

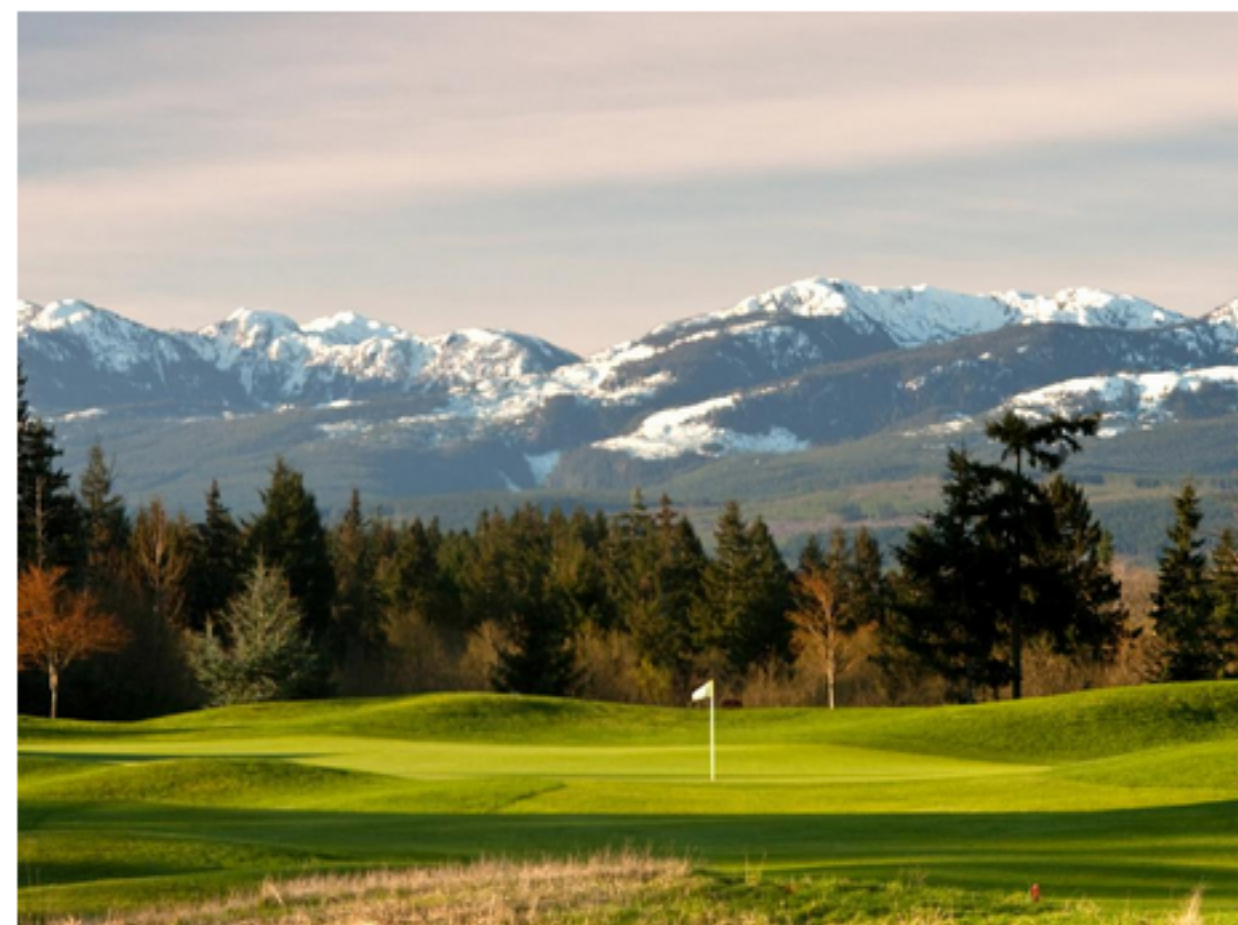
Vancouver island golf trail beckons

BY ANDREW PENNER, CALGARY HERALD MAY 22, 2015

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The Crown Isle Resort and Golf Community is part of the Vancouver Island Golf Trail.

Photograph by: Crowne Isle Resort and Golf Community , Calgary Herald

What do 11 super-fun golf courses, 250 kilometres of scenic Pacific Northwest highway and Condé Naste magazine's Top North American Island award for eight consecutive years equal? If you guessed The Vancouver Island Golf Trail, give yourself a gold star.

The golf trail phenomenon came to North America in 1992 with the success of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail in Alabama. Not surprisingly, many more golf trails followed.

However, many of these "trails" were hastily conceived. Some are no more. Some were not really trails to begin with. And some, like the Vancouver Island Golf Trail, are still building in steam and stature.

In order for a golf trail to work, first and foremost, it needs to be a legitimate trail. A "trail" invokes travel from A to B and enjoying the sites, perhaps some après-golf activities (sea kayaking or salmon fishing, anyone?), along the way.

"An experience along the Vancouver Island Golf Trail can be custom-made," says Trisha Larson, marketing director for the trail.

"Vancouver Island is an amazing place to explore and many golfers want some type of après-golf adventure, be it fishing, craft beer tours, whale watching, spa appointments and so on, to add to their itineraries. We can facilitate all of that."

Obviously, a key component of a successful golf trail is the quality and locations of the courses themselves. The Vancouver Island Golf Trail, which runs along the eastern side of the island, is now 11 courses strong — in 2013 the new Quadra Island Golf Club was added. The courses are separated into convenient sections from south to north, with easy travel days to get to the next course or destination along the way.

"A lot of people choose to play the courses in Victoria, enjoy the city for a few days, then move through the Cowichan Valley, play a round or two, and then cruise up to the exceptional golf courses in the north," says Jason Lowe, general manager at Arbutus Ridge Golf Club near Victoria and a strong advocate for the Trail.

"There's definitely been a buy-in from the golf community here. It's a great product and golfers can easily plan it out in a way that suits them the best."

Adding the exceptionally scenic Quadra Island Golf Club, one of the only brand new courses to open in Canada recently, is seen as a feather in the cap.

"Not many golf destinations are adding golf courses these days," says Larson. "It's a unique nine-hole course on one of the prettiest islands in British Columbia and it's great to have them on board."

From the stunning Nicklaus-designed courses at Bear Mountain to the rolling parkland terrain of Arbutus Ridge and Storey Creek in Campbell River, the Vancouver Island Golf Trail is definitely a "trail" worth travelling.

Visit golfvancouverisland.ca.

Après Golf

Here are five great activities to add to your customized golf trip on Vancouver Island.

- Salmon Fishing at Painter's Lodge: Campbell River is dubbed "the salmon capital of the world" and Painter's Lodge might just be the epicentre. More info: painterslodge.com
- Discover Victoria's Ale Trail: Victoria is home to one of the best craft beer scenes in Canada. Spinnakers, Canoe, Lighthouse; the list is long and tasty.
- Whale Watching: Whale watching and wildlife tours are quintessential B.C. activities. Prince of Whales in Victoria is a great place to start. More info: princeofwhales.com
- Vancouver Island Spas: As we all know, golf is hard work. May as well rejuvenate for the next round. The Grotto Spa at Tigh-Na-Mara never disappoints. More info: grottospa.com
- Vancouver Island Wineries: Southern Vancouver Island, including the Cowichan Valley, is the second-largest wine region in British Columbia. Like the golf, this is a wine "trail" worth travelling.

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