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Castlerock (Mussenden), Northern Ireland

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4th **93rd**

Castlerock Golf Club
 65 Circular Road
 Castlerock
 Co Londonderry
 BT51 4TJ
 Northern Ireland

+44 (0) 28 7084 8314
 5 miles N of Coleraine
Golf Club Website
 Contact in advance - limited at weekends
 Ben Sayers, Harry Colt
 Ian Blair
 Mark Steen

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Top100golfcourses Course Review

Castlerock is a seaside village, located on the Causeway Coast. The course lies at the mouth of the River Bann, where it meets the mighty Atlantic Ocean. On a clear day, the Isle of Islay is visible to the north, and to the west, the rolling hills of Donegal.

Castlerock Golf Club was founded in 1901, originally as a nine-hole layout. The famous Scottish club maker, Ben Sayers, extended the course to 18 holes in 1908. In 1925, Harry Colt made further modifications.

Living in the shadow of its famous neighbours, Portstewart and Royal Portrush, Castlerock is every bit as good, and will not disappoint. This is one of the toughest links courses around, with some fantastic holes. Play close to your handicap and you are doing exceptionally well.

The wind is huge factor and when it blows, hold on to your hat. This will no doubt affect scoring. So much so, that in 2001, during the Ireland PGA International, Paul McGinley registered the course record of 64 on a calm day. The previous day, when the wind was up, the eventual winner Des Smyth, was the only player to score better than par. As with most links courses, you must keep your ball in play. Your short game must be of the highest standard because these greens are very quick, even during the winter. Maintaining concentration is important all the way round, because there are no easy holes at Castlerock.

The 4th, a 200-yard par three, is a fantastic hole, known as "Leg O' Mutton". The tee-shot is played to a raised green, with the railway line running the full length of the hole on the right and a meandering burn running diagonally from right to left. Do not try to bump and run your approach shot to the short par four 6th – the hidden burn runs across the front of the green. The 15th is a great par five, called "Homewards". A blind tee shot needs to be struck slightly right of centre, providing a great chance to score well. The 18th is a lovely finishing hole – a tough dogleg to the right and the highest, double-tiered, green on the course.

We recommend a visit to Castlerock as part of a triple deal (with Portstewart and Royal Portrush). If you cannot obtain this package, Castlerock is definitely worth playing anyway. During 2003, the actor Michael Douglas was a visitor and he loved the place too – a fatal attraction, you might say!

As a closing note, Castlerock also has a 9-hole course called the Bann. The layout is similar to the main Mussenden course, and the par five 5th is considered to be "one of the most scenic holes in Irish golf" – we can't disagree.

Castlerock is 'twinned' with Niagara Golf Club, considered to be North America's oldest existing golf course (1875).



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Average Reviewers Score:



Played as part of a NI golf tour, and was very impressed. Meets all your expectations for a highly rated links course and simply driving in to the car park I knew straight away I was going to love the place - it just had an old and traditional feel for me. Everyone was really friendly and the course itself is beautiful. I do however agree that some tweaking here and there to a couple of the early holes would turn this course from one of the best in NI to one of the best in the UK. I rated Castlerock a fraction behind Portstewart but would

19.8.2009

Castlerock Golf Club - Top 100 G...

A course in immaculate condition, with some very punishing rough - the starter warned us to be careful of our wrists! The first 5 holes weren't my favourite part of the course, although they were extremely tough - I agree with Jim McCann's comments about the internal out of bounds at the par 3 leg o' mutton, it isn't necessary as the hole would still be one of hardest par 3's you will play without it. After the 5th the course turns into links territory and from there gets better and better as you go on - the view from the 17th tee is breathtaking across the Atlantic. All in all a very good links, and the welcome from start to finish from the attentive staff is second to none.



26 June 2007

Reply

I played this course in late September of 2006. It was the most wind I have ever played golf in the weather forecaster said it was gale force winds. It was between 30 & 40 miles per hour, The layout however was excellent wished I could have played on a more enjoyable day. I would like to play here again



04 December 2006

Reply

Lovely course in great condition, agree with the last review that the par should be reduced to 71. Strongly recommend you go and play Castlerock and also enjoy the fabulous welcome you will receive from both staff and members.



09 October 2006

Reply

This is a really enjoyable place to play golf. The course is not too tough but is still challenging and not a pushover. The wind will dictate which holes you will score well upon but scoring chances are there if you play well. It is a par 73 and realistically it could be a par 71 with both the par 5s being reduced to 4. This would not detract from the course. The greens were in incredible condition for October. they were much better than many courses during the summer. As is often the case in Ireland the welcome in the clubhouse was second to none and this is a club of which I would be delighted to be a member of if I lived in the north of Ireland. Go play it .



