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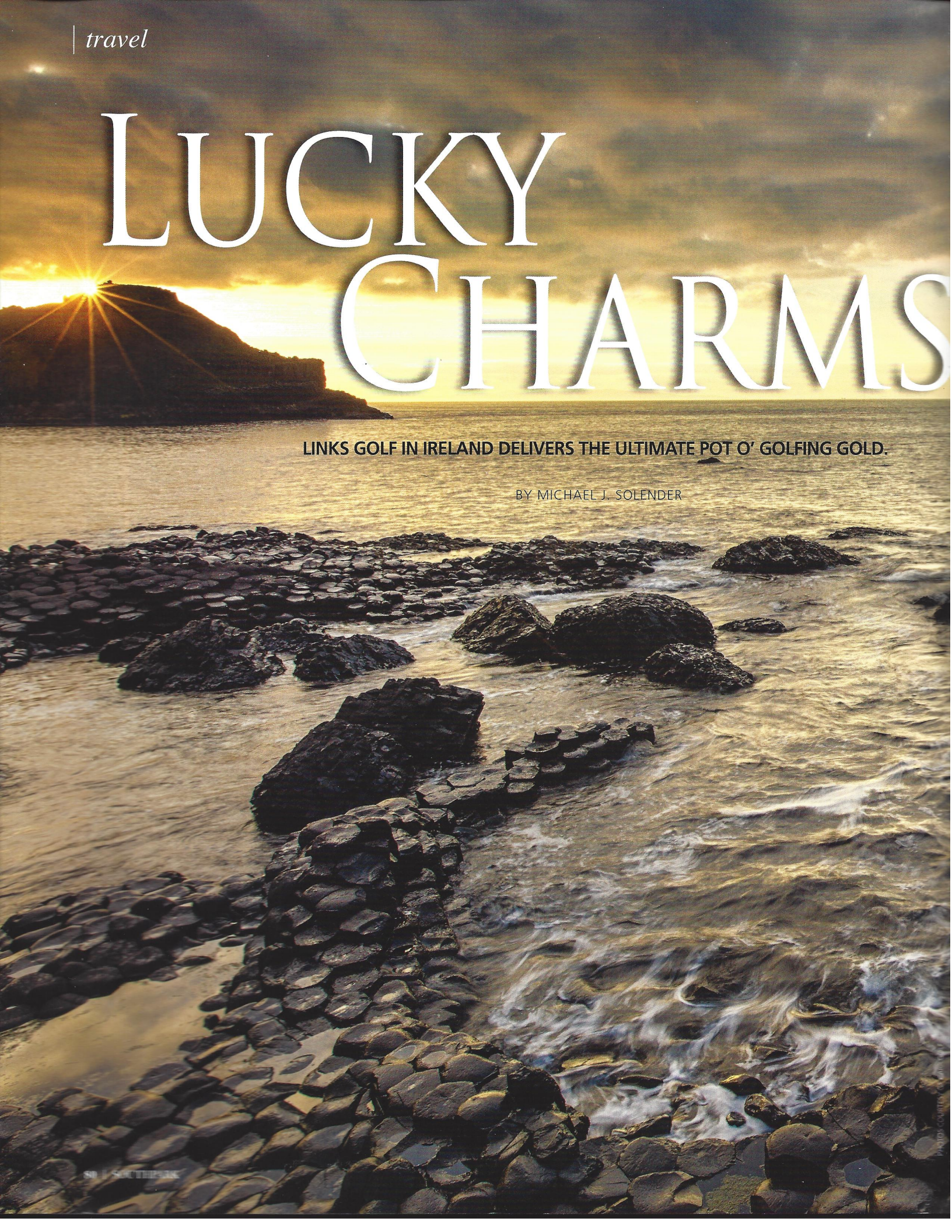
CHARLOTTE
WOMEN
TO WATCH

| *travel*

LUCKY CHARMS

LINKS GOLF IN IRELAND DELIVERS THE ULTIMATE POT O' GOLFING GOLD.

