

Business

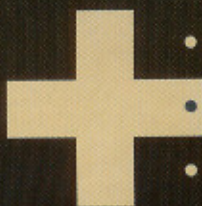
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Corporate Golf Getaway to Vancouver Island

BY ANDREW PENNER

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOLF VANCOUVER ISLAND

Background photo: Crown Isle Clubhouse



Bear Mountain - Valley Hole 17



Storey Creek Hole 14

The team has been grinding away for months. In spite of the times, business is holding its own. Profits, while not soaring, are hanging in there. For the most part, it's due to some heroic efforts by the team. They've proven themselves. They need a break. Golf is good. But where to go?

Yes, in a perfect world the charter would be summoned and the flight to Scotland would go off without a glitch. The historic rounds on the Old Course at St. Andrews, Carnoustie, Gleneagles, and Muirfield would be forever treasured. The grand hotels, the whiskey, and the world-class cuisine would ice the cake. Too bad there isn't a hundred grand in the budget. Like nearly every business out there, things have tightened up, especially when it comes to corporate getaways. Yes, indeed, time to get the feet back on the ground.

Naturally, that means sticking a little closer to home. Thankfully, closer to home also presents some outstanding options. Vancouver Island might just be the cream of the crop.

With over 33 championship courses to choose from – including a number with world-class meeting facilities – a warm climate that allows for year-round golf, outstanding

hotels, restaurants, and attractions, the necessary framework is certainly in place for a winner of a trip.

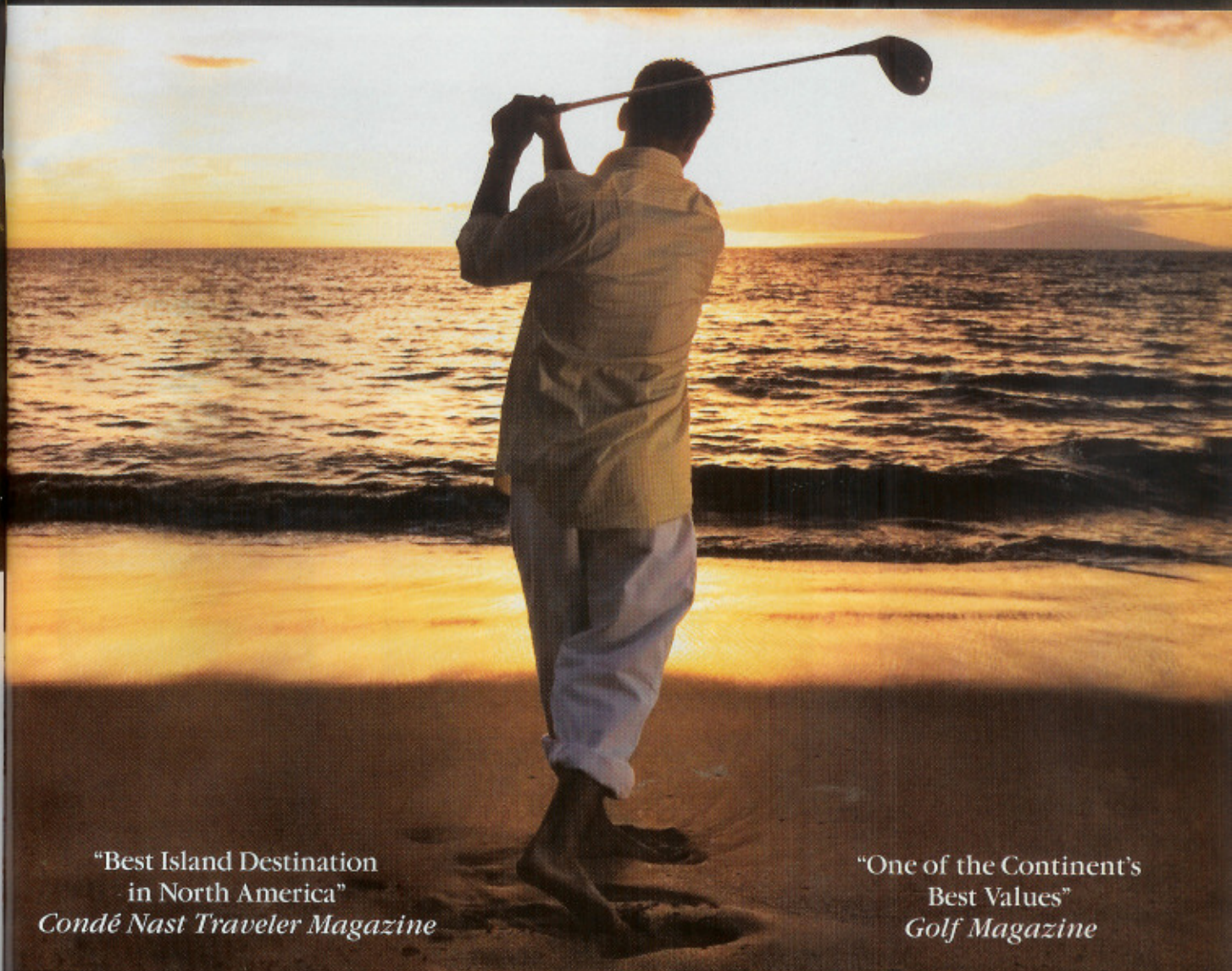
Also, access to great golf and a number of the island's best resorts is quick and easy when flying into Vancouver Island's two main (but conveniently small) airports. Short flights into Victoria and Comox (Westjet, Air Canada, and Horizon are the main carriers) from cities such as Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and so on, mean your staff or valued clients can actually be on the tee just minutes after touch down.

