

Review: Bear Mountain Resort (The Mountain Course)

by Golf Is Mental • September 12, 2017 • 0 Comments

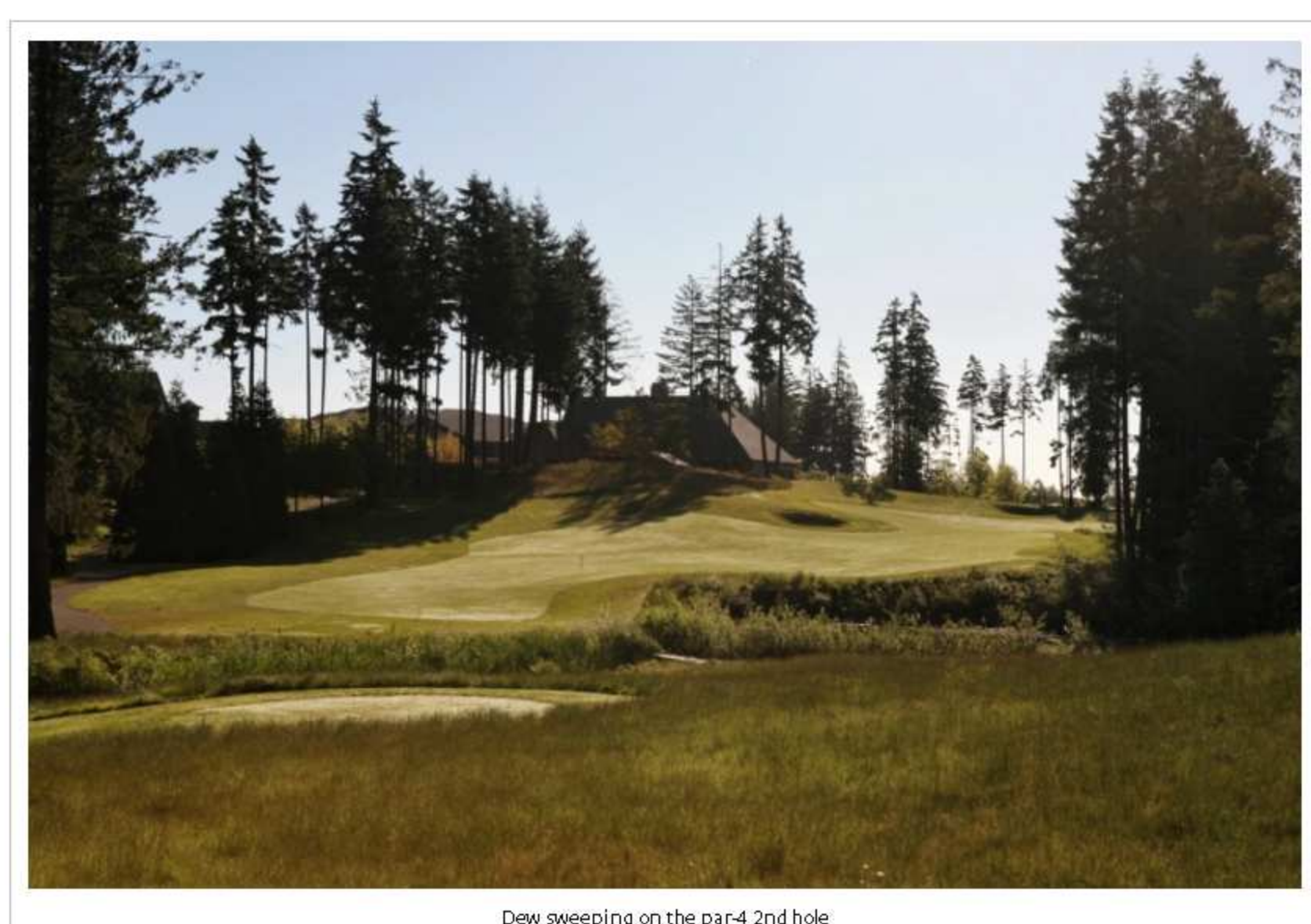
Bear Mountain Resort is a 36 hole facility located on beautiful Vancouver Island in Victoria, British Columbia. Our visit to play at Bear Mountain came on our last full day of a 5 night adventure along the Vancouver Island Golf Trail, so we were a bit unsure how our bodies would hold up playing both courses in one day. After all, it was only May and we were just getting our season started back home in Alberta, even though it felt like the mid-summer on The Island.

