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## Vancouver Island has plenty of gold medal-worthy golf



By Joe Passov, Senior Editor (Courses/Rankings)

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George Fuller  
The 14th hole on Westin resort's Mountain course.

Forget the Winter Olympics — golfers are all about the summer. Vancouver Island is just north of Seattle in the Canadian province of British Columbia, a quick trip across the Strait of Georgia from downtown Vancouver. The Vancouver Island Golf Trail starts at Victoria's Inner Harbour and runs roughly 150 miles northwest to the Campbell River, and along the way it offers a podium full of scenic, bargain-priced courses.

### Westin Bear Mountain Resort (Mountain)

Victoria, B.C.  
7,203 yards, par 72  
\$69-\$149  
250-744-2327

[bearmountain.ca](http://bearmountain.ca)

Plenty of our friends to the north rate this as Western Canada's best course. It is indisputably the toughest. The vision of former NHL great Len Barrie (and designed by Jack Nicklaus) it will leave you feeling like you've been checked against the boards from start to finish. Still, memorable holes dominate. Make time to play the optional 19th hole, a 165-yard par-3 beauty. Check your ego at the first tee, play the right set of blocks and you'll relish the climb on this Mountain.

### Westin Bear Mountain Resort (Valley)

Victoria, B.C.  
6,807 yards, par 71  
\$69-\$149  
250-744-2327

[bearmountain.ca](http://bearmountain.ca)

Nowhere near as fearsome as its Mountain sibling, the year-old Valley layout instead terrorizes you on the greens, which tumble and roll with internal contouring that may make you seasick. At least green speeds at this Nicklaus Design product are kept at a sane pace. Rock walls and a smattering of tattered-edge bunkers make for a distinctive look and a fun day, if you can stomach a month's worth of three-putts in one round.

### Olympic View Golf Club

Victoria, B.C.  
6,600 yards, par 72  
\$30-\$79  
250-474-3673  
[olympicviewgolf.com](http://olympicviewgolf.com)

This is the Pacific Northwest course of your dreams: fairways ribbon through massive firs with snow-capped mountains draped across the background. The clubhouse, Forester's Bistro and Bar and a top-drawer practice facility complete a terrific package. Still, if you spray your shots, you may want to stay in the bar. This heavily forested 1990 William Robinson design traverses steep terrain, and its tight-turning doglegs often demand an iron layup from the tee. Play smart — and straight — and you'll have a blast. Stray, and you'll pay.

### Crown Isle Resort & Golf Community

Courtenay, B.C.

7,025 yards, par 72  
\$35-\$90 (CDN)  
888-338-8493  
[crownisle.com](http://crownisle.com)

Here's Travelin' Joe's take: the Halibut Cheeks appetizer at the resort's Silverado Steakhouse is more memorable than its golf. The course is typical resort fare: tight, tree-lined doglegs, often bunkered on the inside elbow, enough risk/reward water holes to keep good players on their toes and a handful of handsome panoramas. It's a healthy three-and-a-half-hour drive here from Victoria, but enticing side trips make this a journey I'd take again, if only for the candied salmon at Fanny Bay Oysters Seafood Shop ([fannybayoysters.com](http://fannybayoysters.com)) in Buckley Bay.

### Morningstar Golf Course

Parksville, B.C.  
7,018 yards, par 72  
\$35-\$79  
800-567-1320  
[morningstargolf.com](http://morningstargolf.com)

The charming seaside towns of Parksville and Qualicum Beach are roughly a two-hour drive north of Victoria. You can see the water from an ancient nine-hole muni called Qualicum Beach Memorial, but if you're looking for a real taste of championship golf, try Morningstar. This sturdy Les Furber creation features a balanced mixture of well-bunkered, open holes and narrow, wooded tests. I'll challenge anyone to find a tougher medium-length par 4 than the 404-yard 12th. The hole twists downhill to the right but demands a carefully placed tee shot to a skinny fairway that slopes right-to-left. The ensuing sidehill approach from about 160 yards requires a shot over a wetland to a tiny green guarded by a front-left bunker.

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

The Four-Diamond Hotel Grand Pacific (800-663-7550, [hotelgrandpacific.com](http://hotelgrandpacific.com); rooms from \$159) boasts an amazing location overlooking Victoria's Inner Harbour. The Westin Bear Mountain Golf Resort & Spa (250-391-7160, [bearmountain.ca](http://bearmountain.ca); rooms from \$159) is a luxury lodge with a shopping village and superb restaurants.

At Spinnakers Gastro Brewpub (877-838-2739, [spinnakers.com](http://spinnakers.com)) the house-made ales and brick-oven pizzas are standouts, while Butchart Gardens (250-544-4477, [butchartgardens.com](http://butchartgardens.com); \$15-\$30) has impressed visitors with its 55 acres of flowers, trees and shrubbery for more than a century.

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