

Moray Golf Club
Lossiemouth, Scotland

Architect: Old Tom Morris

Tees	Par	Yardage	Rating
White	71	6572	73

Overview:

The old course at Moray Golf Club is a quaint Old Tom Morris original featuring deep revetted bunkers, undulating gorse confined fairways, and smooth flowing putting surfaces. This is not going to be on anyone's "A" list of must courses to play in Scotland but, in my humble opinion, it is a destination worth seeking out if you are traveling along the northern coast of Scotland. It is the proud asset of this small seaside community of Lossiemouth.

The clubhouse displays a dignified stature sitting atop a hill overlooking the finishing hole and seaside links land below. Five flagpoles and a commemorative sundial stand proudly above the practice putting green and some terraced hills creating a perfect amphitheater setting for those enjoying happy hour at the clubhouse bar. As you finish your game you will undoubtedly get some cheers and jeers from related interested parties.

With seven par fours of 400 yards or more, only two par fives at 2 and 17, and a par of 71 there are long stretches of challenging golf without relief and this is plenty of course to chew on for the average bear. The apparent flatness of the terrain, there are very few high dunes except Mt. Lebanon adjacent to the first and last holes, is a bit of a sucker punch because Old Tom found plenty of humps and hollows in the seaside terrain to create fairways and green complexes that impart serious movement as your ball is seeking its targets. The holes are very tightly packed in and there really is not much other than fairway and gorse so any significant wandering off the playing line can mean unplayable circumstances.

The holes themselves are a wonderful collection of links offerings and you will encounter all the characteristics of washboard fairways, intrusive burns, nasty revetted bunkers, and raised greens with arbitrary runoffs. Controlling the sideways movement of your ball is the key and enlisting the help of the given terrain is the best way to do this.

When we played the course they had been experiencing a prolonged hot and dry summer so the course played as hard and fast as the playground out back of P.S. 84 in the Bronx. The lack of any high obstacles means that any wind experienced at Moray will have full force since there is little in the way to obstruct it. The parched conditions coupled with a stiff 25 mile an hour wind made it a real chess match to anticipate the roll out on even the shortest approach shots. We would have been lost without the valued advice of a couple of caddies who knew the lay of the land.

There are not a whole lot of memorable holes on the course but I will say the last five will get your attention. It is a strong finish that begins at the par four fourteenth that gets its name from its bearing toward the sea. On a clear day the green is majestically framed by the sea and a lighthouse in the distance. The par

three that follows is a clever and deceptive hide-n-seek hole that calls for strong visualization off the tee. A strong par four and a funky par five bring you to the signature hole to end your day. This long par four may be one of the strongest finishing holes in all of Scotland. The second shot into a plateau green complex set into the hill below the club house packed with revelers is a real adrenaline rush. A perfect finish for a very enjoyable day of links golf.

Something you will notice early on is that the course sits adjacent to a Royal Air Force base next door. You may have to ignore the screaming jet engines from fighter bombers on training runs, so don't say you were not warned. At least there are a number of wind socks visible over the fence to help you figure the wind and the landing light poles for the runways that appear like cactus gardens throughout the property can give you some convenient aiming lines.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis:

#1 Par 4 316 yards Mount Lebanon

The course begins gently with a wide fairway and a birdie opportunity. Revetted bunkers protect the left and the car park and Mt. Lebanon of gorse is on the right. About 210 down the center aimed at the maintenance shack behind the green is the ticket. The approach is a short club into a large relatively flat green tipped back to front and circled by bunkers.

#2 Par 5 481 Cup

The second is a funky reachable par four with a crazy green complex. Hit a straight one here between the bunkers and fur on the right and the bunker off the whins down the left. If the wind is favoring you might take a poke at this green. The green is an embossed triangle that sits below the fairway masked by a ridge about 50 yards from the green. Anything that gets beyond the ridge should funnel down onto the green. There is a road that bevels off the back left corner of the green complex so don't be overzealous on your macho attempt.

#3 Par 4 397 Table

Deceptively difficult hole where you need to hit a good drive at the bunker through the fairway to set up a middle iron to a steeply elevated firm green that is difficult to hold. It seems counter intuitive but your best play may be a punch and run up the hill. You will be surprised how receptive it is to running shot up the steep face to the green. A par here is an unlikely but very good score.

#4 Par 3 193 Coullart

A longish technical three par with some teeth. This is the smallest green you have ever seen not on a pitch and putt. The bowl shaped green has a bank hovering on the right and long rough and gorse on the left. OB behind the green for on last thought. Feeding one on the front of the green is the play.

#5 Par 4 413 Kinneder

This is the first of the seven long par fours you will see today. The RAF base peers over your shoulder the length of this hole on the left. Beware of landing jets intruding into your intended line of flight. You have to bomb one down the right at the bunker on the right and turn it back to the left to slip into the slot at 150 just off the last bunker on the left. Another small green that sits below the fairway, across a gully, that gathers the ball left to right so play accordingly. Out of bounds road is on the right with bunkers and gorse left.