Turns out we lived to tell the tale.

We departed our hotel along the bustling Victoria harbor bright-nearly, and roughly 30 minutes later city life was a distant memory as we climbed 1100 scenic feet up to Bear Mountain Resort.

The two courses at Bear Mountain — The Mountain Course and The Valley Course — were co-designed by Jack Nicklaus and his son, Steve. This review is for The Mountain Course — the 6900 yard, Par 71 layout which plays host to the Pacific Links Championship on the PGA Tour Champions in September.

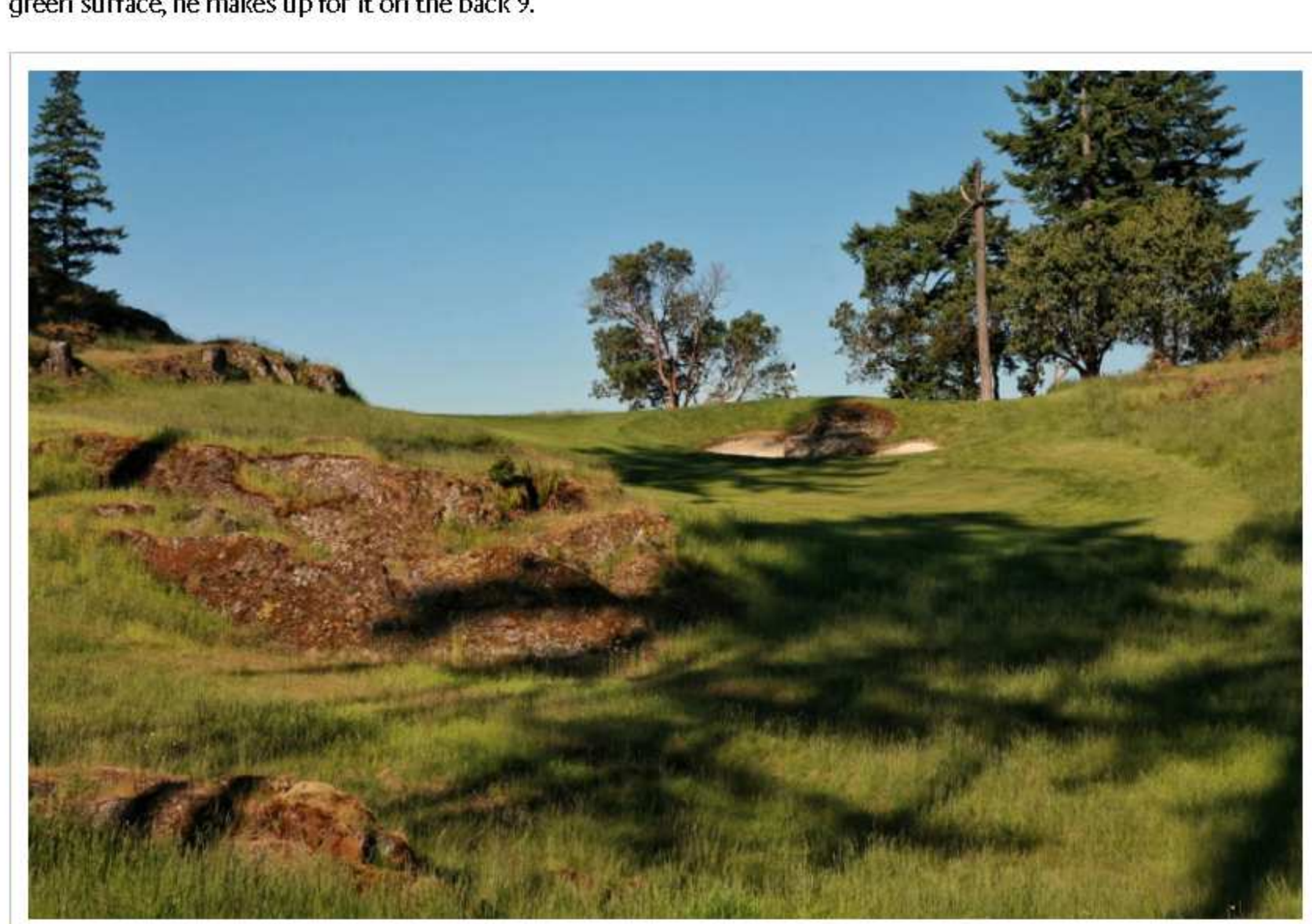
Whenever I visit a Nicklaus course, I prepare myself for a stern challenge. One that typically packs a few tricks, whether it's some hidden bunkers or more blind shots than I typically prefer. Couple those expectations with the mountainous terrain of Bear Mountain, and I expected a wild ride. Turns out the layout was more approachable and a little less wild than I expected. However, if it's your first time playing there, it is worth paying attention to the GPS unit in the cart — they're there for a reason.



