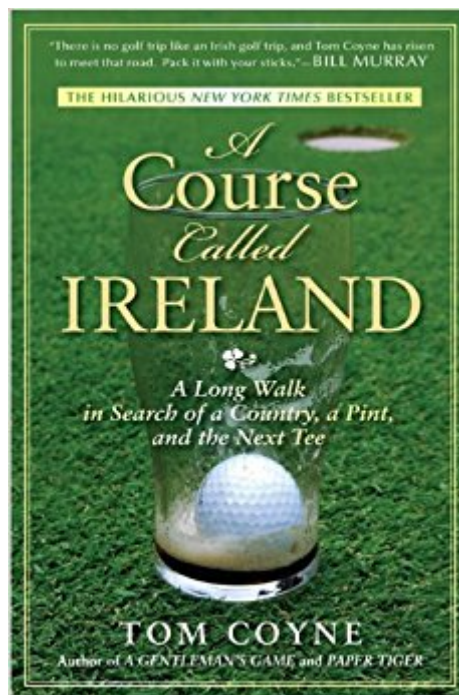




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A Course Called Ireland: A Long Walk In Search Of A Country, A Pint, And The Next Tee



Synopsis

The hysterical story bestseller about one man's epic Celtic sojourn in search of ancestors, nostalgia, and the world's greatest round of golf By turns hilarious and poetic, *A Course Called Ireland* is a magnificent tour of a vibrant land and paeon to the world's greatest game in the tradition of Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*. In his thirties, married, and staring down impending fatherhood, Tom Coyne was familiar with the last refuge of the adult male: the golfing trip. Intent on designing a golf trip to end all others, Coyne looked to Ireland, the place where his father has taught him to love the game years before. As he studied a map of the island and plotted his itinerary, it dawned on Coyne that Ireland was ringed with golf holes. The country began to look like one giant round of golf, so Coyne packed up his clubs and set off to play all of it on foot. *A Course Called Ireland* is the story of a walking-averse golfer who treks his way around an entire country, spending sixteen weeks playing every seaside hole in Ireland. Along the way, he searches out his family's roots, discovers that a once-poor country has been transformed by an economic boom, and finds that the only thing tougher to escape than Irish sand traps are Irish pubs.

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Customer Reviews

In this cheerily self-deprecating work, Coyne—an Irish-American Philadelphian who never knew much about his roots and avoided exercise—describes how he undertook a wildly ambitious plan to spend four months playing over 40 golf courses in Ireland and getting to them by walking. Coyne's tiredness quickly translates into hiker's euphoria; however, he has a tougher time facing the Irish breakfast every B&B owner serves him (sausages, rashers, beans, soda

bread— an afternoon of wincing regret). Having already written a couple of books on golf (e.g., *Paper Tiger*), Coyne knows his way around a course, but more importantly, he also knows better than to bore readers with monotonous accounts of hole after hole. His style is more that of the travelogue, as he's bowled over by one astoundingly beautiful and windswept course after the next. By the time Coyne gets to Ulster, it's clear that golf is by far the least interesting thing for him, as the author packs his humorous narrative with historical tales and travel anecdotes about the small towns he passes through and the many pubs he stops in along the way. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Take the standard golf memoir, in which a dewy-eyed golfer rhapsodizes his way around the great links courses of Ireland or Scotland, and meld it with the extreme travel book, in which a slightly crazed soul attempts some form of outlandish trek, often involving sports (*I Golfed across Mongolia*, 2006), and you have something like this peculiar but thoroughly enjoyable account of one man's attempt to turn the whole of Ireland into a golf course. Coyne, author of *Paper Tiger* (2006), about his failed attempt to qualify for the PGA Tour, decided he needed to take the ultimate golf trip before settling into the responsibilities of parenthood. Like John Garrity in *Ancestral Links* (2009), Coyne chose to visit Ireland, the land of his ancestors, but unlike Garrity and numerous others, he eschewed the usual creature comforts of traveling golfers. No, Coyne made the entire coast of Ireland his golf links, walking all the way from course to course around the circumference of the country. An outlandish premise, to be sure, and the resulting account hurts the reader's feet almost as much as it did Coyne's. The numbers say it all: 963 holes played over four months at 635 over par, with 129 lost balls. Naturally, there are anecdotes aplenty to spice the on- and off-course frustrations (encounters with livestock and disbelieving locals dominate). Unlike other golf memoirs rife with accounts of idyllic shots hit in the gloaming, this one is not liable to inspire much envy in homebound hackers. Except, perhaps, for the pubs: Coyne visits nearly as many watering holes as he does water holes, and his play-by-play of pub life is every bit as entertaining as his recollections of purely hit five irons. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I enjoyed every page, every little story, every experience, every feeling, every golf course, every character, every beer. My wife teases me about how long it takes me to get through a book. This one shocked her because I couldn't put it down and read it faster than any book she's seen me read. I read a lot of sports books and books on history...my two favorites. In terms of sports related

books and considering pure enjoyment, this one ranks right up there with Moneyball (as a huge A's fan). In my mind, being the mostly Irish golfer that I am, I have planned (fantasized) this grand trip to Ireland and mapped out courses I would play even before stumbling upon this book. Sadly, A Course Called Ireland (and others) is as close as I ever will get to Ireland. So I guess what I enjoyed is living vicariously through Mr. Coyne knowing I will likely never have the opportunity and privilege to "play Ireland." I was glad to get a sense of Mr. Coyne's gratitude and deep appreciation, in spite of his exhaustion and a few dicey situations. What a journey! I was sure glad to tag along.

