**“Trump’s Golf Costs: $102 Million And Counting, With Taxpayers Picking Up The Tab”**

**By S.V. Date**

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[Donald Trump](https://www.huffpost.com/news/topic/donald-trump)’s golf habit has already cost taxpayers at least $102 million in extra travel and security expenses, and next month will achieve a new milestone: a seven-figure presidential visit to another country so he can play at his own course.

U.S. taxpayers have spent $81 million for the president’s two dozen trips to Florida, according to a HuffPost analysis. They spent $17 million for his 15 trips to New Jersey, another $1 million so he could visit his resort in Los Angeles and at least $3 million for his two days in Scotland last summer ― $1.3 million of which went just for rental cars for the massive entourage that accompanies a president abroad.

And, notwithstanding Trump’s campaign promise that if elected he would not play golf at all, the White House has done preliminary work for Trump’s visit to his [resort](https://www.trumphotels.com/ireland) on the west coast of Ireland next month, according to Irish media and government sources, even though no official meeting with Irish leaders is planned in the capital, Dublin.

Late Tuesday afternoon, the White House announced that Trump would meet with Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar in Shannon, just 30 miles by air from Trump’s golf resort in Doonbeg. It will be the first time Trump will visit a foreign country — with the staggering footprint of personnel and equipment that entails — for the main purpose of playing golf, though an official purpose was layered on after the fact.

“It’s obviously an incredible waste of money,” said Robert Weissman, president of the group Public Citizen. He then quipped: “Of course, the more time he spends golfing, the less time he spends governing, the better.”

The $102 million total to date spent on Trump’s presidential golfing represents 255 times the annual presidential salary he volunteered not to take. It is more than three times the cost of special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation that Trump continually complains about. It would fund for six years the Special Olympics program that Trump’s proposed budget had originally cut to save money.

While Republicans and Trump himself frequently criticized former President Barack Obama for his golf outings, Trump has spent more than twice as many days on the links, to date, as Obama did at the same point in his first term. And because Trump has insisted on dozens of trips to New Jersey and Florida to play at his resorts there, taxpayers are spending more than three times as much as they did for golf by the same point in Obama’s term.

The White House did not respond to numerous queries regarding this story. North Carolina Republican congressman Mark Meadows, a close Trump ally, dismissed the $102 million figure as insignificant.

“There’s a lot more important things to worry about than the rounding errors that we sometimes have on these things,” he said Tuesday.

Just as troubling as the amount Trump has spent so far on golf trips is the fact that his visits have been to his own properties — for-profit businesses that put money in his own pocket and that Trump routinely praises during his visits.

During his trip to Scotland last year, for example, Trump [wrote](https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1018068353305411584): “I have arrived in Scotland and will be at Trump Turnberry for two days of meetings, calls and hopefully, some golf - my primary form of exercise! The weather is beautiful, and this place is incredible!”

“His top priority with these trips is not the business of the American people, it’s the business of the Trump Organization,” said Jordan Libowitz of the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. “The American presidency has become another tool to advertise his golf properties.”

The vast majority of Trump’s golf costs result from his insistence on playing at his Florida courses in West Palm Beach and Jupiter, where he has spent 61 days while staying at his resort in the nearby town of Palm Beach. A weekend trip to Mar-a-Lago averages $3.4 million, with most of that resulting from the hundreds of thousands of dollars it costs each hour to fly both the modified Boeing 747 that serves as the primary Air Force One, as well as the C-17 cargo planes required to move all the support vehicles in Trump’s motorcade.

Determining the cost of Trump’s golf visits is not easy. The White House is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and Trump’s press office does not answer most questions about his golf visits — even refusing to confirm whether he is, in fact, playing golf when he is physically at his golf courses.

But a recent Government Accountability Office [report](https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/696512.pdf) regarding Trump’s four early 2017 visits to Mar-a-Lago has provided hard data and a methodology that HuffPost followed in its own analysis.

The HuffPost analysis took a conservative approach to determining costs. For example, it used a per-hour rate of $15,994 for Trump’s use of the smaller Air Force One that he takes to Bedminster, New Jersey, even though that figure accounts only for fuel and maintenance, not the additional factors that GAO used when it determined the $273,000-per-hour cost of operating the larger plane.