BY MICHAEL J. SOLENDER







Mt. Falcon



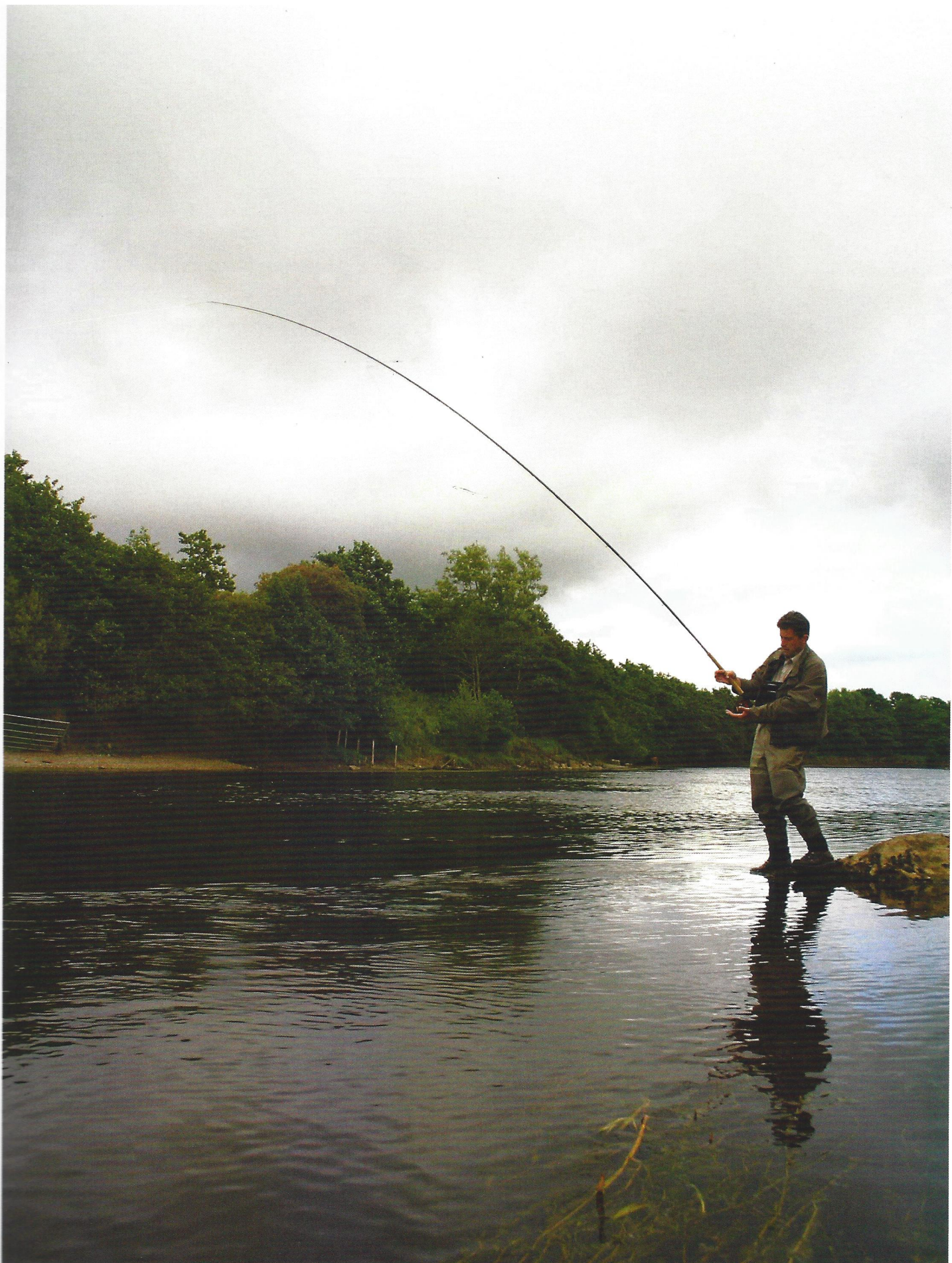
Two hours after stepping off the plane at Dublin Airport, I was standing on the first tee at Ireland's storied Portmarnock Golf Club, staring down an opening drive that has challenged the world's greatest golfers since 1894.

Saucer-eyed and ensconced by the club's history—it has hosted Irish Open Championships, the British Amateur Championship, and the Walker Cup—I steadied myself in the 35-mile-per-hour wind, took a mighty swing, and embarked upon a week-long tour of the best golf on the planet.

True links, the oldest style of course, are characterized by sandy dunes and ridge-lined ribbons of land exposed along the sea. Absent trees, the wind-hewn parklands play hard and fast, demanding a low ball flight to cut through penetrating gusts and a "run-up" style of play.

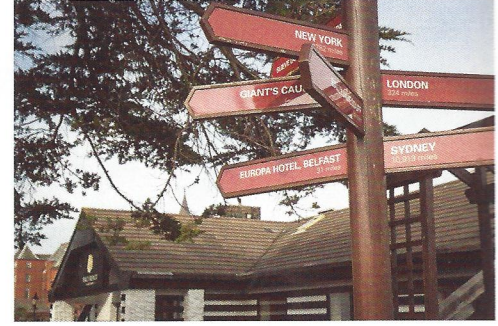
"Irish links golf is unlike that anywhere else," says Marty Carr, executive chairman of Carr Golf, Ireland's top operator of custom crafted golf tours. "We love introducing our guests to Ireland's trophy courses and magical hidden gems as they get to experience golf in its traditional and most pure form."