Nicely written, good insights into the people of Ireland and into life in general. This is not a book about how he played each hole on each golf course (which would be a turn-off)....it is much more than that. Thoroughly enjoyable, funny. Even non-golfers would enjoy it.

An inspiring and motivational journal of a golf pilgrimage. We read aloud the relevant narrative for each of the courses we played and couldn't have had a more inspiring and motivational prequel. But even better Tom distills the essence of the Irish Links experience....the raw beauty of courses created by nature with understated finishing touches by design....and the craicthe enduring hospitality and the spiritual connection with courses that have challenged golfers and built enduring friendship and fellowship for centuries. A must read if you're going golfing in Ireland or if you are looking for some ideas for an unforgettable golf experience.

As far as golfing goes, I consider myself a pretty fair first baseman. I came to the game relatively late -- aged thirty-seven -- and it shows. I didn't read this for the wonderful insights on how to use a sand wedge from the rough, or how to use a putter when just off the green. I read it about Ireland, and that's where it really delivers. Sure, he's a Domer. And yeah, in retrospect, there were errors, especially when you consider he was traveling with a fan of that other baseball team in Chicago that allows its fans to jump out of the stands and assault first base coaches and umpires. But the book is an enjoyable jaunt and it has its touching moments. I'd like to play a couple of the courses he played just so I could walk around them. And the moment he crosses into Northern Ireland cemented my worst fears about the Six Counties that rightfully belong to the Republic. If you like golf, this may or may not work for you. But if you like Ireland, if you like doing something just because it can be done, this book is a must read.

If you're considering reading A Course Called Ireland, Paper Tiger, or Gentleman's Game, here is

what you need to know: Tom Coyne studied writing at Notre Dame and attempted to play on their golf team - turned out he was better at writing, proven by his first book - A Gentleman's Game, turned into a movie starring Gary Sinise, Phillip Baker Hall, and Mason Gamble. Mason went on to play the lead role in finally producing a film of *A Golf in the Kingdom* (1972) - the best selling golf novel of alltime (and shot at Bandon Dunes). Tom's next writing project required he spend a year attempting to improve his golf enough to make it thru Q School and earn his tour card - then write about the experience. *Paper Tiger* was a joy to read and must have been a dream experience to live. *A Course Called Ireland* was based on this simple premise: I'll walk the entire perimeter of Ireland, carrying my clubs and all that I need on my back with one pair of Keen hiking shoes - and write about it. He journeyed inland, entertained visitors, broke out and traveled small parts by car, but all in all, lived and wrote an incredible story that, like his other books, puts his reader in a place they would otherwise never experience and it's done with great skill, humor, self-deprecation, and incredible passion for golf. If you like Michael Bamberger, James Dobson, or Curt Sampson - you're going to like reading Tom Coyne very much. Enjoy.

This was a very different and interesting book. It's not a fanatical book about golf, it's not an in-depth exploration of Irish culture, and it's not even a physical fitness book. And yet, it includes all of these things in a book that is enjoyable for everyone. At times, it feels a little long, but of course it's a long walk, so that is how it SHOULD feel. The observations about Irish history and politics and history are interesting without being heavy-handed. I enjoyed reading it and, although as it got near the finish I looked forward to the end, I was still a bit disappointed that it was over.

This book is one of the best travel books I have ever read. His writing is amusing throughout, and he really captures not only the spirit of Irish links golf, but also the essence of Ireland and the Irish people. I read most of the book after returning from a golf trip to Ireland, and could really appreciate the descriptions of the courses I had been too, but I wish I had read the whole thing before the trip. My only reservation is his low rating of Royal County Down, which I thought deserved its ranking as one of the best courses in the world.

Great story, but really as much about Ireland as it is about golf. Since I've traveled to Ireland a fair amount, I was familiar with many of the locations Tom Coyne visited. In fact, I followed much of the story on Maps on my iPad, where I could see even the smallest road and "detours" he took. So many things rang true in the book, from the narrow, rock-wall fringed roads to the warmth and

hospitality of virtually everyone in Ireland. It really makes me want my next trip to be to some of the out-of-the-way courses and locations that the normal American golf traveler never sees. Highly recommended!

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