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## Playing golf on Vancouver Island in British Columbia begins and ends in Victoria

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VICTORIA, B.C., Canada -- The setting was the par-3 14th on the [Mountain Course at Bear Mountain](#). Hundreds of feet below sits the city of Victoria, its Inner Harbour and the Olympic Mountains and Pacific Ocean as its backdrop.

In the span of a week, my better half and I had started in the city below, took on a half-dozen golf courses and returned the final day to Bear Mountain Resort, no doubt the jewel of the 11-course Vancouver Island Golf Trail, a 150-mile path of courses that runs along the east coast of the island.

Though Bear Mountain has gone through some struggles in recent years -- including bank receivership -- this elevated Nicklaus Design that might be better than ever was a fitting end to a terrific golf trip. Looking down from above, the memories of our first two days in Victoria were still fresh and fondly remembered.

### Ah, Victoria

If Nancy and I had just stayed in the Victoria area alone, that would have been reason enough to take a golf trip to Vancouver Island, which boasts the best climate in Canada and a 12-month golf season. Undoubtedly one of the most beautiful small cities in the world, Victoria really does offer it all, and in our first two days, we got a good sampling.

It started with a two-night stay at the Hotel Grand Pacific, an historic and romantic lodging located on the Inner Harbour amid other hotels, restaurants, museums, the neo-baroque buildings of B.C. Parliament and the Wharf. It's a setting of contradiction -- peaceful and serene, yet buzzing with activity like the regular arrival and departures of seaplanes, ferries and cruise ships. There are restaurants of every kind, but while in Victoria, you have to sample the fresh salmon at places like [Pescatore's Seafood & Grill](#) or the fish stands at the Wharf, where we got some of the best fish tacos this side of the Mexican border. And then there are the micro-brews -- too many to name -- and pubs. In our two days we made our way to a couple: [Bard & Banker](#), an old bank converted to a Scottish pub, and [Irish Times](#), which serves a healthy sampling of Guinness and local brews as well as corned beef and cabbage.

Of course, we did play golf, too, before we left Victoria to head up the eastern coast on the Trail. That came at [Highland Pacific Golf Club](#), a homespun course that started as just three holes, but eventually evolved into 18 that blend together surprisingly well considering the piecemeal construction of the course. As the name implies, the course has two very distinct nines, neither of which are boring and quite challenging with plenty of views of the city, Olympic Mountains, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Thetis Lake Park.

### Don't pass up nine-hole Quadra Island Golf Club

This was my second golf trip to Vancouver Island, so I didn't want to play the courses I did four years ago, and with the exception of one -- Bear Mountain -- they were all new.

None were disappointing, even the nine-holer we played on Quadra Island, on the northern end of the Trail about halfway up the east coast. [Quadra Island Golf Club](#) is also one of the best bargains -- you just have to make your way out to the island, either by water taxi or ferry. We got there by water taxi from [Painter's Lodge](#) in Campbell River. About a 10-minute boat ride to [Painter's Lodge's](#) sister property is [April Point](#), a secluded seasonal destination set among a wildlife refuge of sorts, where we even spotted a few pods of killer whales before our return.

The course on the island was a community effort 15 years in the making. With some initial consultation by architect [Ted Locke](#) who provided some basic designs and consultation, the island of 3,000 people raised around \$3.5 million to carve out a fairly impressive nine holes on a canvas that's befitting a course that would cost two or three times as much to play. Plus, even though it's just 3,300 yards, it's plenty tough with lots of uneven lies, uphill holes and doglegs. Best of all, green fees to play it twice are under \$40, so if you can get out to Quadra, it'd be worth the effort.

### Plenty more resort golf on the Trail

The [Mountain Course](#) -- as well as the [Valley Course](#) -- at [Bear Mountain](#), is simply stunning, befitting the Westin Resort, where we stayed. Perfectly manicured and views from every angle, there's nothing boring about the Mountain Course. I pretty much liked every hole and could remember all of them even after just playing it twice in four years. Staying at the [Bear Mountain Westin Resort](#) and just playing those two courses while exploring Victoria could certainly be a trip unto itself.

But getting out on the Vancouver Golf Trail is certainly worthwhile, especially if you have some time. There was never more than a three-hour drive, and that came on the last day making our way back to Victoria and Bear Mountain.

Besides [Highland Pacific](#) and Quadra Island, the other three courses we played were all solid.

[Fairwinds Golf Club](#), for example, is a terrific [Les Furber](#) design that snakes along the edges of a peninsula on [Nanoose Bay](#). Also a tale of two nines, the front is tighter, more target golf, while the back opens up with wider fairways and more opportunities to hit the driver.


[Storey Creek](#), which is just 20 miles from Campbell River as we headed back south, is another outstanding [Furber](#) design. Carved out of a forest of evergreens and hardwoods, every hole is isolated, giving you the feeling you're the only ones on the course.

And [Crown Isle Resort & Golf Community](#), which boasts a membership of 500 golfers, is a [Graham Cooke](#) design. At 7,000 yards from the tips, it's as tough as you want it to be, with lots of interesting doglegs, elevated greens and tees, water hazards and well above average conditioning.

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Mike Bailey is a senior staff writer based in the Houston area. Focusing primarily on golf in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean and Latin America, he contributes course reviews, travel stories and features as well as the occasional equipment review. An award-winning writer and past president of Texas Golf Writers Association, he has more than 20 years in the golf industry. Before accepting his current position in 2008, he was on staff at PGA Magazine, The Golfweek Group and AvidGolfer Magazine. Follow Mike on Twitter at [@Accidentgolfer](#).

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