Deer sweeping on the par-4 2nd hole

The front 9 winds through the mountainous forest with continuous undulations and elevation changes. While the course does punish wild tee shots, there was more room out there to drive it than I expected from a mountain course.

Jack throws a couple of rugged uphill par 3's at you on the front 9, and if you don't like par 3's where you can't see the green surface, he makes up for it on the back 9.



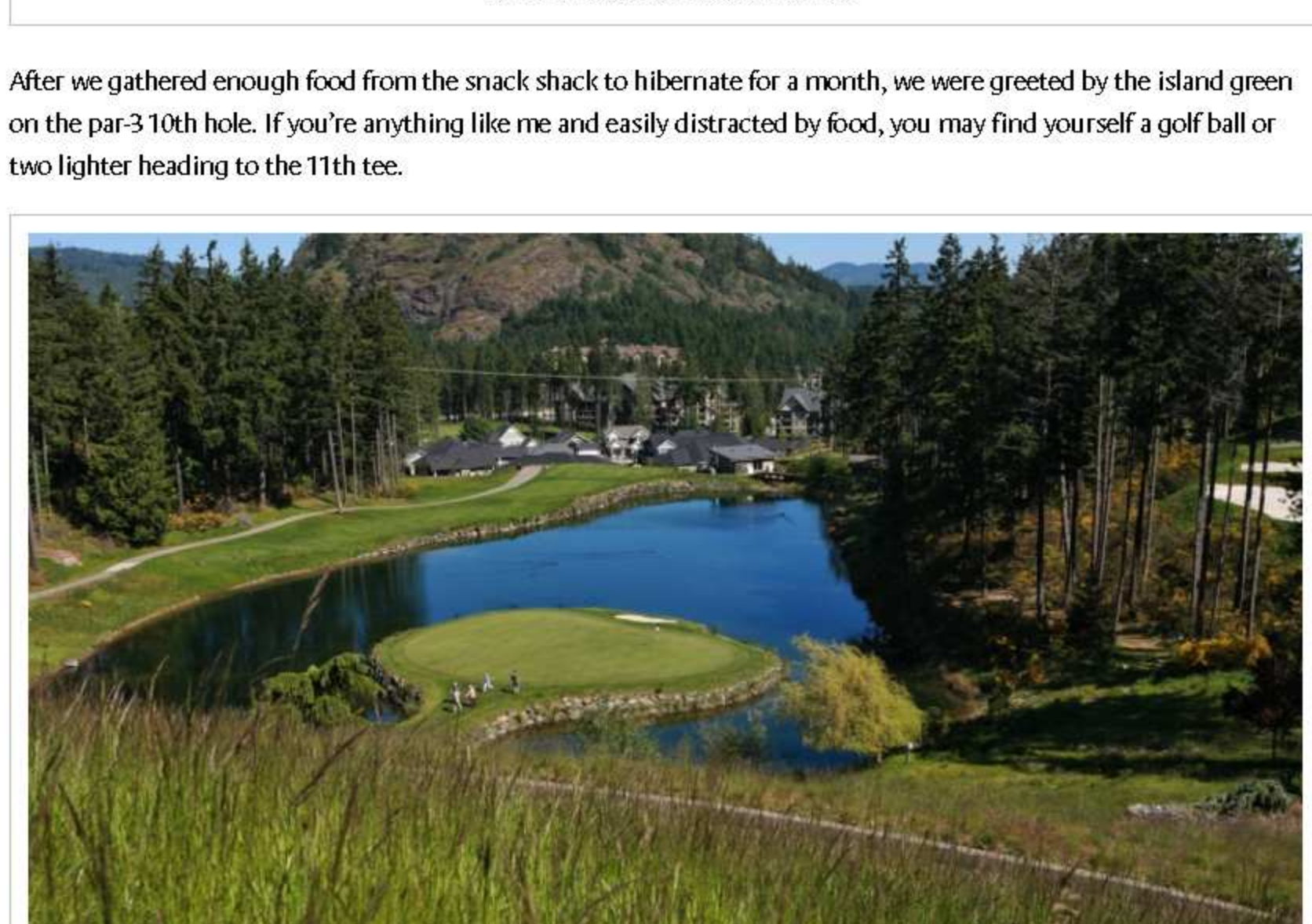
The uphill par-3 4th hole

