

LAHINCH GOLF CLUB
County Clare-Irish Republic

Architect: Allister MacKenzie

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	Par	Yardage	Rating
White	72	6559	127

Overview:

This is a blue collar quirky links course that is nothing short of enchanting. As with so many of the old links courses it is built adjacent to a quaint summer resort town-complete with the "vacation trailer park" and probably a midway if you come the right time in the summer. The place wrecks of Irish country character and it holds a very special place among the great links courses of Ireland. This is not a rich man's hunting ground-it is everyman's hunting ground where all are welcome as long as they love to play golf.

The collection of holes is quite remarkable-there are simply holes the likes of which you will not see elsewhere. Largest sand hills in Ireland except for the back side at Tralee-when my wife first saw the golf course from the edge of town her response was "what golf course"- the players and the greens just seem to be dwarfed by the grandeur of the hills. Now add to the mix windswept hard undulating greens, exposed windy conditions, and an occasional rain squall and you are in for a day of challenges that will thrill and enthrall. There is real MacKenzie bunkering here-very strategic and very intimidating.

There is certainly no pattern to the routing you play a five par with a mountain in the middle of it followed by a three par where the green is hidden between two mounds that will remind you of some Grand Old Opry cleavage. Pay attention on this tee because the driving area of one of the finishing holes literally crosses the driving line toward this green you can't see. The next hole has a bunker in the middle of the driving area in which you could hide four heavy pieces of earth moving equipment. And so it goes-one very interesting, very quirky, and very challenging hole after another. When you are done playing this the first time you cannot sort out the holes in your mind-it is like a Rorschach Test with grass.

The course was renovated in 2002 and they have added and substantially changed a good number of holes. To my eye a brilliant rehab job-the new holes are a wonderful fit-you would not know the additions were not original if you had not played it. The changed holes just strengthen the character of an already strong test.

Local lore has it that you look at the goats from the first tee-if they are scattered about the weather will be fair-if huddled take the umbrella and the rain pants. Rain or shine or both, you are in for a real thrill ride this day.

Hole-By-Hole:

#1 Par 4 373

The opening is by no means tame-usually upwind and always uphill so this can play long. Further complicated by the crossfall of the fairway to the right. Big lift to get to the green that is pitched back to front. Huge falloff short and right. Make par here and it is a notable starting accomplishment.

#2 Par 5 498

Take in the view from this tee for a moment, the town below looks like a picture postcard. The one tumbles back down the hill across of a mass of pitches and swales that will throw even a good shot into unproscribed places-get used to it. The drive and second shot are guarded by bunkers tucked to the left. Drive to center and then a fairway metal toward the shed left of the green. You will end up with a short pitch to a fairly flat green that is raised slightly from the fairway-one bunker short right-two off the greenside left.

#3 Par 4 412

First really great hole of the day. 215 yard drive is required and must reach top of the 30 foot sand hill and to come to rest on a plateau overlooking the green far below. Now a long second turning left across a broad expanse of bumps and bruises disguised as rough. Plays downhill to a green set by the beach which will make the approach considerably shorter. Green is protected by low dunes and a couple of wing pot bunkers-one big one on the left. Your score may not be the better for it but you have just taken on the full flavor of Lahinch.

#4 Par 5 465

You have never played a set of holes like these next four. Klondike is a short par five but not a simple as it appears. The wind should be behind you with the ocean at your back and you drive to a landing area below you and then it is uphill narrow ribbon of fairway is guarded by hills on both sides. Blind second over a mountain-looks like a traffic cops hand thrusting intimidatingly to stop your progress. Hit it over this to the shared fairway with eighteen. Note that the landing area is very downhill and you will be surprised how far your ball progresses once it clears the little mountain. Green is backed up against the pedestrian road which is OB and this one has some serious contours to negotiate. The locals hang out on the wall behind this green so don't be surprised if you muster a few catcalls if you approach put is meek.

