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A TRAIL OF COUNTLESS DELIGHTS

Vancouver Island Golf Trail has something for everyone

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*Bear Mountain,
Mountain Course, #10*



A TRAIL OF COUNTLESS DELIGHTS

Vancouver Island Golf Trail has something for everyone

By HAL QUINN

It is one of the most dramatic, and beautiful, viewpoints in golf. From a mountain ledge the panorama encompasses the sparkling deep blue of the Juan de Fuca Strait as the entire inner harbor comes into focus; then the rolling green hills beyond give way to the tips of the San Juan Islands and the distant peaks of the Olympic Peninsula on the horizon. It is a spectacular sight worthy of a few cold beverages at the finest of 19th holes. But this perch overlooking Victoria, British Columbia, is a 19th hole you play.

The dramatic vista unfolds above the provincial capital from the green of an extra hole on the extraordinary Bear Mountain Resort Community Mountain Course, just one of more than 50 golf courses – from pitch and putts to championship layouts – that grace Vancouver Island. This massive 12,355-sq. mile isle tucked off the coast of southwestern British Columbia and northwestern Washington State has something for every visitor, especially golfers.

What Vancouver Island also has – aside from »





«easy access from the rest of the Pacific North West via water or air – is an incredible variety of off course activities and distractions that make it ideal for guys only, gals only, and guys and gals golf getaways. From the internationally renowned Grotto Spa at Tigh-Na-Mara, the unforgettable Butchart Gardens to wineries and craft breweries, hiking and biking trails, trophy fishing, whale watching, race car driving, ocean swimming and beach blanket relaxing, they all roll out enticingly along the Vancouver Island Golf Trail.

Although the Trail connects a baker's dozen of terrific courses and any spot along the way is a fine starting point, Victoria is very convenient for most visiting players. Its excellent restaurants and brew pubs (there are 25 craft breweries on the Island), museums, galleries, and the historic parliament buildings alone make it a place where visitors love to linger. If you are lucky enough to be in Victoria August 6th you and about 10,000 new friends can enjoy the 28th annual Symphony Splash concert by the Victoria Symphony Orchestra performing on a floating stage in the natural amphitheater of the city's inner harbor. (If you're arriving by your own boat, make a reservation at <http://www.gvha.ca/marinas-facilities/marinas/reservations/splash>)

When golf first arrived on the Island, Victoria was hardly the bustling port city of more than 80,000 it is now. (The population of Greater Victoria exceeds 340,000.) In fact, Canada was in its infancy when the Victoria Golf Club opened in 1893, the oldest golf club in Canada still on its original site. Just a few minutes away is the venerable Royal Colwood GC, designed by the legendary A. V. Macan that opened in 1913. This remarkable course, gently wandering through stands of 500-year-old Douglas Firs, received its Royal designation from King George V in 1931. A year earlier another great Macan design, Gorge Vale GC, had joined the solid foundation for the game on the Island.

The 19th or 'extra' hole debuted at the Mountain Course in 2003. Steve Nicklaus was routing the course for Nicklaus Design but the 1,250-acre »

«property was so spectacular that papa bear Jack had to come and take a look. As they surveyed the site of the 14th green, Steve looked out over the cliff and spotted the ledge. He remarked to his Dad that it would make a spectacular par 3. And so the signature 19th hole with that incredible view was born; a 140-yard extra hole between the 14th and 15th.

Much has changed over the years on Bear Mountain, now also home to the Valley Course, and this September the return of the PGA Tour Champions Pacific Links Bear Mountain Championship, and defending champion Colin Montgomerie and friends, making that time of year a fine time for Island hopping.

The Resort, a half hour drive north of Victoria, is also home to the

Westin Resort and Spa – 7,000 sq. ft. operated by Santé Spas – and two Westin buildings – one with 65 suites, the other with 91 – and the 160,000 sq. ft. clubhouse that includes a convention center, grills, lounges, pro shops, fine dining at Panache, and a two-level 2,600-sq. ft. penthouse suite with views that stretch to Mount Baker in Washington State.

The Mountain Course reflects its name, with dramatic elevation changes over its 6,900-yard par 70 layout. The Valley course lives up to its name too with a 6,807-yard par 71 tour through trees, around lakes and over streams. The greens are larger, but the undulations are challenging. A great stay and play destination.