For visitors who came for the dramatic vistas and signature holes, the front 9 is definitely the build-up to that. As you make the turn, I recommend stopping at the self-serve snack shack, with everything from breakfast sandwiches to chocolate to get you ready for the picturesque back 9.



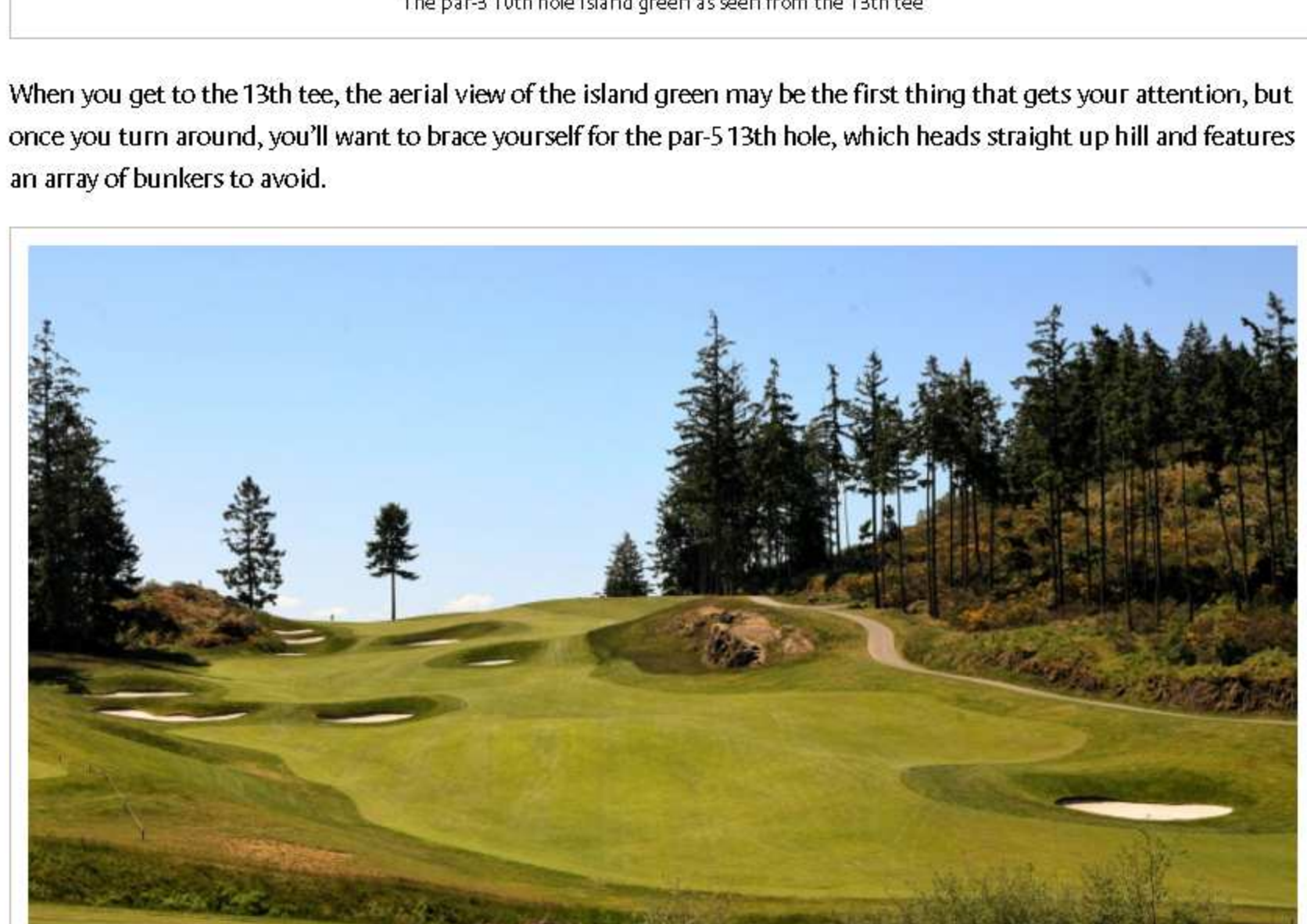
The self-serve snack shack at the 10th tee

After we gathered enough food from the snack shack to hibernate for a month, we were greeted by the island green on the par-3 10th hole. If you're anything like me and easily distracted by food, you may find yourself a golf ball or two lighter heading to the 11th tee.