Any presidential outing requires coordination of multiple offices and agencies and incurs additional costs compared to staying in the White House. Even one of Trump’s day trips to his course across the Potomac River in northern Virginia — there have been 52 to date — requires fuel for all the motorcade vehicles and some personnel costs if overtime is necessary for Secret Service agents and others. (Those expenses, however, are minimal compared to flight costs, and HuffPost did not include them in its $102 million total.)

And the price increases exponentially the farther Trump travels.

Flying the Marine Corps helicopters — three of them are used each time ― from the White House to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, where Air Force One is based, costs $57,000 for the round trip, according to the GAO report. Flying the massive C-17 transports loaded with Trump’s 7-ton armored limousines and other specialized support vehicles costs $800,500 per Mar-a-Lago trip.

And for each of those trips, the Coast Guard winds up spending an extra $855,500 to patrol the Atlantic Ocean to the east of Mar-a-Lago and the Intracoastal Waterway to the west. That figure includes the expense of getting necessary ships, boats and crews to South Florida from stations as far away as Boston and Houston, the GAO reported.

When Trump travels overseas, the costs rise even higher, as yet more agencies become involved. Dozens of White House staff members may travel with Trump during a weekend to Mar-a-Lago or Bedminster, but that number swells to several hundred on an overseas trip. The administration avoids lengthy motorcades on foreign soil, so Marine helicopters and V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft must be pre-positioned. A backup Air Force One is sent along as the support plane.

According to a [Scottish newspaper](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/trump-visit-to-net-glasgow-luxury-rental-firm-nearly-1m-1-4768576) last summer, the U.S. State Department paid a local car rental agency $1.2 million for vehicles for all the staff who relocated from London, where Trump had met with Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Theresa May, to Scotland, where Trump wanted to play golf at his Turnberry resort before heading to Finland to meet Russian dictator Vladimir Putin.

Between that expense and the costs of moving equipment from London to Glasgow and then 55 miles southwest to Turnberry, those two golf days cost taxpayers at least $3 million beyond what they would have spent if Trump had simply stayed in London, according to HuffPost’s analysis.

One of Trump’s favorite lines of attack against Obama was to point out his frequent golf outings during his presidency.

“I play golf to relax. My company is in great shape. [@BarackObama](https://twitter.com/BarackObama) plays golf to escape work while America goes down the drain,” Trump [tweeted](https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/152814332915363840) in December 2011.

“Can you believe that, with all of the problems and difficulties facing the U.S., President Obama spent the day playing golf. Worse than Carter,” he [wrote](https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/521813597799067648) three years later.

As he began his own run for the White House, candidate Trump repeatedly promised that golf would never make it onto a President Trump schedule. “I love golf, but if I were in the White House, I don’t think I’d ever see Turnberry again. I don’t think I’d ever see Doral again,” he told a rally audience in February 2016, referring to his course near the Miami airport. “I don’t ever think I’d see anything. I just want to stay in the White House and work my ass off.”

Trump reneged on that pledge within two weeks, when he took his first of 24 trips to date to Mar-a-Lago. He has, according to HuffPost’s analysis, spent a total of 61 days on his Florida courses, 58 at Bedminster in New Jersey, one at Trump National Golf Club in Los Angeles and two at Trump Turnberry.

Wednesday is the 853rd day of his presidency, and Trump has spent 174 of them at one of his own golf courses. He spent one additional day golfing: Nov. 5, 2017, at the Kasumigaseki Country Club outside Tokyo with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It is the only time thus far that he has played golf at a course he does not own.

That insistence of frequenting his own properties, in fact, has driven his total golf expenses disproportionately higher than Obama’s at the same point in his presidency.

By Obama’s 853rd day in office, he had spent 70 days at a golf course. But 48 of those golf days were at courses on military bases: Joint Base Andrews or Fort Belvoir, both in suburban Washington a short motorcade ride from the White House. All but two of the others were on family vacations to Hawaii and Martha’s Vineyard.

And although Hawaii is four times as far from Washington, D.C., as Palm Beach, Obama only went there twice in his first 28 months. In that same time span, Trump has gone to Mar-a-Lago 24 times. While Obama made two trips to Martha’s Vineyard through May of 2011, Trump has already gone to Bedminster 15 times.

The result: Obama racked up out-of-town golf expenses of approximately $30 million compared to Trump’s $102 million.