#5 Par 3 148

Famous Dell Hole. Hit a six iron at the directional rock and trust it. Green is a Dolly Parton cleavage-green set without the rhinestones. This is kind of like dropping it between the M and N volumes of the World Book on a library shelf. It is worth noting that the green hiding behind the right one is actually Y-shaped with the shortest carry about 142 on the right front and the longest 162 across the back edge.

#6 Par 4 412

From here on it is truly spectacular. Looks meek but there are two ferocious fairway bunkers in the left center of the fairway that can consume a bunch of road construction vehicles. Drive to right center just short of the crater for a look at the green far below you. Now send one through the dunes to a tight green set just above the sea on the left. Green is hanging on a precipice and is deep and undulating. Best shot is into the front feeding back and left.

#7 Par 4 366

Elevated tee to more elevated fairway. Drive to right center-the fairway runs out at 120 so you have to hold your drive to the right or no more than 220 yards. Green is set to the left across a low expanse back up on a plateau-what a look across to this green setting against the sea. Another deep green that you want to land it on the front and feed it back.

#8 Par 3 153

One of the new holes-very much like a Tralee back nine three par. Short iron from top of one dune to the top of another with the wind coming off the sea on your left. Green is nestled in with a big pit short and left-best curve in comes from the right. If the wind is up this one is moose elusive.

#9 Par 4 391

Panoramic view of the back nine from the left side of the tee. Drive to center to a fairway below that looks like low tide because of the ripple fairway. Fairway leans hard left and will throw the ball that way-so you want to land it up the right and let the gravity troll take his toll. Now you have a short pitch to a precipice green with the same current. This green has some very severe contours in it-pure Irish existential putting challenge.

#10 Par 4 424

Number three index for a reason-a ferocious challenge. Drive to center into the valley in front of you. Now your second is over a dune in the center of the fairway with a bunker cratered in its center. The 200 yards will play 220 to the uphill plateau green set. This one needs to seriously elevate to get there. Missing on either side will mean an adventurous pitch.

#11 Par 3 156

Second new short hole is backed up to the sea. Short iron to a long tiered green protected on the left by a bunker. Best shot comes in low from the left and works up the putting surface that leans a bit right and back to front.

#12 Par 5 514

Beautiful bear of a hole. Drive from the cliff's edge at the ruins of O'Brien's Castle-trouble for a hook. Hillary influence from tee to green so expect that it will kick down to the left once it hits the landing area. From here you lay up from the right back to center to set up a look at an undulating steep green well protected by sand. Approach from the right and feed up the green.. Beautiful stone bridge just beyond the green.

#13 Par 4 267

Very nice short hole. Don't get cute-just drive to a safe area and wedge in. Peril on the right in a deep hollow. Fairway slopes left and consequences there are not as bad. Double tiered heavily bunkered green is no piece of cake even for a wedge.

#14 Par 4 445

They added dunes on the left to separate the old siamese twin fairways of 14 and 15. Making this a four par it is much harder. Drive to center and you get a view of the glimpse of a green between the dunes right and left. Approach must be strong through the trough-beware green is hard.

#15 Par 4 439

Similar difficulty rating to the last but a different challenge. Drive to center at the left edge of the bunker some three hundred off the tee. Now you have another up ramp to the green-hit a strong fairway metal right up the throat. The green is elevated and will feed weakly struck balls into the deep bunker front and right. Up and down from anywhere 50 yards and in is just a true links challenge.

#16 Par 3 192

Club selection is crucial from the elevated tee to the green below-panoramic view. Aim to land this just short of the green and let it feed onto the green. The pot bunker in front is set about twenty yards from the green Don't be short and don't go for the flag.

#17 Par 4 406

Two of the best finishing holes to accent this experience. Big hole. Drive center over the rock at the steeple in the distance to a semi-blind fairway. Do not miss to the right because there is a deep gully of rough that will make any thought of reaching the green absurd. You will have 200 yards left to the green slightly below tucked behind bunkers on right and left ten yards short of the flat green.

#18 Par 5 498

Plays across the fifth fairway. Drive to right center at the left end of the club house. Hit as much as you want down the turbulent fairway at the gray house off right edge of green. This green has some serious Lahinch contour to it.

6/14/02