The par-3 10th hole island green as seen from the 13th tee

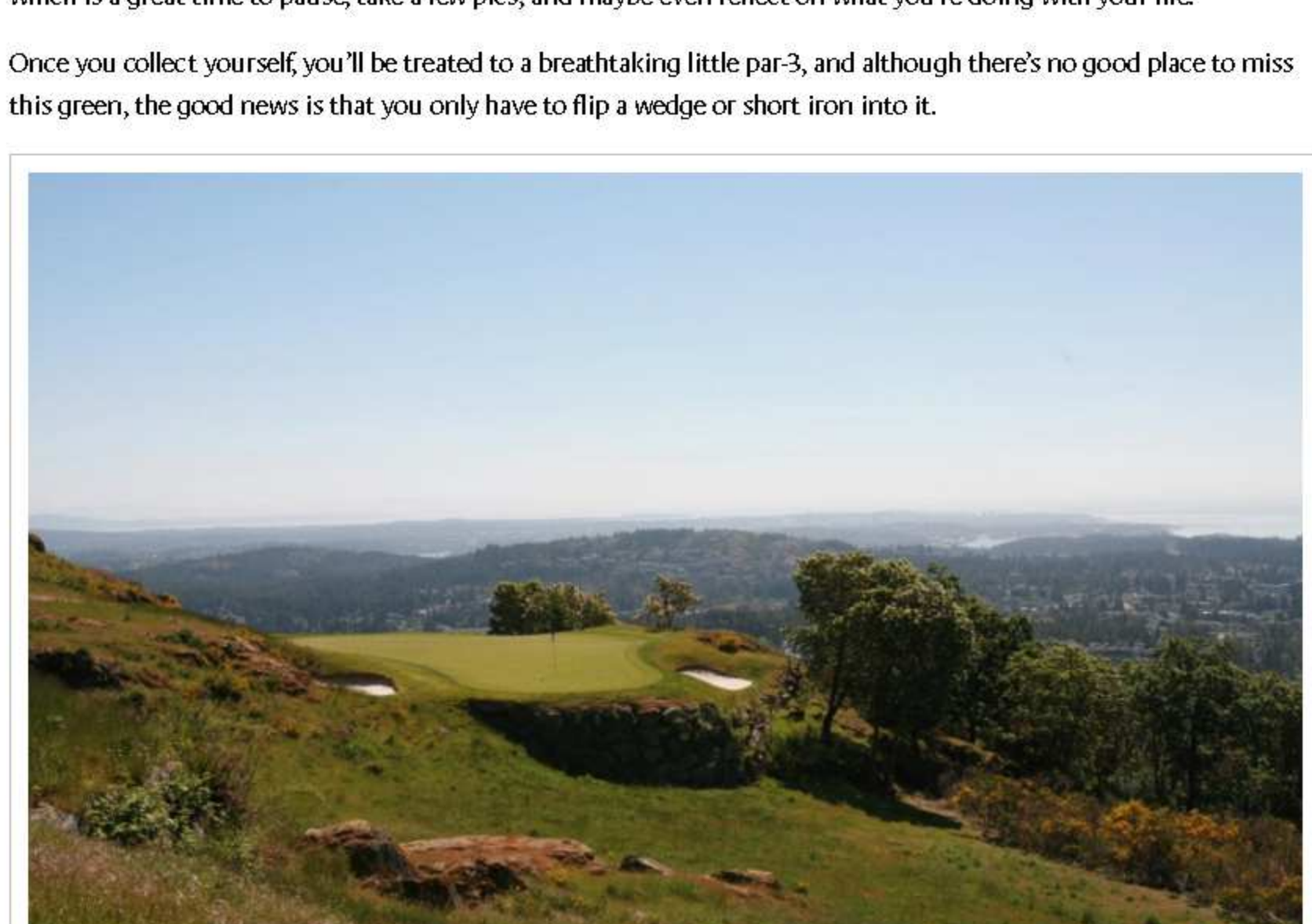
When you get to the 13th tee, the aerial view of the island green may be the first thing that gets your attention, but once you turn around, you'll want to brace yourself for the par-5 13th hole, which heads straight up hill and features an array of bunkers to avoid.