It seems that the breadth of the Olympic Peninsula is on display from the beautiful clubhouse and restaurant, and the Bill Robinson-designed course, at nearby Olympic View (20 minutes from downtown Victoria). One of the Golf BC family of fine courses, a dozen lakes keep it exciting on this 6,534-yd. par 72 layout. Perhaps the most memorable hole is the 417-yard par 4 17th that requires a precise drive and a second shot that must be executed while ignoring the beautiful 40-ft. waterfall behind the green. »





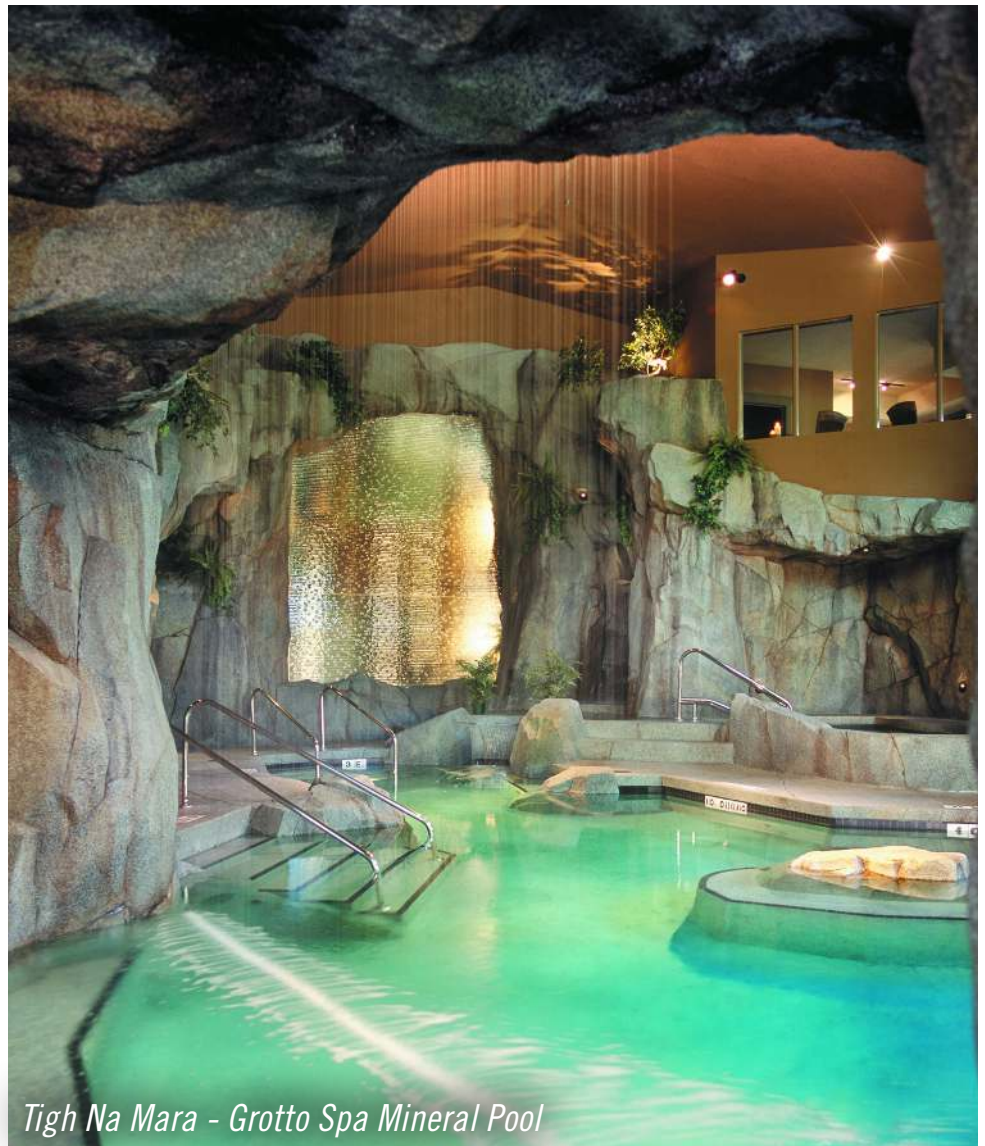
Olympic View, #17



Butchart Gardens, Victoria, BC



Victoria Spinnaker Brew Pub



Tigh Na Mara - Grotto Spa Mineral Pool

«The neighboring Highland Pacific GC is a relative newcomer – the Pacific nine opened in 2008 and the Highland nine two years later – that immediately made a name for itself. The nines are unique, yet both are really great looking layouts, fitting the golfer's eye from every tee and fairway. Along the 6,600 yards are some of the Island's finest views of Victoria, the Olympic Mountains, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Bear Mountain, and the stunning Thetis Lake Park. The golf is as good as the views.

Traveling along the scenic Malahat Highway – a worthwhile photo-op journey in itself with the 1,156 ft. elevation at Malahat Lookout a window on the region – it is hard to imagine that it was cut through the forests as a cattle trail in 1861 and not paved until 1911. But the now smooth and serpentine Golf Trail leads to Cobble Hill and the beautiful Arbutus

Ridge G&CC. This Robinson design takes full advantage of the dramatic and heavily treed terrain. Not long by today's standards, but the par 3 17th with its peninsula green and the uphill par 4 finishing hole are reminders of how challenging the layout is from start to finish.

