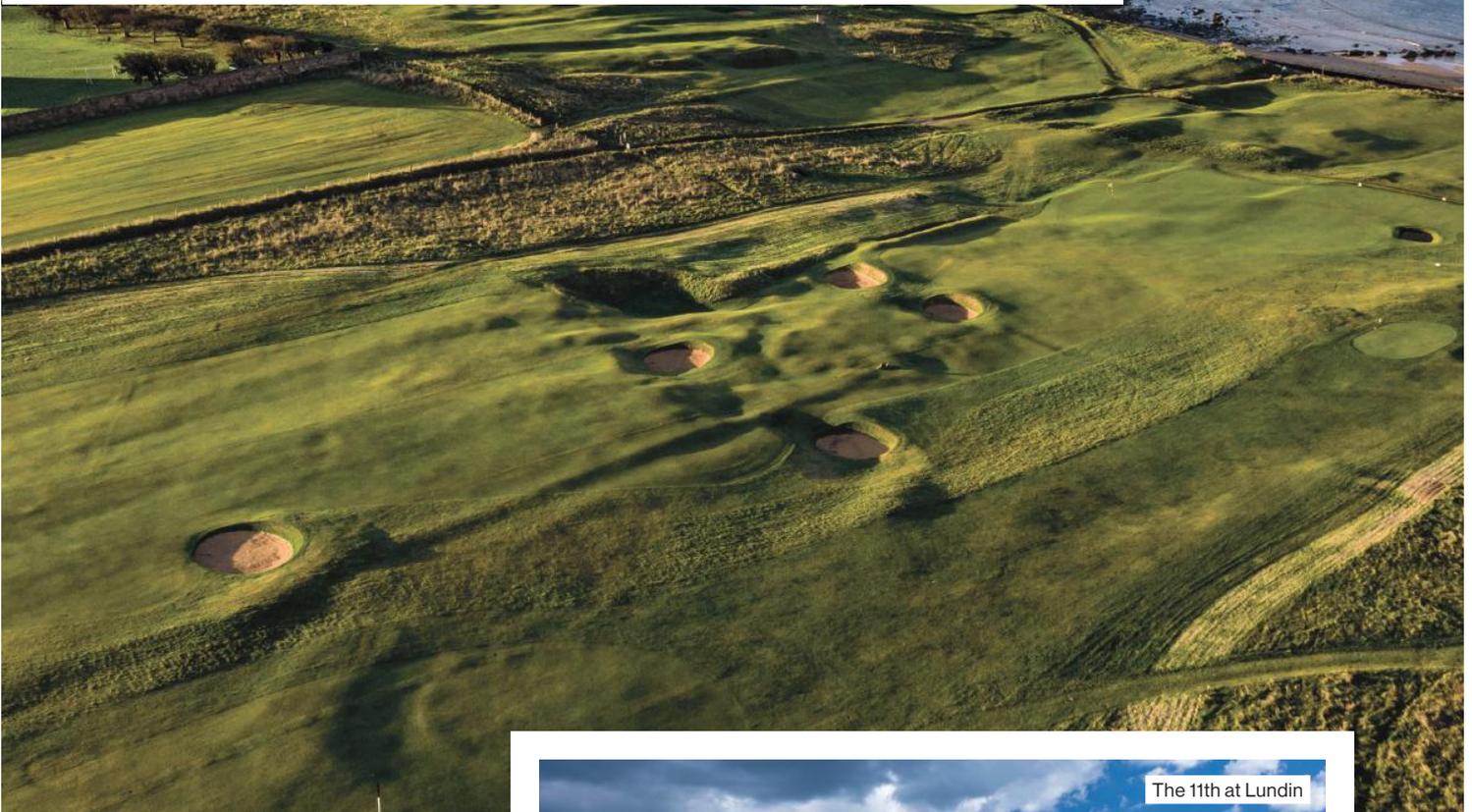
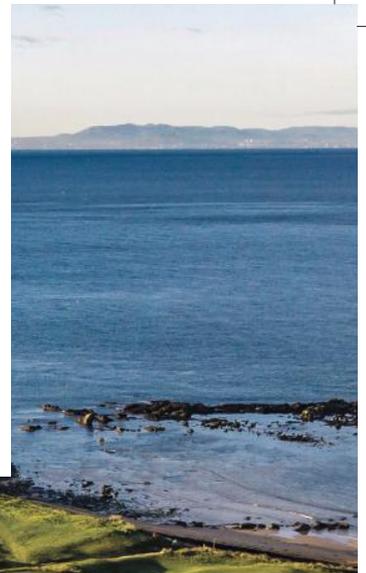


