



KING ISLAND GOLF: CAN IT REALLY BE THAT GOOD?



The opening hole at Ocean Dunes

Richard Fellner

OVER the last few months, you will have doubtless heard all the hype about Australia's latest golf courses on King Island, namely Ocean Dunes and Cape Wickham.

Golf magazines across the globe have touted the rugged beauty and true links-style nature of these courses, with some journalists placing these courses among the top in the world.

But do these two seaside layouts really live up to all the hype? Are they really THAT good?

Having recently been to the island for the official opening of the courses, I can say without hesitation that the answer to both questions is a resounding YES.

I've played courses all over the world, and I have never sampled layouts quite like these two beauties. Raw, rugged and

remarkable, they absolutely tick all the boxes.

Seaside links is the way golf was meant to be played. Bump-and-run shots, punched irons under the wind, and proper course management are the name of the game, and you'll find it all at King Island.

From your opening tee shots at both courses, you are immediately dumbstruck by the natural beauty of the surrounds. With breathtaking views in every direction, it can be near impossible to concentrate on your golf. Especially when you come to holes like Ocean Dunes' par-3 4th, or Cape Wickham's par-3 17th, which each require a carry over the crashing waves.

And while much has been written about the seaside holes at these courses, these layouts also make their way through the rolling dunes, offering a mixture of risk/

reward opportunities and pure golfing joy. Holes like Ocean Dunes' 13th – a short uphill par-4 with danger lurking all around, to the blind teeshot of its par-4 17th (how much of the corner do you dare to take on?)—stand out in this regard.

A recent trip to the island, however, brought to light one very important consideration for ANYONE planning a King Island holiday: Choose your dates wisely.

Firstly, there is not a lot of accommodation available, (though it will be getting better as Cape Wickham is set to finish their beautiful on-course accommodation soon). So you'll need to book well in advance. For our trip, we stayed at the King Island Hotel (managed by the team at Ocean Dunes). Only five minutes from the course (and 10 minutes from the airport), it is a perfect spot for

a group trip or weekend getaway, as the rooms are clean, comfortable and recently renovated. And the food at the hotel is of an extremely high quality, as we sampled local delicacies including crayfish, scallops, lamb, beef and, of course, the famous King Island cheese.

Secondly, you need to plan around the King Island weather. We were there the first week of October, and the weather was quite unfavourable. During our trip, Mother Nature "treated" us to everything she had. But, despite the rain and wind at times, the clouds eventually parted, giving way to some bright sunshine.

And though the wind stayed to keep us company, we found that both courses were extremely playable in even the strongest gales. This is due to the fact that each hole was designed with the weather in mind. For most of the holes, the wind was either into us, or with us. And while we encountered a few crosswinds, the fairways and first cut of rough were generally wide enough to contain even the most wayward of shots.

If you haven't booked your trip to sample these two courses, then I highly suggest that you do so immediately (or at least immediately after you finish reading this month's issue of Inside Golf, cover to cover!)

Getting to King Island is a breeze, with charter aviation companies offering high-quality service to the island. Among our favourites are **Air Adventure**, a private charter golf tour specialist out of Melbourne (Golf.airadventure.com.au, golf@airadventure.com.au, 1800 033 160) and **Express Golf**, specialising in golf flights from Sydney (www.expressgolf.com.au, 0402 353 378, troy.doak@gmail.com).

More information: www.oceandunes.com.au, and www.capewickham.com.au.

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