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## **Golf tourism a major driver of growth for Irish economy with over 220,000 visitors – AIB Coach & Golf Tourism Outlook**

- Spending to the fore as golf tourists typically spend three times more than the average leisure tourist
- Coach operators plan a fair way with sustainability plans to green their fleet
- Women's Irish Open tees off what should be a successful summer for the industry

AIB has published its Coach and Golf Tourism Outlook, highlighting the contribution of coach operators and golf tourism to the Irish economy. Following the pandemic there has been an upswing in coach and bus registration, enabling the sector to expand. However with supply struggling to match demand, and as more operators look to make their fleet more sustainable, challenges aren't fading. Meanwhile the scorecard for the golf tourism industry is looking more birdie than bogey, with 220,000 international visitors to Ireland every year, according to Failte Ireland.

### **Coach Tourism**

The spread of coach tourists across the shoulder season means they contribute to the continuity of tourism businesses across the year and improve the year-round utilisation of Ireland's tourism infrastructure. Coach and bus registrations increased by 70% in 2024, with the sector still catching up on the slowdown caused by the pandemic, and a large volume of coaches delivered in late 2023 were not registered until 2024. Demand is expected to increase while supply remains constrained.

### **Golf Tourism**

Golf tourism contributes significantly to the Irish economy with an estimated value of over €300 million annually according to Failte Ireland. Over 220,000 international golfers visit each year, drawn to Ireland's high-quality golf offering of over 400 courses. Major upcoming events, notably the 2025 Open Championship at Royal Portrush and the 2007 Ryder Cup at Adare Manor are poised to further elevate the sector's profile and economic impact.

Ireland is internationally renowned as a premier golf destination, with about a third of the world's true links courses located here. The North American golf tourism market is the most significant and high value. Tourists from there favour extended trips and premium accommodation, often relying on coach access and pre-arranged group tours.

According to Failte Ireland research a golf visitor typically spends three times more than the average leisure tourist, with most of the spend going directly into local economies on non-golf expenditure such as accommodation, transport, food and beverages.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important factor for coach operators who are looking to futureproof their fleet. Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important factor for coach

operators who are looking to futureproof their fleet, with the range of electric vehicles on the market improving. Progress has been made and in the final quarter of 2024 electric buses outsold diesel for the first time across Europe. In Denmark, Finland and Luxembourg zero-emission buses accounted for two-thirds of the total bus and coach market. New vehicle engines have been developed to achieve the lowest possible fuel consumption and to also achieve the low emission levels required by the EURO 6 directive. Coach operators are working towards alternatively fuelled vehicles and the Government currently has the Zero-Emission Heavy Duty Vehicle Purchase Grant Scheme in place.

**Nessa Devereux, AIB Head of Transport & Logistics** said “Coach and golf tourism play a critical role in Ireland’s tourism infrastructure. Ireland is committed to increasing its number of sustainable transport journeys, which is a key focus in Ireland’s climate action plan. Ireland has a range of wonderful golf courses that attract and play host to international visitors who come for the golf and stay for the tours, the welcomes and experiences. We can see the contribution that golfing tourists tend to make to the Irish economy is a very real one. By supporting coach and golf tourism customers as they work towards greening their fleet and optimising journey performance, AIB will continue to be a major supporter of the sector and associations that support the sector.”

The AIB Coach and Golf Tourism Outlook can be found [here](#).

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