Up the road in Duncan, the legendary A.V. Macan designed a 9-hole gem in 1947. The Cowichan G&CC was expanded to 18 holes in 1985 and is another perfect example that length is not the deciding factor in what makes a golf course challenging and enjoyable. This terrific parklands layout is routed through mature trees requiring thoughtful course management on the narrow fairways and a deft touch on the fast greens with perplexing mounds and swales.

Along the Trail in Nanoose Bay, architect Les Furber created a moderate-length course »

«that is as demanding as it is scenic. The Fairwinds G&CC, part of the Fairwinds resort and residential community with a 360-slip marina, measures just over 6,100-yards but the variety of ponds and streams, doglegs, elevation changes and stately trees soon has players thinking less about their drivers and more about quality golf shots. And that's what is required on this picturesque par 71 layout.

Furber also designed the Morningstar International Golf Course in Parksville, whose beaches are a magnet for vacationers from around the world. With room to stretch, Furber created a muscular 6,983-yarder that plays every inch of it at sea level. It has a fine mix of long and short holes – the signature hole is the 404-yd par 4 12th – and challenging long ones like the 538-yd double-dogleg par 5 9th hole. But six sets of tees make it welcoming for everyone.

Along the coast at Qualicum Beach, the Pheasant Glen Golf Resort is an Island gem. With views of Mount Arrowsmith, dense stands of forest, ponds, creeks and well-positioned bunkers, this John Johnson design is a very worthwhile stop along the Trail.

The latest addition to the Trail is Nanaimo Golf Club. While the city is internationally known for the Nanaimo Bar – try to eat just one – the spectacular 18-hole semi-private championship course is known as the best all-season golf course on Vancouver Island. The six sets of tees stretches the layout from just over 5,000 yards to 6,700 taking it from comfortable to challenging.

Graham Cooke has long been one of Canada's finest amateur players and one of golf's best architects. All of his talents are on display at the Crown Isle Resort and Golf Community in Courtenay. A superb test at just over 7,000 yards, Crown Isle is almost as well known for its course as for its unique 48,000 sq. ft. clubhouse. But it's Cooke's creative routing, big rolling greens, and splendid use of the forest and ponds that keep golfers coming back to this par 72 track with a resort-friendly 120 slope.





Fairwinds Hole #2

«The Storey Creek GC in Campbell River is the aforementioned Les Furber's first solo design (after years working with Robert Trent Jones, Sr.) and one of his best. He carved this 6,699-yard, par 72 gem out of deep forest in 1990. Each hole is isolated by the stands of pines, and each seems to be home to a variety of wildlife. This tranquil community course, with a slope of 132, has long been a favorite among amateur and professional players alike. From Campbell River, a beautiful 10-minute ferry ride across Sutil Channel takes you to the Quadra Island GC. Set in a secluded forest, the 3,219-yd. nine-hole layout makes for a memorable round, as do the wonderful views of the Georgia Strait and the mountain ranges along B.C.'s mainland. Going around Quadra a couple of times would be a fitting end to an unforgettable journey along the Trail.

The Golf Channel Morning Drive's Matt Ginella made the trek this spring and captured some terrific footage to give viewers a hint of the Island's pleasures. <http://golfvancouverisland.ca/golf-channel-features-vancouver-island-golf-trail/>

He didn't have time for a wine tour, but you can arrange a wine and golf vacation at <http://golfvancouverisland.ca/golf-packages/specialty-packages/golf-and-wine/>. There's also a special option for the ladies: <http://golfvancouverisland.ca/golf-packages/specialty-packages/womens-golf/>

And if riding around in a golf cart doesn't quite fulfill your need for speed, check out <http://islandmotorsportcircuit.com/>.

Accommodations and tee times and everything else are just a click away at <http://golfvancouverisland.ca/golf-packages/>

With a remarkable variety of quality golf courses, spectacular scenery at every turn, outstanding hotels and resorts and spa, and equally world-class restaurants and recreational activities, the Vancouver Island Golf Trail is one you can happily travel time and again.



VANCOUVER ISLAND'S TOP-RATED COURSES

VICTORIA AND THE SOUTH ISLAND (page 8)

- 1 Highland Pacific Golf
- 2 Olympic View Golf Club
- 3 Bear Mountain Resort – The Mountain Course
- 4 Bear Mountain Resort – The Valley Course
- 5 Arbutus Ridge Golf Club

COWICHAN (page 14)

- 6 Cowichan Golf & Country Club

CENTRAL ISLAND (page 16)

- 7 Nanaimo Golf Club
- 8 Fairwinds Golf Club
- 9 Morningstar Golf Club
- 10 Pheasant Glen Golf Resort

NORTH ISLAND (page 19)

- 11 Crown Isle Resort & Golf Community
- 12 Storey Creek Golf Club
- 13 Quadra Island Golf Club

VANCOUVER ISLAND DRIVING TIMES

VICTORIA TO:	
DUNCAN.....	45 min
PARKSVILLE.....	2 hr
COURTENAY.....	3 hr
CAMPBELL RIVER.....	3 hr 30 min



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