

## Highland Links Golf Course North Truro, Massachusetts

Architect: Willard Small (1892)  
J. Henry McKinley (1913)

Tees	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Blue	70	5332	67.0	114
Red	72	4587	67.8	117

### Overview:

Founded in 1892 and heralded as Cape Cod's oldest golf course, the Highland Links in North Truro is one of America's nostalgic golf treasures, perched high along windswept bluffs overlooking the Atlantic next to the vintage Highland Lighthouse on Cape Cod. This is not going to appear on anyone's top ten courses in Massachusetts much less the northeast, yet if you are truly a student of the game this is a must play if you are on the Cape.

The original Highland House Golf Links was an adjunct to an ocean hotel and cottage resort operated for years by Isaac Small of Truro and his family. After years of growing wear and tear the links were refurbished in 1955 by owner Hal Conklin. In the 1960's, when Congress approved President Kennedy's Cape Cod National Seashore Act, Highland Links became Federal property leased to the Town of Truro. This is now an inexpensive public golf course available for the pleasure of anyone visiting the northern end of Cape Cod.

Deep natural rough, Scottish broom, thick gorse and low bushes, hilly terrain with non-irrigated open fairways, and spectacular ocean views make this course a genuine links in the Scottish tradition. Wind, weather, rock hard fairways, and high rough are always a factor at Highland Links. Add to this the up and down elevations and gently rolling fairways you will have a links golf experience that you will not soon forget.

This is only a nine hole course but they have two sets of tees so you can make a second loop to get in the full eighteen. I highly recommend you do that because the first time through there is a steep learning curve on how to play these holes successfully. As you play the nine again from slightly different tees it is interesting that the men's inward nine is 200 yards shorter while the women's inward nine is 30 yards longer. The second hole is a par 5 on the front and a much shorter par 4 on the back. The fourth goes from a par 4 to a par 5 as the thirteenth. With different teeing lines, the shorter distance on the second nine seems a harder round to the measure of par.

If you are used to lush fairways and fair bounces you need to check your ego at the door of the golf shop. This is golf the old way, rock hard fairways with existential bounces, small putting surfaces with angular fall offs, and serious slopes to navigate on the greens. The wind will be a major influence so trajectory control and creative attack lines are called for. If you have a quiver of links shots bring them with you because the ground is your friend and you will have to make some strong up and downs to play well here.

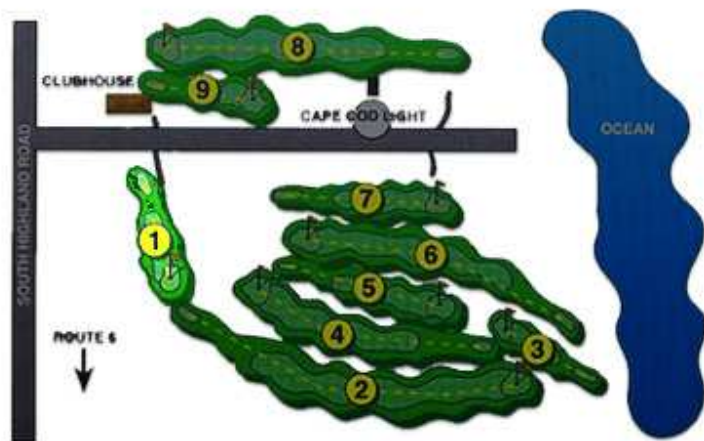
The views on the high holes are just spectacular. When you get to the tee box on six you are perched on a cliff about 400 yards above the ocean with a drop dead panoramic view worth a digital moment. This place is not without a sense of humor. There is a sign adjacent to this tee box on the walking path to the cliff that says, “No Ball Retrieving From Pond”. You would need a grappling hook, lots of rope, and a lobster basket.

The Highland Lighthouse is prominent on the horizon through the round but never more spectacular than when it is the backdrop to the finishing par three on each nine. There are also two other curious architectural artifacts on the top of the dunes behind the second and third holes.

The first is a globe that looks straight out of Epcot Center at Disneyworld. It is an old FAA service dome that originally was used by the Air Force as a surveillance station during WW II. Juxtaposed to it stands a 55-foot tall medieval looking granite tower on which you would expect to see Mel Gibson in full Braveheart garb wielding his sword and a shield. This is the Jenny Lind Tower that was transplanted from Boston in 1927 as a gift to Truro from Harry Aldrich, a rich Boston attorney. The tower was famous because Jenny Lind, the most famous singer in the world in 1850, delivered a concert from the top of it to a throng of people who could not fit into the auditorium she was scheduled to perform in at Boston and Maine’s Fitchburg Depot. I am thinking that a young and impressionable Mr. Aldrich must have been in that crowd.

What this place lacks in polished feature and comfort detail it more than makes up for in traditional links look and feel. For those who love a rough and tumble British Isles golf experience there may be no better place on the east coast to find it than a double lap at Highland Links.

Hole-By-Hole Description (Blue/Red and White/Gold):



#1 Par 4 250/203 Yards

#10 Par 4 242/215

The first hole is a fairly straightforward short hole that does not call for any heroics. I would resist the temptation of trying to drive this green and loft a 200-yard shot across the moors land to the top of the hill about 50 yards short of the green. This leaves a lofted pitch to a small green protected by a couple of shallow

bunkers. The tee box on 10 is set more to the right which actually makes a prettier look for the hole across more of the heather.

