



Vancouver Island boasts vibrant golf scene

Ocean and mountain views feature at B.C. courses where champion golfers have teed off.



After a round at Bear Mountain among its varied topography, golfers can enjoy food from an innovative menu that goes beyond the traditional hot-dog-and-beer golf lunch special. (BEAR MOUNTAIN)

By **IAN CRUICKSHANK** Travel
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VICTORIA, B.C.-The traditional snack at a golf halfway house is a hot dog and a chocolate bar, washed down with either a beer or a pop. OK, it's a lunch nightmare, chock full of nitrates, sugar, alcohol and empty calories. It's enough to give a dietician the yips. The first time I realized there's an alternative had been at [Bear Mountain](#), the golf resort that rises 20 minutes north above Victoria on Vancouver Island.

During our mid-round stop, we snacked on lobster salad chased with a shot of chilled vodka. It had been an eye opener in more ways than one. Vancouver Island has evolved. It's no longer a seniors-only zone. It's a vibrant spot with a range of ages and activities. The island is also sprinkled with more than 20 golf courses, including the estimable [Vancouver Island Golf Trail](#).

Tiger tales: The first thing you notice at [Olympic View Golf Club](#) in the outskirts of Victoria is the stylish, glass-fronted clubhouse that juts out towards the first tee, looking out across the water to the peaks of the Olympic Mountains in Washington state. The second thing that caught my attention was a photo of a youthful Tiger Woods, who played the course as an amateur in 1994. When the photo had been snapped, he'd just finished playing a terrific round at Olympic View. On the par 5, 18th hole, Woods smashed a 3-wood off the tee, hit a four iron approach shot and then chipped in for an eagle, an indication of what was to come. Details: [golfbc.com](#)

Nicklaus times two: The most stunning layout on the island is the Mountain course at the [Westin Bear Mountain Golf Resort & Spa](#) Westin Bear Mountain Golf Resort & Spa, designed by Jack Nicklaus and his son Steve. It originally opened in the summer of 2004 and climbs through an all-Canadian stretch of topography — rocks and rivers, valleys and mountain peaks. At the high point of the course, the panoramic view takes in the Pacific Ocean, the Olympic Mountains, Mount Baker and the city of Victoria — quite a foursome. A couple of years later, Nicklaus' design company added the Valley course at the resort, a handsome track that is more forgiving than its big brother. The Mountain Course is also home to the Pacific Links Bear Mountain Championship, which features the top players on the PGA champions tour. Last year, Scottish legend Colin Montgomerie won the title in a playoff. The tournament will be played this year from Sept. 11-17. Details: [bearmountain.ca](#)

Find your inner harbour: The last time I was in [Victoria](#), I hung out around the Inner Harbour, marvelling at all the activity. A ship the size of a small apartment complex served as the centrepiece, and the rumour was it belonged to Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft. (According to Google, Allen's yacht *Octopus* includes two helicopter pads, two submarines and a recording studio once used by Paul McCartney.) There were plenty of smaller craft, too, including kayaks. Vancouver Island boasts about 3,500 kilometres of coastline, as well as 700 lakes, 160 rivers and 890 streams, all of which are open for paddling. If you don't have time to circumnavigate the island, you can rent a kayak at the Inner Harbour for three hours and canoodle around the "big boy" toys. If you're a little peckish after the paddling, try a hand-rolled, wild salmon tacone at [Red Fish Blue Fish](#), a former cargo container turned outdoor eatery on the Inner Harbour. Details: [tourismvictoria.com](#)

Ian Cruickshank was hosted by Tourism BC which did not review or approve this story.

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