

If ever a golf course evoked the language of being 'out of this world' then a spectacular case could be made for the newly-opened Lofoten Links, in the northern reaches of Norway hard by the Norwegian Sea, at Hov on the island of Gimsey.

Designed to echo the tradition of Scottish links in that the layout plays second fiddle to what nature has provided, Lofoten is a triumph of imagination and execution - the only difference here being that the course sits on the 68th parallel of the northern latitude.

At the mercy of the ever-changing weather and the mood of the sea, each of the 18 holes enjoys its own character in what is a rare and intoxicating coastal setting, many featuring tight landing areas and several with rocky outcrops waiting to penalise errant approach shots. To be beaten up out here on a blustery day is all part of the experience; you don't travel to a destination like this to enjoy bland pitch and putt golf.

As the photographs suggest, the jagged Lofoten mountains and the ever-shifting Arctic light make this a photographer's paradise, and largely on the strength of glorious images such as these was Lofoten nominated in the category of 'The World's Best New Course 2015' in the annual World Golf Awards - the Oscars of the industry.

The man behind the lens here was Kevin Murray, the first golf photographer invited to the property by the operator Troon Golf. And it's fair to say Lofoten Links made quite an impression.

"I'd sum it up by saying it's one of the most incredible locations I've even had the privilege to visit to take photographs," says Murray. "It's not easy to get to - I went via Oslo, took a two-hour internal flight north and then a three-hour drive along some of the most amazing scenery you can imagine, like driving through the set of Lord of the Rings, through mountains and waterfalls. It really is out of this world."

"The golf course itself is built on an old Viking burial ground and there's a spiritual element to Lofoten you simply cannot escape. I actually stayed on the property overnight on my own, which was quite an experience. The green-keeper, who lives a mile or so from the course came out with me to try to capture the Northern Lights - it's a bit hit and miss, if the cloud base is low you can be unlucky. On my most recent trip we were lucky, and the light show was just incredible. We cheated a bit, the green-keeper's truck headlights on the flag - but the green swirling lights are genuine. It is truly, truly, magical."

The effort to get to Lofoten is especially rewarded in the summer months with 24-hour daylight and the opportunity to golf under the midnight sun (mid-May to early August).

In fact, the prized tee times are from 2300 hrs to 0100 - surely a ticket to add to that bucket list?

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ONE FOR THE BUCKET LIST...

Lofoten Links delivers exceptional rewards for those prepared to go the extra mile...

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN MURRAY