#2 Par 5 460/421

#11 Par 4 377/312

This hole would feel right at home on just about any fine links course in the British Isles. The hallway look from the elevated tee of this ramped hole is framed by a huge densely vegetation covered dune on the right and a smaller scale one up the left. Heather grass further narrows the playing area all the way up the hole. The FAA Dome and Jenny Lind Granite Tower hovering in the distance is an added visual accessory that gives a Moorish Flair to the hole.

As a par 5 you want to hit a 220 yard shot right at the elbow of the dogleg in the valley below to leave yourself about 200 to 220 up the ramp to the green. The second is uphill to a green with three bunkers dispersed across the fairway about 25 yards from the green. This green looks quite inviting set amongst a backdrop of tall dunes on all sides. If the wind is not inhibiting you can bounce a ball up on to this putting surface. The small green has a flowing lean from 2 to 7.

As a four par on 11 the hole is much more difficult par because it is just a long ramped hole up the alley. A strong right to left driver up the slot will leave a medium iron to the green above.

#3 Par 3 160/118

#12 Par 3 118/118

As the longer third hole this is a much more difficult club to select because the wind affect coming over the hills that surround this sharply uphill green complex can bedevil you. Pick a club you can flight down and play the front edge distance-it will play a club longer for the elevation change alone. One bounce up the face of the hill will kill the forward pitch and should stop it on a green that is banked right to left. If the wind is howling all bets are off on the club selection.

#4 Par 4/5 379/346

#13 Par 5 415/346

The next two holes are two of the most difficult pars you will try to make all day. This one is decidedly different as a par four than a five. The severity of the Jai Alai wall you have to traverse off the tee makes it a borderline unfair tee shot. If the wind is coming at you this is almost an impossible task even from the par four tee. If you clear the top of the rise you get a good look at the green set against the maintenance barn. The green leans to the left across a hollow the last 35 yards so pick your line of roll out accordingly. As a five par the lay up is a blind shot over the hill top to about 60 yards which will leave a rudimentary pitch for your third.

#5 Par 4 380/281

#14 Par 4 361/361

This difficult par 4 is the number one handicap hole for good reason. Wait until you have the green light to drive and hit it directly at the flag on the green flapping in the distance. A solid drive will take you over the

top of the hill feeding into the gathering hollows in the fairway and cascade it down to the bottom of the hill. It is a three-story second shot to an exposed green perched on the horizon. My advice is to control the trajectory of this approach and land it just short to feed onto the green that falls off to the back right corner. Don't forget to reset the tee light to green as you make your way to the green. With the ocean peeking through the dunes behind this green you can be putting in a three-flap wind which is a challenge of it's own. The 360 view from this green is just wonderful.

#6 Par 5 464/392

#15 Par 5 453/402

As you walk back to the tee box on the longest hole on this course you will get panoramic view of Highland Links' association with the beach and ocean surrounds. The longest hole on the course this cliff tee stands about 1300 feet above the Atlantic but try not to be distracted by the view. The driving area is partially obscured by the furry humps between you and the fairway but you have a full carry into an uphill landing area that looks like an unfurled flag. The drive is a solid draw working off the lighthouse into the upslope. Your second is either a layup to pitching range or a high trajectory long shot to a small green that is blind except for the top threads on the flag. Fescue on both sides and a couple of shallow bunkers on the right and back. This is one of your best scoring opportunities of the day.

#7 Par 3 171/141

#16 Par 3 159/150

Of the three pars this is the simplest looking but it is not without challenge. The hole measures to a mid-iron but that can change dramatically based on the wind direction and intensity. A small low coffee table of a green sits about level to the teeing ground across a gentle dip. The severity of the climb to the bunkerless green is much more abrupt on the right side and balls seem to deflect in that direction. The shot is a trajectory controlled effort at the left edge of the putting surface-if you miss left there is a gentle collection area that is an easy up and down to most flags. Anything missed to the left or over leaves a much more difficult task.

#8 Par 4 353/295

#17 Par 4 349/308

Once you cross Lighthouse Road you arrive at the 8<sup>th</sup> tee you have below your feet a sweeping gently uphill dog leg left between two bands of nasty fescue. The green is set up in an alcove to the left surrounded by low hedges and trees just behind the Highland House the Truro Historical Museum. A soft draw following the shape of the fairway will leave a precise second shot to a small green setting just behind one nasty bunker on the left about 15 yards short of the green. The green slopes sharply downhill left to right and so all approach shots are hard to keep close to the hole.

#9 Par 3 136/83

#18 Par 3 105/94

A short walk takes you to the tee box and a signature Par 3 you will not soon forget. From the tee box set back in a hallway behind the Highland House you have in front of you a green complex with all the links features with the Highland Lighthouse standing sentinel as a back drop. This two-tier green juts out of the side hill on the right and has the nastiest bunker on the course at the front right protecting the top tier. This tier is nothing but a 12 inch shelf and you will need to use the side and back board provided by the hill to contain a shot to a flag on this section. The lower tier is elevated from the fairway so you must land it on the surface that slopes away from you and to the left. A recovery pitch from the severe low area left of the green is very likely. Even

though you have a short club in your hand on this tee, making a par on this finishing hole is something for the scrapbook.

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