

Tee booking policy at Stoke by Nayland

A number of members have recently raised questions about the tee booking policy, in particular about distinctions made between Golf Club members and commercial golf visitors. On behalf of the members, we put some of these questions to Matt Manning, Managing Director of the Stoke by Nayland Resort.

Q. How do you see the relationship between Golf Club members and non-members?

MM. “The resort has a very delicate ecosystem, we have multiple groups of people all with different needs and we have to try to keep it finely balanced. The Golf Club **Members** are vitally important to the Resort and we do all we can to ensure they get the golfing experience they want. On the other hand, the golf club would not be viable if it wasn't for the **Visitors** and societies we get through commercial golf, so we also need to do what we can to make their experience as enjoyable as possible”.

Q. What priorities do the members have?

MM. “Essentially the course booking is split into three groups, **Members**, **Commercial** and **Visitors**.

“Our tee booking policy has not really changed for the last 15 years. **Members** have always had the ability to book further ahead than **Visitors**, and the **Commercial** bookings have restricted times. Following Covid, when we started online booking, we extended the lead time for **Members** from one week in advance to two weeks in advance. **Visitors** can also book online, but they cannot book any further than four days ahead.

“**Commercial** bookings, golf breaks and golf days are normally booked well in advance, however, with a couple of exceptions, they are not permitted to play before 10am during the week and 11am at weekends. This ensures that slots before these times should be available to **Members** when they go to book a tee time, which, as I say, they can do up to two weeks in advance.

“Finally, we have the green fee **Visitors** who can play at any time but can only book four days in advance, essentially filling in the gaps. **Visitors** booking online will only see available tee times after 10am weekdays or 11am at weekends. But, if they ring the ProShop and there is availability during **Member** priority time within the four days, they can book tees...but it will be more expensive”.

Q. What are the exceptions you refer to?

MM. “There are a couple of exceptions, such as if a **Commercial** group has made a 36-hole booking. Over the years we have had a few regular groups who have booked 36 holes in a day, but we are actively trying to cut that number down. There will be a very few occasions during the summer months when we still have 36-hole bookings, but they are few and far between. And of course, **Member** competitions and matches which are often outside of the member restricted times”.

Q. Can Members book tee times before 10am if they are bringing guests?

MM. “Yes. A **Member** can book an early tee time and bring up to three guests as long as the member plays with the group and the guests pay the appropriate green fee”.

Q. Can you understand the frustrations of Members caught behind Commercial groups?

MM. “Of course that can be frustrating, but it is important for **Members** to understand that, while they can book a tee for any time during the day, if they choose to go out after the **Member** priority times, in what is essentially the prime time for **Commercial** golf, then they have to accept that it may be slow.

“**Commercial** groups that are here for a day out, who don’t know the course layout, are going to be slower than groups of members. It is therefore important that, where possible, we maintain separation of user types. I would always recommend members play either in the **Member** priority time in the morning or after 2pm”.

Q. When we have inter-club matches, sometimes they can be in the afternoon. Can you do anything to stop them getting caught up?

MM. “Where possible we try to add a buffer, however, in reality, matches are often booked when the diary is already filling up and only a small buffer can be accommodated. Which doesn’t really help. To ensure a singles match is not held up we would need to have a buffer of at least 90 minutes after the last fourball, that’s 48 golfers who can’t play in order for the singles match to have a clear course”.

Q. Do you think it would be beneficial to notify members of the societies and group playing each day?

MM. “I am not sure how helpful it would be as bookings are constantly changing. That said, the structure of the diary is fairly static: **Members** times, followed by **Commercial** golf followed by general play. The main thing members need to do is avoid the 10am - 2pm period of the day”.