07 October 2006

Reply

A review of Castlerock should mention the clubhouse and the staffing of the golf course as well as the actual lie of the land on which the course is built. I have rarely been at a club with such a vibe - you feel that staff are really trying hard to provide a service to the members and guests. And out on the course itself , there seemed like a small army of green keeping staff tending to the tees, fairways and putting surfaces. The Mussenden Links is a great links track and deserves to be in the top 100 on the website alongside Portstewart (Strand) which is only several long drives away across the river Bann - and the club seem very proud of their ranking too because a copy of these website pages have been pinned to the noticeboard in the gents locker room! The greens were fast and true when I visited in late April, 2006 and the member I played with told me they had been that good throughout the winter. Tee boxes were immaculate and greenkeepers were repairing divots on several holes as we played. Some bunkers needed raking but that was the only small criticism I could raise with the condition of the course. I didn't like the OOB to the left of the burn on the par 3 'Leg O' Mutton' fourth hole (onto the fairway of the 14th hole) - the only time I've seen something like that before was on the Machrie in Islay - but I did like the idea of the large halfway house after the 9th hole which obviously gets well used in the summer season. The bunkerless short 9 hole Bann course is well worth playing too; just don't think a short course like it will be a pushover as there are blind shots galore and some of the small punchbowl greens are very hard to find, especially if the wind gets up like it did for me. It is certainly a pity that some of those holes in amongst the dunes could not be incorporated into the big course but maybe it's also good to have an alternative track for members to play when there's many guests competing on the Mussenden in a week long competition like the 'Black Bush' in June every year. Castlerock should not be overlooked when playing links golf along the north coast of the Ulster province - and they also accept the Openfairways card which offer a green fee discount making it even more of a bargain when playing here. Jim McCann



24 April 2006

Reply

Played this course the first week of Sept and really enjoyed it. The greens were very good and made the day. I especially liked the first and thought it one of the best opening holes i 've played in some time. The one at Portstewart is equally as nice mind you !! The course is well laid out and there are some very nice holes. I'd give it 8/10. The hospitality of the club was excellent and we had a nice carvery too. We played on the Sun and it cost us £70 which was expensive given that it is a good course but not a spectacular one. Play it if you can afford it !!



26 September 2005

Reply

Fantastic course but pray you get a calm day because this course is exceptionally difficult on a windy day. The greens are the best ive played on and the view from the 17th tee is spectacular!



04 August 2005

Reply

A beautiful golf course and a great challenge for the amateur golfer looking to improve their game, really enjoyed playing here



28 July 2005

Reply

Great opening at Castlerock, dog leg right uphill - a really nice hole. A couple of straight forward holes early on but the great collection of links holes continues with only a couple more that may come into the ordinary category (11th and 13th). Castlerock is a much better course than the current rating suggests. Highlights must include the run from the 6th to the 9th - pure delight.....Strong finish too. Had a fantastic time here and I recommend it highly



01 February 2005

Reply

Castlerock has the potential to be an absolute crackerjack golf course. As it currently stands, the Mussenden is certainly a must-play when visiting the North and the course stands up well against Royal Portrush (which I think is a bit overrated). After a strong start, the Mussenden leads you to the 3rd, which is closest to the railway line, and it's these holes (3rd and 5th) that inspire the least. If only the 5th (and some of the par 3s) on the excellent 9-hole Bann course could be incorporated into the Mussenden, I think Castlerock would be a Top 100 course. Why not take a leaf out of Ballyliffin's book and get a celebrated architect to take a look at the routing of the holes? Castlerock has GREAT potential, but it's well worth a visit and it certainly won't disappoint.



29 January 2005

Reply

I am completely amazed that this course is not in the top ten. It's simply delightful. It provides the ultimate

19.8.2009

Castlerock Golf Club - Top 100 G...

5 overlooking the Atlantic Ocean on the nine-hole Bann course is quite beautiful. I would advise you to play this course as soon as possible before word gets out. Oh, and watch out for the par 3 fourth, Leg o Mutton, it's a treat.



Reply

28 July 2004

Castlerock should be number 1. It is 50 or so places behind an unnamed course which I have played and found quite an unpleasant experience. This is links golf of the very highest order. A warm welcome is assured from the fantastic Irish people. Take plenty of balls.



Reply

28 July 2004

No idea as to why Castlerock is not rated more highly. The course is significantly better than its current ranking suggests. The views are staggering and the challenge is extreme when the wind blows. Wonderful downhill finish, falling down to the clubhouse.



Reply

14 June 2004

Played here in Feb 2004 - and did the wind blow ! When the elements are not in favour this is tough. Loved it here despite the weather - Links golf of great standard.



Reply

06 April 2004

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