



Home Top Destinations Course Guide Course Reviews Golf Instruction Equipment Resorts Top Deals Blogs News Search Here...

PGA News LPGA News Euro PGA News Submit a Press Release Browse the News Archive Subscribe for Daily Golf News Syndicate Golf News

NEWS

Canada

7 Aug. 2008

Golfers: 1

Get Quote

Feature Stories

Columns

Top Deals

Photo Galleries

Reader Letters

Hole in One

Golf Humor

Vancouver Island anticipation: Bear Mountain's new Valley Course goes even higher than monster Nicklaus original

By Chris Baldwin, Senior Writer

The new Bear Mountain Golf & Country Club Valley Course, designed by Jack Nicklaus and his son Steve, with its giant par 5s and its steep, up-and-down greens, will be worth the wait.



Courtesy of Darren Burns Bear Mountain Golf & Country Club's new Valley Course's 18 gives a sense of all elevation change.

VICTORIA, B.C. - The new course at Bear Mountain Golf & Country Club is called Valley Course, which is about as much a misnomer as branding a Michael Jackson concert, "a kid-friendly environment." For the name Valley Course brings to mind a nice, meandering, flat journey, especially if you've played Bear's original Mountain Course and been eaten alive by Jack Nicklaus and his son Steve's never-ending run of showcase holes.

Instead ... well, let's just say you should forget any visions of flat and boring.

"It's called the Valley Course, but it has even more elevation change than the Mountain Course," Bear Mountain Course Superintendent Darren Burns said, laughing. "There's not a flat hole out here."

That couldn't have been more evident in WorldGolf.com's exclusive tour of the under-construction Valley Course. With all but the ninth hole largely blasted out of the hulking rock that defines Bear Mountain, in anticipation of opening late this year, the drama in the new Nicklaus design became unmistakable.

Just navigating up and down the rollercoaster fairways sometimes proved to be a challenge in Burns' big pickup truck. Standing on the high raised tees, many with grass already grown on them, provides some lessons in vertigo, too.



Chris Baldwin/WorldGolf.com Bear Mountain Golf & Country Club's Valley Course features dramatic drops.

as a bobsled run and grins.

"Turns out it's not such a walking course," he said.

Lance Armstrong might balk at walking Bear Mountain's Valley at his Tour de France peak. You're taken up, down and all around a towering forest land on a mountainous area over Victoria. (Bear's about a half hour from downtown).

IF YOU GO!

Just the Valley Course alone is expected to cost more than \$18 million, and it's one of the most talked about projects period (golf or otherwise) on Vancouver Island in years.

RELATED LINKS

- Victoria, Vancouver Island's golf gateway
Looking to golf the Canadian Rockies?
Golf in British Columbia
Planning a golf vacation to western Canada?

SUBSCRIBE

Golf Vancouver Island

A Canadian golf experience like no other. The beauty and golf courses of Vancouver Island await - from tee times to golf packages.

golfvancouverisland.ca

Escape to a Tropical Golfer's Paradise

The only championship course located on the Las Vegas Strip, Bali Hai is a tropical golfers paradise.

balihaigolfclub.com

Try the PGA Tour Partners Club Risk-Free for 30 days

FREE preview issue of the official magazine and a FREE sleeve of golf balls! An inside look at how the game's leading pro players stay competitive and advice from golf's greatest experts.

LPGA eTour Official Online Game Play to Win Over \$150,000 in Cash & Prizes Weekly

Win Golf Lessons with Butch Harmon in Las Vegas



WIN A FREE GOLF BOOK



WORLD GOLF TELEVISION grid of images showing various golf-related scenes.

British Columbia Golf Articles

Arbutus Ridge Golf Club brings inexpensive, good



Ads by Google 

Quick Golf Package Quotes

The quicker, easier way to plan your Myrtle Beach golf trips!
www.golfholiday.com/qui

Full List of Golf Courses

Golf Guide To Help You On Your Trip. Find The Best Course Today!
www.GolfLink.com

BC Golf Vacation

Golf British Columbia's top courses Your BC golf adventure starts here!
HelloBC.com/BritishColu

Ridge Golf Club Hotels

Hotels near Ridge Golf Club Pay at check-in. No booking fees.
www.priceline-europe.co

Bear Mountain Golf Resort New Valley Course

Opening nine holes: Late August

Whole course: Late 2008
1999 Country Club Way
Victoria, B.C.

Vancouver Island golf:
(888) 465-3229
www.golfvancouverisland.ca

Area tee times: (877) 323-3633

Burns does much of the day-to-day overseeing of the new course's development with someone from Nicklaus Design (usually senior design associate Chris Cochran) coming every three weeks or so to approve or call for redos on things, while keeping the mystery alive.

When other head professionals or sales guys on the island heard that I had toured Valley Course, they were quick with a slew of questions. Many centered around the query, "Is it really going to be harder than (famed hacker batterer) the Mountain Course?"