A look at the par-5 13th hole from the 15th fairway

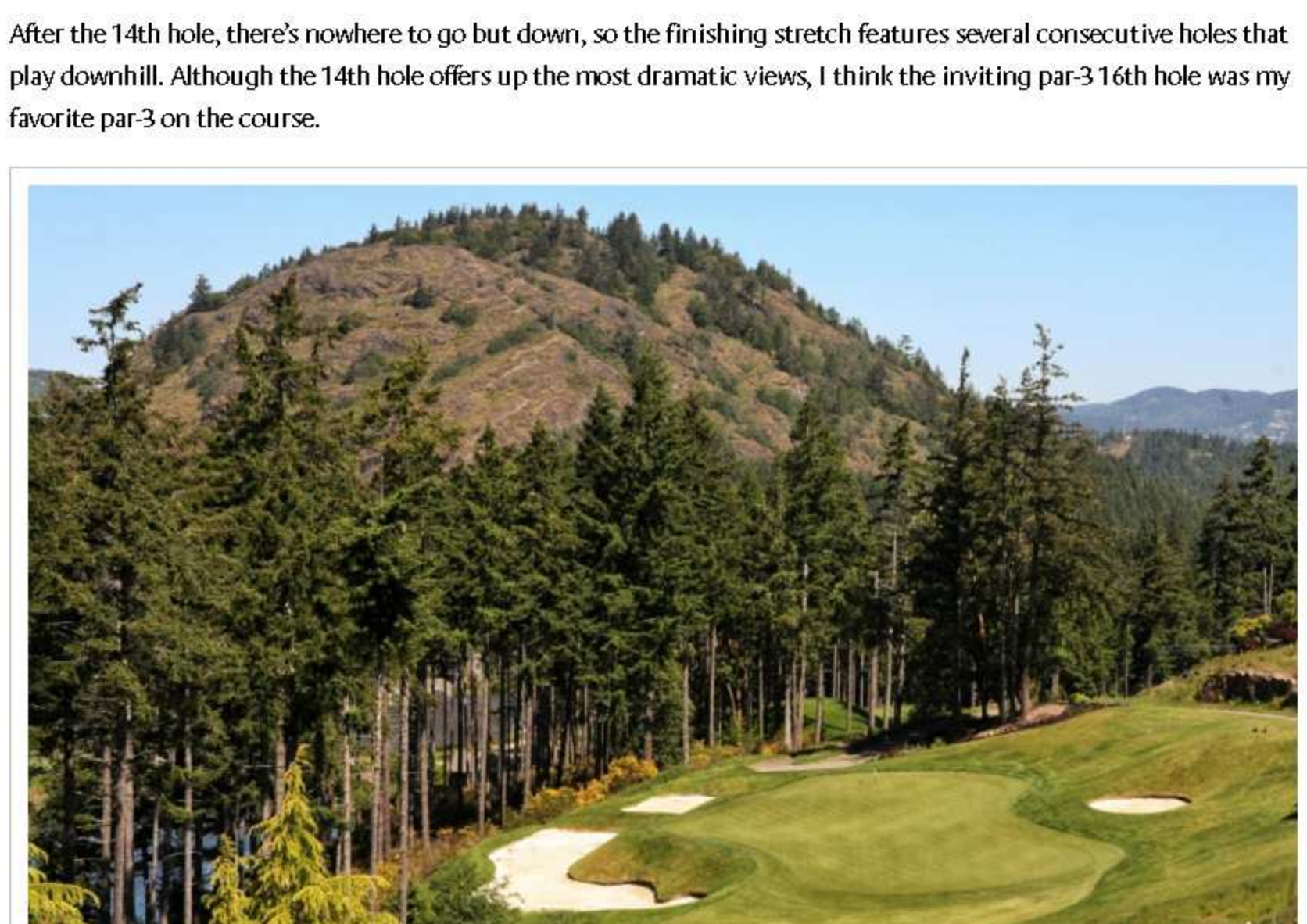
If you make it up the 13th hole alive, you can pat yourself on the back for reaching The Mountain Course summit, which is a great time to pause, take a few pics, and maybe even reflect on what you're doing with your life.