And Trump’s tab will grow by several million dollars more if he follows through with a golf outing at his resort at Doonbeg, Ireland, before or after his coming trip to London and Normandy in early June. An Ireland stop means travel on Air Force One, C-17s to ferry vehicles and helicopters as well as hundreds of White House, Pentagon and State Department staff that make up the entourage of a foreign visit.

Cognizant of how a foreign visit solely for a golf vacation might look, the White House tried to arrange some type of official meeting with Irish leaders for weeks after it began planning the Doonbeg trip.

But Prime Minister Leo Varadkar’s government, cognizant of Trump’s [deep unpopularity in Ireland](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/normally-ireland-rolls-out-the-red-carpet-but-trump-is-not-a-normal-president-8lb2cj0tk), was reluctant to agree to the White House request that Varadkar travel to Trump’s private resort on the opposite side of the country from Dublin, said an Irish government source who spoke on condition of anonymity. Tuesday’s announcement of a meeting in Shannon, possibly at Shannon airport — where Air Force One will land — appears to be the compromise location.

“We welcome the announcement of the visit by the U.S. president,” the Irish Embassy said in a statement Tuesday. “Detailed arrangements around the visit will be made public in due course.”

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The White House press staff, meanwhile, did not respond to repeated queries about various aspects of this report over a period of weeks.

It is the same strategy that Trump has used throughout his two and a half years in office when it comes to his golfing. While the Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama White Houses usually released the names of the president’s golf partners after any given outing, the Trump White House has almost always refused to confirm that Trump even golfed — including on occasions when he has shown up wearing a golf shirt, trousers and ball cap. (The only exceptions have been when Trump has played with a famous person or a member of Congress.)

On March 3, 2018, HuffPost filed a White House pool report from Mar-a-Lago stating: “Pool did ask the White House what the president was doing at his golf course and with whom he was doing it but received no reply.”

This past Sunday, four hours after arriving at Trump’s golf course in Sterling, Virginia, the Washington Blade reporter serving as pool wrote: “No word from the White House on POTUS’ golf partners, nor even confirmation POTUS was, in fact, golfing.”

On some golf days, Trump or his White House have [claimed](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/donald-trump-playing-golf-virginia-white-house-meetings-weekend-a7660091.html) — dubiously — that he is involved in “meetings,” when, in fact, social media posts later show he had been out on the course.

Meanwhile, Trump’s Republican supporters who, like Trump, spent years attacking Obama for his golf outings have suddenly gone silent.

During Obama’s second term, Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso asked the GAO to look at a trip he took that combined a speech in Illinois with a golf weekend in Palm Beach. When the GAO released a report in 2016, Barrasso said in a statement: “President Obama had such little disregard for the taxpayer that he spent millions of dollars to play golf with Tiger Woods. This arrogance is par for the course for the Obama administration.”

Asked about Trump’s far higher golf spending, Barrasso told HuffPost Tuesday: “I haven’t followed that at all.”

Michael Steel, once a top aide to former Republican House Speaker John Boehner, acknowledged that Republicans’ views on presidential golf may not be consistent in recent years. “There’s no question that people’s concerns and criticisms often come with a partisan lens,” he said. “At the same time, I don’t think anyone prefers the president be watching television and tweeting than playing golf ... I think it’s healthy for people to relax.”

More troubling to watchdog groups than Trump’s hypocrisy, though, is the self-dealing that occurs whenever Trump travels to his own resorts. On top of the publicity value of a presidential visit, each trip also results in many thousands of taxpayer dollars flowing to Trump resorts for hotel rooms, golf carts and food and drink for Secret Service agents.

Because Trump continues to profit from these businesses — despite a promise he made during the campaign that he would not — a portion of that taxpayer money ends up in Trump’s own pocket. The GAO report found that Mar-a-Lago received approximately $60,000 in just the four visits it studied.

“As Trump promotes his golf courses through taxpayer-financed visits to his clubs, it’s an extra benefit for him that his properties are able to scoop up some taxpayer money directly,” said Public Citizen’s Weissman.

“It’s clear that to Donald Trump, the presidency is just another way to benefit his businesses,” CREW’s Libowitz added. “Because of his refusal to divest from his business empire, Americans must always ask whether his decisions are made primarily with his bank account in mind.”

Igor Bobic and Arthur Delaney contributed reporting.

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