

# MADE FOR WALKING

This month we focus on courses that make for a good walk while playing

BY BEN KARPINSKI

So many courses in South Africa really do make a walk all the more special. Though certainly not a definitive list, the courses suggested here will hopefully inspire you to think twice about popping the clubs on the back of a cart in future.

Firstly, let's address the benefits of a good walk. It allows you to take it all in, quite literally. Experiencing the routing of the course with each step, and getting to appreciate the scenery and outdoor experience is invigorating.

Then there are the positive health benefits. Assuming the average golfer walks 7-10 kilometres each round in a period of 4-5 hours, with slight elevation changes here and there, you could be burning a minimum of 1 200 calories per round. That will naturally increase should you carry your own bag, or play in warmer conditions.

Straight to the 19th hole point: The average amount of calories in a post-round beer is between 130-150 calories, so you head into the 19th with a lot credit – which is another good reason to enjoy a walk.

Then there is the social benefit too. When you and your friends walk the course, you get extended periods to talk on each hole between each shot. From a playing perspective, walking often puts you in a better rhythm and allows you to consider your next shot more, especially when walking towards the green and taking in all the elements.

Generally the flatter and older style courses make for the best walks. So links and links-styled courses will naturally take centre stage here. Though there are many fine estate courses in South Africa, with



spectacular views and scenery, cart paths and big distances between holes will rule them out.

Another aspect to consider here is that some courses are well known for the quality of their caddies. Getting to walk with someone with a deep local knowledge of a course is a tremendous experience.

With all the above in mind, here is our suggested top 10 to consider.



## **GARY PLAYER COUNTRY CLUB**

Here, you literally walk in the footsteps of legends. Since 1981, the Gary Player Country Club has been the home to the Nedbank Golf Challenge. Attracting the greatest players in the world to compete at this iconic championship course. It's a spectacular walk through the natural bush setting, culminating in the thrilling finish with the Sun City lake on your left hand side. So many iconic holes, with free roaming wildlife and subtle elevation changes to enhance the natural scenery throughout.

## **THE LINKS AT FANCOURT**

Though not a true links, Gary Player has designed something magical with the land. A modern great, with the conventional understated charms of a links layout. Walking down the first hole here is a special experience, and one that doesn't quit until you reach the giant green on 18.





## *HUMWOOD GOLF CLUB*

Perhaps known as South Africa's most famous true links course, Humewood is a throwback to golf of generations gone by. With the natural slopes and swales flowing through local vegetation, it's a wonderful coastal walk where you develop a greater appreciation for the ground you are playing on.



## *GEORGE GOLF CLUB*

There are many wonderful golf courses in the Garden Route, with George perhaps the pick of the bunch to walk alongside the Links at Fancourt. Here you will get to enjoy views of the surrounding mountains, stand beside towering trees and get to experience the most charming of parkland layouts.



## DURBAN COUNTRY CLUB

Walking Durban Country Club is a true treat for the senses. With some of the most unique slopes you will ever encounter, forged from the original coastal sand dunes, every hole is something you get to feel a connection with while walking. Perhaps the most memorable being your stroll towards the charming clubhouse while playing the dramatic short par four 18th.



## GOWRIE FARM

A course where walking is essentially part of the rules. When Guy Smith designed Gowrie with limited resources, but a gigantic vision, he wanted people to return to the roots of the game and the simple pleasures of walking a course. The initial 9-hole layout has in recent years been expanded to a full 18, and this initial desire for people to connect with the course has only been made stronger in doing so.



## *CLOVELLY COUNTRY CLUB*

The very definition of a country gem, Clovelly is set in a delightful coastal valley between Fish Hoek and Noordhoek in the Cape. Though a short course by modern standards, its proportions seem perfect when walked. The flow and undulations always seem natural, and it is the only course in Cape Town far away from any major roads, which further enhances the walking experience.



## *EAST LONDON GOLF CLUB*

A spectacular property that was just made to be a golf course. Somewhat of a tougher walk than the other courses on this list due to elevation changes, the extra exercise is more than worth it for the ocean views alone. Cut through thick patches of local vegetation, it is a course where you will struggle to guess what is coming next when you play it for the first time. It makes for an unmissable experience for all golfers.



## HERMANUS GOLF CLUB

You will struggle to find a more enjoyable course to walk around in all of South Africa. Hermanus spans 27 holes, on a breathtaking rolling property with sea and mountain views. Predominantly flat and friendly on foot, some holes will really surprise you in both beauty and diversity as you stride down the fairways.



## UMDONI PARK GOLF CLUB

An underrated classic, with tropical terrain that effortlessly flows towards the sea. Another of the more undulating courses mentioned here, Umdoni is a decent workout, but one that you will not forget – especially when standing on the 18th hole and looking down the formidable par five to the ocean and clubhouse. It's a place of real old charms and seaside magic, and absolutely a place to best experience on foot.