#6 Par 3 146 Gordonstoun

Not a stout par three but a lovely challenging hole. This short pitch is full carry to the flattest green on the course that sits just below the tee. It is well fortified by long rough and surround sound bunkering.

#7 Par 4 435 Ring

For a long hole this is a tight driving area with tall bushes and trees on the right, the gorse on the left, and one pot bunker in the center of the driving area at about 170. Likely a long club for the second into a green with well placed staggered sand pits at 85 and 50 yards respectively that will intercept shots without proper towardness.

#8 Par 4 456 Heather

Another stout par 4 this has a number one handicap ranking and it has earned it. Cleverly placed nest of bunkers haunt the landing area on the right of a fairway lined with heather and gorse. Drive at the bunker on the left as the hole bends right. If you smoke it off this tee you still have a full fairway metal to this well protected narrow green sandwiched by bunkers.

#9 Par 4 310 Ditch

The next two are a tandem of holes the likes of which you would not see on a contemporary design. If the wind is behind this is an almost drivable par four. The fairway looks like the tranquil surf late in the day with a series of ripples from 11 to 5. Aim a 210 shot at the rain hut on the right. This will give a full wedge or a links style low runner into the green ensconced by bunkers. If the wind is up this is a good example of how sporty a short hole can be on a links course.

#10 Par 4 313 Tom Morris

The cunning sister of the last hole this turns 180 degrees with another drivable short one. You actually hit your drive over the back left corner of the ninth green. If it is downwind it is worth taking a shot at this. Smoke a draw to follow the contour of the hole and feed it up between the bunkers. Likely have left a short pitch into a green tightly ringed by bunkers. Pin tucked to the right is very hard to get close to the flag.

#11 Par 4 423 Lighthouse

No more short stuff, the next four are all long and difficult par fours. Hit a big one at the port-a-potty just left of the green to have a reasonable shot of reaching in two. The second is aimed directly at the lighthouse and must carry a diagonal burn about 50 yards short of the putting surface. The green can be first and make a long shot in difficult to hold.

#12 Par 4 389 Beacon

This is a difficult driving hole with a slight dogear right to left. You have to hit it right off the tee or you may end up in the ditch that runs across the fairway. The landing area down the left has adjacent deep revetted bunkers. The second is uphill to a stepped green with a serious transition that is pitched back to front. Anything on the green with a fade spin will be gathered by the greenside bunker on the right.

#13 Par 4 418 St. Geradines

Another long one where only the well struck drive can reach in two. Hit a solid draw between the bunkers to follow the shape of this hole. Deep bunkers protect the green and the natural contours up there move everything from right to left. If you manage to hit the green it is very flat and you should walk off with a par.

#14 Par 4 427 Sea

The last five holes is a wonderful series of challenges that will test your patience. On a clear day the view on this one is jaw dropping-shoreline, sea, and the lighthouse-another Kodak moment. This is a generous fairway but there is nasty gorse and rough to be concerned about. Hit your drive over the runway light poles to about 150 from the green just short of the series of depressions that cross the fairway. Approach is a green that seems embedded into the beach, anything short will run to the left leaving a tricky pitch to a green with subtle contours.

#15 Par 3 184 Short

This is the only par three on this side and it is tactical joy to play. Longish club to a green blinded from your view protected by sand and grass bunkers. As you experienced with most of the seaside holes the ball runs toward the sea. Best shot is a draw over the mound of the first of a chain of bunkers on the right that will feed your ball onto the putting surface.

#16 Par 4 358 Road

This short four par generally plays into the wind over a series of furry mounds.. A solid drive leaves a shortish iron to a tricky sloping tiered green set in a depression just short of a low dune of gorse and heather. Your approach ends up on the wrong tier and you have serious work to do for a two putt par.

#17 Par 5 509 Long

Alas a par 5 but it is likely playing into the prevailing wind. Have to drive this right to left to avoid the gorse on the right and long rough on the left. Hybrid lay up well out to the right should leave a wedge into a green tucked to the left at a foot of a big dune. The lone bunker at 50 yards in the middle of the lay up area is a serious no-no. If you keep it between the hash marks it is a birdie hole-outside of them no telling.

#18 Par 4 408 Home

To many this is one of the best finishing holes in Scotland. OB down the right and the left is protected by five revetted bunkers. Drive it long and straight over the corner of the rock outcropping on the right which leaves a long to medium club from amongst the high moguls to a deep and narrow green set in a natural amphitheater below the clubhouse. What a spectacular view walking to this green. Avoiding the bunker short left of the green in the face of the hill is a must. With the clubhouse gallery as witness this would be an all-star par to make and the brew would go down real smooth.

<http://www.moraygolf.co.uk/>