Slieve Donard Hotel



My bespoke Carr-created journey included three of Golf Digest's top-100-rated courses in the world. Dublin's Portmarnock, No. 1-rated Royal County Down, and the site of the 2019 British Open, Royal Portrush. Portstewart, Rosapenna, and Enniscrone rounded out an itinerary traversing the coastal regions from Ireland's northeast to the north and west of Northern Ireland.

Giant's Causeway

Ireland's charms extend well beyond the links, and non-golfers are rewarded for joining along.

One spectacular post-morning golf excursion found us exploring the legendary Giant's Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This geological wonder perched along Northern Ireland's shores provides a peek at more than 60 million years of the earth's volcanic activity, a massive jigsaw puzzle of 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, craggy rock formations, walking trails, and the North Sea's crashing surf.

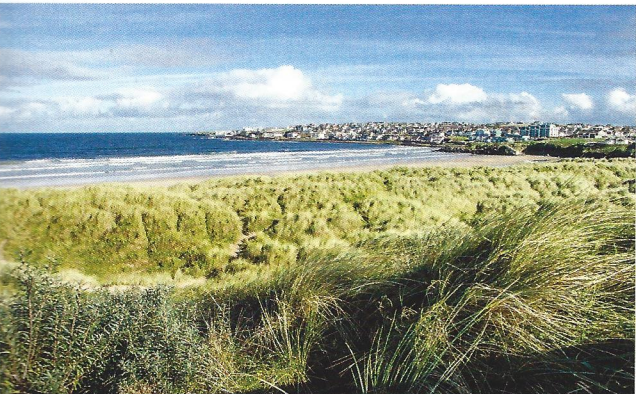
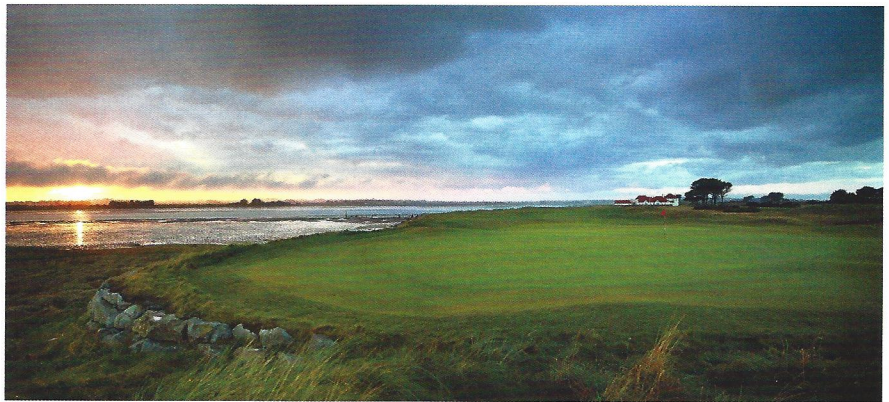
Daily touring demands fuel, and full Irish breakfasts are perfect fortification. I found none better than those offered at the historic Bushmills Inn—a welcoming country-style lodging with origins extending to the 1600s. Eggs as you like them, rashers, blood pudding, sautéed mushrooms, broiled tomatoes, and freshly baked soda bread are a grand way to start the day. Porridge is served the Irish way, with a splash of Bushmills Whiskey and cream.

A visit to nearby Bushmills Distillery filled me with the pride and tradition of crafting these fine spirits in the world's oldest whiskey distillery.

Next up was the legendary Royal County Down with on-site accommodations at the fabled Slieve Donard Hotel. Opened in 1897, the hotel boasts luxurious public rooms, a world-class spa, and sophisticated dining. Golfers love the next door proximity to



Bushmills Inn




the mesmerizing Royal County Down. The famed dunes, tall fescue, undulating greens, and top-drawer caddies are just a short walk from the car park.

Capturing my imagination and my heart was Mt. Falcon Estate. The stunningly restored Irish manor house in County Mayo is a luxe escape like no other. This baronial lodge established in 1876 welcomes guests with glowing peat-stoked fires, attentive staff, elegant lounges for afternoon tea, and roomy lodgings with the most comfortable beds in the whole of the Emerald Isle.

Relax with a book from their library, fish from the nearby River Moy for wild Atlantic salmon, or spend the day with their on-site Falconer for a truly fresh take on nature.

Ireland's population is only 4.5 million people, yet more than 80 million Irish passports have been issued worldwide. Most everyone who visits this enchanted land it seems want to lay claim to her charms.

For more information on Carr Golf: www.carrgolf.com, 1-855-617-5701 (U.S. toll free) or +353.1.822 6662. 



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