

# Golf tourism

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**Simon and Louise Hudson**

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# 1 An Introduction to Golf Tourism

## Spotlight: Wales challenging the giants of golf tourism

Celtic Manor Resort, home of the 2010 Ryder Cup, courtesy of © Crown copyright (2009) Visit Wales



The Welsh Assembly Government is counting on the Ryder Cup scheduled for October 2010 at the Celtic Manor Resort to put Wales firmly on the golf tourism map, rivalling Scotland, Ireland and England in the international arena. It is the biggest event ever to come to Wales and one of the biggest sporting attractions in the world. Scotland has always been considered the birthplace of golf with the rudimentary beginnings of the sport back in the 15th century. The first golf club was established near Glasgow in 1744. St Andrews, built in 1754, was given the royal seal in 1834 and has been hailed ever since as the bedrock of British golf. But, more recently, Wales has been identified by golf tour operators as a cheaper but good quality alternative for golfing holidays.

The Ryder Cup is slated to be a landmark for the country's tourism. The Welsh Assembly Government has recognized the importance of the Ryder Cup as a means to challenge the 'giants' of golf tourism, stressing the alliance of business and golf to attract corporate events and, as a spinoff, foreign investment. Currently, there are 500 international companies based in Wales, employing 80,000 people, and responsible for \$21 billion in investments since 1983. The government is using this globally-televised event to highlight tourism in rural and urban Wales as well as business opportunities. With the national recession hitting hard throughout the UK, it's a heaven-sent chance to revitalize the economy.

Ryder Cup Wales invited Ian Woosnam to be the official ambassador for Team Wales. Captain of the victorious European team at the Irish Ryder Cup in September 2006, Woosnam wanted to raise the Welsh profile as a separate entity from England. 'Winning the bid to host the 2010 Ryder Cup gave Wales the opportunity to tell the world what it has to offer,' he said. Newport – chosen as the Ryder Cup city – has 45 golf courses within a forty-minute radius, including four championship

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courses. The 160 miles long by 60 miles wide country actually has more than 200 courses with a golfing tradition stretching back centuries. The Welsh Golfing Union was established in 1895, the second oldest union in the world (second to Ireland). Alongside a rich sporting history in golf and rugby, Wales also boasts 641 castles and 687 miles of coastline, adding to the broader tourism appeal.

The Ryder Cup dates back to the 1920s when it started as a contest between US and British golfers. Samuel Ryder – a successful entrepreneur – donated the trophy and the inaugural Ryder Cup matches were played at the Worcester Country Club, Massachusetts, in 1927. Since 1979 the biennial competition evolved into a USA versus Europe match, securing international TV coverage in 150 countries and territories for 2010. In the run up to the 2010 event, Wales reinforced its increased profile with curtain raisers staged during the Ryder Cup Wales 2009 summer of golf. The Bull Bay Golf Club held the Welsh Open Young PGA Professional Championship in both 2008 and 2009, sponsored by Ryder Cup Wales 2010. The Welsh Open at Chepstow in July 2009 and the Welsh National at Llanelli in September 2009 were also similarly sponsored.

The Welsh Assembly Government is also using this opportunity to regenerate golfing facilities, providing financial support to the tune of \$3 million for golfing projects throughout the country via the Ryder Cup Wales Legacy Fund. In a report by Roger Pride, Director of Marketing for the Assembly, there were eight factors identified to differentiate Welsh golf from traditional, 'stuffy' images. These were:

- Easy access to tee-off times
- The unique Welsh welcome means you won't be made to feel small
- You can go at your own pace
- No unnaturally scorching sun
- The outstanding beauty of the natural environment
- You don't have to take out a loan to pay for a round of golf
- Relatively easy access
- The antidote to the English, Irish and Scottish golf scenes

Pride, who is also a Director of Ryder Cup Wales 2010 Ltd, has led the development of Wales' golf tourism strategy. He has identified their target demographic to be the 29 to 49 age group for whom time is currency. Their needs encompassed the Internet, closer destinations and shorter breaks. He also noted an increasing proportion of female golfers, linking that with Welsh Hollywood icon, Catherine Zeta Jones. The alliance between golf apparel and fashion was also underlined as well as the crossover between younger celebs from music/TV/film/soccer to playing and endorsing golf.

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