Once the Nicklaus team got into it, it's almost like they couldn't help themselves. Not with this much potential for spectacular holes already there. Not with Steve Nicklaus

surely wanting to top the original his dad helped design.

Bear Mountain's valley of danger

Bear Mountain's Valley Course is anything but your conventional building site. The land was completely stacked with tall trees over a rocky terrain. The first time Burns and Bear Mountain owner Len Barrie - a former journeyman NHL player (184 career games played) turned groundbreaking Vancouver Island business tycoon - toured the Valley Course site, they had to take along big machetes for protection.

A very large and protective mother cougar had a den right on what's now the 11th hole.

Eventually, when the construction really got going, the cougar moved on. But the big den in a hollowed-out tree/rock system is still visible on No. 11. You can even crawl in and see all the bones, mostly skulls and legs from the prey the mammoth cougar collected over years. It's basically a deer's worst nightmare.

Burns hopes that the resort will put up a sign to point out the cougar den.

Of course, golfers will soon be able to get feasted on from a different species - back-to-back par 5s (12 and 13) from the Nicklaus team. There will be five par 5s on Bear Mountain's Valley Course, giving convention another wink and a slap.

Twelve goes straight uphill - and will have many golfers thinking it lasts forever - while 13's a downhill 490-yarder that gives even golfing mortals the illusion they can go for it.

Then, you get to 15 - a par 5 from a high, raised tee - that the lead builder expects will be over 600 yards when it's all said and done. Stand on this plateau tee, looking over the lake, you have to clear (only about 250 yards just to fly it from the back tees) with the mountains and the tall trees far ahead guarding the green, and the Valley Course takes on the look of a course stretching for the sky.

Its greens are much larger than the Mountain Course's putting surfaces. The fairways are wider in some cases, too. And Valley Course only has about half the bunkers (35 or so). In fact, it's going to be a completely different golf experience in almost every way. The grasses used at the two courses are completely different, so is the bunker sand, right up to its color.

Burns will have two separate maintenance staffs at his disposal - one for Bear and one for Valley Course - to make sure the two golf courses maintain their own identity.

Standing on the tees now - especially the sky-high eighth, which will no doubt draw plenty of signature-hole buzz - Burns sounds like a kid at Christmas, itching to rip into a new present. "I can't wait to play this course," he said, "to hit this shot."

He's not alone. Bear Mountain members and resort guests have been found wandering past all the construction signs and off-limit markers, just to sneak a little peak.



The yellow police tape keeps the deer off the new Valley Course's greens and tees.



Valley Course has to live up to theatrics of Bear Mountain Golf & Country Club's original Nicklaus, the Mountain Course.

"Our members are really bugging us to just get the thing open," Bear Mountain Head Professional Steve MacPherson said.

The hope is to open nine holes in late August, which will include a large stretch of the back nine, and then get the whole 18 operational by the end of the year.

Until then, Burns has put up yellow police tape around the tees and greens that are largely finished, a trick to keep out the deer. He learned it opening four other golf courses. Whether he'll be able to keep himself from the temptation of zinging a few Pro V1s from the high tees is a whole other question.

golf and food to Vancouver Island

At Arbutus Ridge Golf Club, rounds begin with visions of recording your career best round and end with one of the most wicked finishing trios on any island not [...]

Morningstar Championship Golf's tough shots provide winged entertainment on Vancouver Island

Crown Isle on Vancouver Island: A pure golf resort where you least expect it

Vancouver Island's Bear Mountain: No need for signature Nicklaus holes when they're all memorable

Fishing for a deep sea water wimp? Only on a golf trip

Canada Golf Articles

Photo Gallery: Dundarave Golf Course on Prince Edward Island

With red-sand bunkers and the Brudenell River, Dundarave Golf Course is a rave on Canada's PEI

Prince Edward Island is a storybook place that has redefined itself as a premier golf destination

Rookie Chez Reavie captures first PGA Tour victory in Canadian Open at Glen Abbey


Crowd favorite Mike Weir shares first-round lead in rain-soaked RBC Canadian Open

May 19, 2008

Any opinions expressed above are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of the management. The information in this story was accurate at the time of publication. All contact information, directions and prices should be confirmed directly with the golf course or resort before making reservations and/or travel plans.

[Contact us](#) [Site Map](#) [Advertising Info](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

© WorldGolf.com 1997- 2008

Ads by Google 

**[Quick Golf
Package Quotes](#)**

The quicker, easier way to plan your Myrtle Beach golf trips!
www.golfholiday.com/qui

**[Las Vegas Golf
Specials](#)**

Official Course
Site: No Fees No Prepay. Rates starting at \$49
www.waltersgolf.com/No

**[PEI Golf
Packages](#)**

Play & Stay golf packages with your choice of course & accommodations