with President George H. W. Bush and family, but other White House residents have also

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Above, Former Presidents George W. Bush, left, and George H. W. Bush, right, playing a round of golf at the Cape Arundel Golf Club in Kennebunkport.



Known for its view of the Kennebunk River, the Cape Arundel Golf Club has small greens, rolling terrain and tidal creeks.

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Fine Furniture, Primitive
Books, Collectibles

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teed off here, including Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The dark green 100-plus-year-old clubhouse was recently christened "41 House" in honor of the first President Bush. Inside visitors discover a well-stocked pro shop complete with the Presidential and 41 House logo collection of clothing and hats.

Every golfer teeing off at Cape Arundel quickly becomes aware that a river runs through it. The tidal and meandering Kennebec River rises and falls alongside numerous fairways and greens. At high tide kayakers can be seen paddling upriver to Picnic Rocks, while low tide near the 10th hole reveals the astonishing number of balls missed when hitting to the 167-yard par 3 13th.

One of the most daunting holes is the 17th, a 358-yard par 4; a good drive enables you to go for the green in two, but it's a blind shot over a bodacious long bunker, then downhill to a two-tiered green with water just 15 feet away.

Before play, golfers may practice at Cape Arundel's new full service driving range, well worth the short car ride from the clubhouse.

There is no food service at 41 House but golfers can snack on hotdogs, burgers, cokes and gatorade at the alfresco 11th Hole Grill.

Cape Arundel Golf Club
19 River Road, Kennebunkport
Phone: 207-967-3494
Holes: 18
Par: 69
Rating: 67.8
Slope: 123
Yardage: 5850 (back tees)
Greens fees: \$65-85
Semi-private
www.capearundelgolfclub.com

The Ledges Golf Club

The Ledges Golf Club in York was voted among the "Best Courses You Can Play 2014" by *Golfweek*. *Golf Digest* gives it four and a half stars.

Opened in 1999 and designed by architect William Bradley Booth, the Ledges can be a handful but, with six different tees, it's also playable for every type of golfer.

The pro at the Ledges says, "The greens are fast, the terrain is rugged, but it's all quite manageable."

There are two signature holes. The 220-yard par 3 eighth hole features an elevated tee and a landing area bordered by water on three sides. The 618-yard par 5 18th hole is a lengthy dogleg to the green and considered by some to be one of the toughest finishing holes in New England.

Lush pine trees border fairways that climb over hilly and rocky terrain with nary a house in sight.

The elevated tees offer superb vistas of the Maine countryside, especially beautiful during fall foliage season.



The Ledges Golf Club in York is playable by every type of golfer. It was voted among the "Best Courses You Can Play 2014" by *Golfweek* magazine. Their pro shop is stocked with a wide selection of golf gear and accessories.

After golf, visit the pro shop or compare scorecards in the cozy cafe while sipping a beverage.

The Ledges Golf Club
One Ledges Drive, York
Phone: 207-351-3000
Holes: 18
Par: 72
Rating: 74.2
Slope: 137
Yardage: 6981 (back tees)
Greens fees: \$30-60
www.ledgesgolf.com

The Links at Outlook

The first 11 holes of the Links at Outlook in South Berwick live up to the club's motto: links golf in the Scottish tradition.

The lush fairways cut back and forth through meadows and fields, with rolling dunes, scattered bunkers and sparkling ponds to make shots to the green more interesting.

The back seven holes, accessed through a tunnel under Route 4, are hilly, with tighter fairways and several blind drives.

"The views from the back holes are spectacular, and you can even see Mount Agamenticus from the 12th and 17th tees," says the pro shop attendant.

Pro Dave Paskowski gives high marks to the eighth hole, a 213-yard par 3, and the 17th hole, a 502-yard par 5. "But this is truly a laid back working man's course," he says, "very doable and great fun to play."

After 18, golfers gravitate to the Outlook Tavern Restaurant and enjoy pub-style food while watching any of three high-def televisions.

Next door, the post-and-beam Red Barn Restaurant offers "rustic elegance" for fancier dinners and events.

The Links at Outlook has a full range for practice plus an excellent pro shop for club rentals.

The Links at Outlook
10 Route 4, S. Berwick
Phone: 384-4653
Holes: 18
Par: 71
Rating: 70.2
Slope: 125
Yardage: 6423 (back tees)
Greens fees: \$39-58
www.outlookgolf.com

Webbhanet Golf Club

Nestled among the seaside cottages and historic homes of Kennebunk Beach, Webbhanet Golf Club "often surprises people," says Kirk Kimball, head professional. "Once visiting golfers have played here, they always want to come back because the course is in excellent condition and we have probably the toughest par 3s on our front nine anywhere in New England," he says.

To wit: the third hole (dubbed Needle's Eye) stretches 238 yards tee to green; the fifth hole runs 174 yards straight uphill to a kingsize rolling green; the ninth hole is a 215-yard carry to a crowned green shaded by a full-grown oak tree.

Many golfers enjoy walking Webbhanet, either carrying their own bags or with a push cart; the elevation changes are not onerous.

Seasoned golfers relish the challenge of the eighth and 17th holes. Both are dogleg par 5s, both feature shots to the green over water, both demand length and accuracy to make par.

On sunny afternoons you might spot resident duck families circumnavigating the ponds.

With the ocean just a block away, golfers actu-

ally feel when the tide changes because, suddenly, the temperature might drop a few degrees.

Midway through the course and adjacent to the eighth tee, the Shack sells egg, ham and tuna salad sandwiches, plus gatorades and Arnold Palmers; there are two umbrella-topped tables with chairs nearby for a quick refreshment or post-round lunch.

Over the years many famous golfers have teed off at Webbhanet, including 1913 U.S. Open Championship winner Francis Ouimet, along with Gene Sarazen, "Champagne Tony" Lema and Babe Didrikson Zaharias.

Former Secretary of State Edmund Muskie was a devoted member who enjoyed honing his short game on the practice putting green and the short game practice area close to the weathered two-story 100-year-old clubhouse.

Webbhanet Golf Club
26 Golf Club Drive, Kennebunk Beach
Phone: 207-967-2061
Holes: 18
Par: 71
Rating: 68.6
Slope: 114
Yardage: 6068 (back tees)
Greens fees: \$55-75
Semi-private
www.webbhanetgolfclub.com