ON TOUR

Fife

Rob Smith is thrilled by four courses that are sometimes overshadowed by the more famous St Andrews names



Leven Links

Par 71, 6,551 yards
GF: round: £85-£100;
day: £120-£150

This friendly club with its historic links is this year celebrating its bicentennial. Running over easy-walking linksland that borders Lundin, the modern-day layout dates back to 1909 and has staged Final Qualifying for The Open six times. The closing hole is a cracker, as tough a finish as you will find anywhere. Played into a four-club wind, I had to lay up short of the protecting burn, not with my second but with my third!



Leven's 5th



The 11th at Lundin

Lundin

Par 71, 6,371 yards
GF: round: £85-£100; day: £120

The nine holes on the seaward side of the defunct railway that divides this excellent course were originally shared with neighbouring Leven Links. A split in

1909 saw James Braid design nine new holes over land occupied by Lundin Ladies to the north of the tracks. The result is a fine links with just a hint of parkland at the short 12th and par-5 13th. With the course in impressive order for early spring, I thoroughly enjoyed my game here.



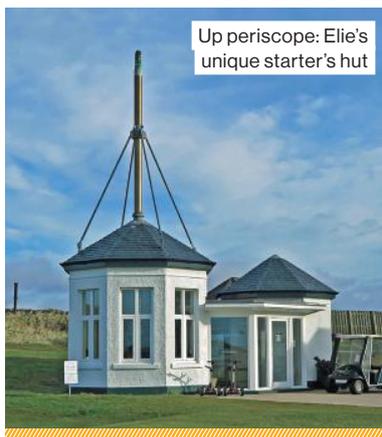
Variety is the name of the game at Elie

Elie

Par 70, 6,273 yards
GF: round: £85-£105;
day: £105-£128

Elie had been on my golfing radar for 40 years, since I first read about the periscope from HMS Excalibur that is used to check the first fairway is clear. Having failed to tick it off my list, I was delighted to put that right on a trip to play a few of Fife's superb but perhaps less well-known delights.

Naively, I had assumed that 16 par 4s would make this something of a dour and samey test. I could not have been more wrong. The variety is outstanding: some are just about drivable, some are unreachable and all require thought and touch. With a stiff westerly wind, the two short holes were polar opposites – driver on the 3rd and wedge at the 11th. The welcome in the superbly upgraded clubhouse was excellent and I would happily return here anytime.



Up periscope: Elie's unique starter's hut

Kinghorn

Par 66, 5,157 yards
GF: round: £14-£26

Knowing nothing of Kinghorn before, I was amazed to discover this short but exceptionally sweet and sporty course. The original nine holes were designed in 1887 by Old Tom Morris, but

golf was played here earlier in 1812. What you now have is a very well-presented course with spectacular views, greens that are sloping but fast and true and where the emphasis is on fun. This is a terrific and very pleasing alternative to the more financially and strategically demanding courses elsewhere.



Kinghorn is a fun alternative



LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Stay

Rufflets, St Andrews

This friendly and handsomely appointed country house hotel offers the perfect refuge after a day on the links. Surrounded by delightful gardens, there are 23 individual and characterful rooms in the main building, as well as lodges in the grounds. Look out for the photos of one of its celebrated guests, Jack Nicklaus.



Eat/drink

Seasons Restaurant at Rufflets

With two AA rosettes to its name, Seasons serves the most delicious and beautifully presented meals using locally-sourced ingredients, including many items from its own kitchen garden. I can recommend the Cullen Skink soufflé.

Also play

In a county packed with amazing golf, where do you begin? The St Andrews courses, Kingsbarns and Fairmont St Andrews are givens, and there are cracking courses at Crail, Scotsraig and Ladybank as well as the outstanding new Dumbarnie Links.