Once you collect yourself you'll be treated to a breathtaking little par-3, and although there's no good place to miss this green, the good news is that you only have to flip a wedge or short iron into it.



The scenic par-3 14th hole

After the 14th hole, there's nowhere to go but down, so the finishing stretch features several consecutive holes that play downhill. Although the 14th hole offers up the most dramatic views, I think the inviting par-3 16th hole was my favorite par-3 on the course.



The downhill par-3 16th hole

My favorite par-3 was followed up with my favorite par-4 on the course, which was driveable from the tees we were playing, and practically begged you to go for it. I hit driver over the right bunkers and let the contours work their magic. My ball hung up on the slope, but I managed to get it up and down for my third birdie of the day (my signature humble brag of the post).



The short par-4 17th hole

The Mountain Course at Bear Mountain is named aptly — it is a mountain course. With that comes unique and sometimes unforgiving terrain, beautiful vistas, and significant elevation changes. While I am typically drawn to courses that are more open and walkable, the Mountain Course exceeded my expectations in terms of playability. While some of our golf balls didn't make it out alive, we made up for it with several birdies in the group as well. Playing the appropriate tee box is very important here, because biting off more than you can chew could get you into some trouble.

As you'd expect from a course that charges a premium price (\$199 for resort guests and \$249 for non-resort guests), the course conditions were superb, and the service and amenities were very good as well.

After the round we headed straight to the 18th hole to the patio to refuel with lunch and hydrate with a beer so we could attack the Valley Course in the afternoon. We were happy with the food and the service, and the only thing that stopped us from spending the whole afternoon hydrating on the patio was the Valley Course calling our name.

Having played the Mountain Course now, I'm even more impressed with the guys on the PGA Tour Champions and their ability to score. In the 2016 Pacific Links Championship, Colin Montgomerie won in a playoff over Scott McCarron who both tallied 3-day totals of 15 under par. That's a bally golf on that track.

For those looking for the full stay-and-play resort experience, Bear Mountain features a Westin hotel, among other activities such as biking, tennis, and a fitness facility. It felt like a happening place, and not just for golfers.

For more information on the Bear Mountain resort, or to inquire about building your own golf package along the Vancouver Island Golf Trail, visit [Golf Vancouver Island](#). Thanks to Bear Mountain for the great hospitality during our 36 hole adventure! Stay tuned for my review of the Valley Course.



Happy golfing!

Josh

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Always great to get a round in at @stacyranch. course is in great shape. Tee sheet was packed and played in 4 hours. How it should be!



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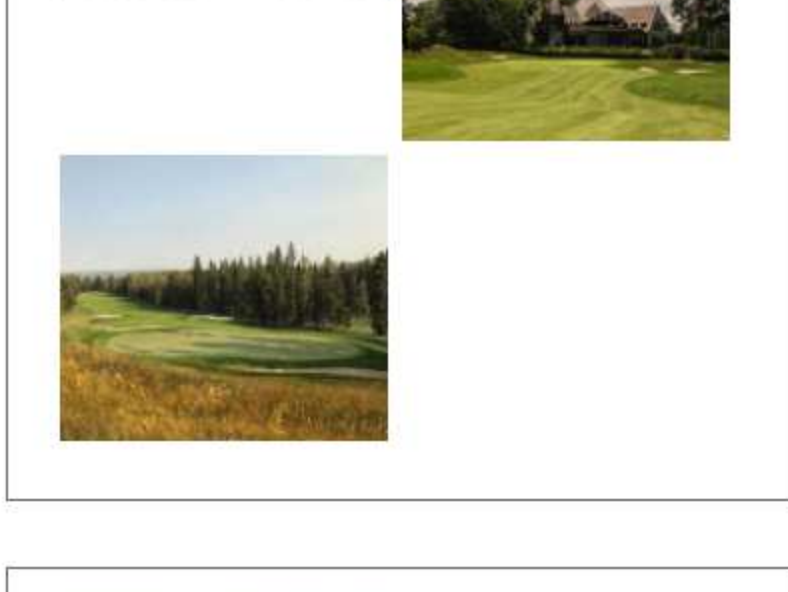
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