There's no better example of this than the Crown Isle Resort in Comox, perhaps the most beautiful, enjoyable – and conveniently located! – golf resort on the island. With luxurious course-side accommodation, plenty of meeting space in their massive 48,000-square foot clubhouse, and situated just a five-minute shuttle ride from the Comox Valley Airport, Crown Isle has plenty of enticing attributes. To top it off, the 7,024-yard Graham Cooke-designed championship golf course is simply stunning. So it's not surprising that many companies call on Crown Isle year after year for their corporate getaways.

Many of those corporate golf "work days" look like this: 18

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Arbutus Ridge #18



Pheasant Glen Hole 1



Delta Victoria Ocean Point Resort



Apres Golf at Bear Mountain



Fishing

holes in the morning, lunch and a brief meeting in the early afternoon, then another round of golf followed by cocktails and dinner in the evening. (Life is so tough on these junkets!). If that's the formula you like to use, then securing tee times at another nearby course is something you'll likely want to consider.

Another excellent course (located 30 minutes north of Crown Isle) is Storey Creek, a layout that nature lovers always fall in love with. Every hole on the 6,699-yard Les Furber route is tranquil and tree-lined, making for one of the most peaceful rounds of golf you'll ever experience. Perhaps this is exactly what your work-weary staff needs!

Just an hour, or so, south of Comox is another area to consider. Beautiful Oceanside (Parksville, Qualicum, & Nanoose Bay) is home to three of the most scenic courses on the island, a number of outstanding resorts and meeting facilities, and some very cool

restaurants, including The Landing, with its amazing floor-to-ceiling salt-water aquarium.

Pheasant Glen, one of the "secret gems" on the island, boasts a secluded 18-holer that parades through a quiet meadow before meandering through rolling woodland on the exciting back nine. There is also an outstanding golf academy at Pheasant Glen, led by their popular director of instruction, Brent Morrison. For the "players" in the group, it doesn't get much better than Morningstar. A past Canadian Tour site, Morningstar is a pristine parkland course with ample length, difficult greens, and plenty of sand and water to keep you on your toes.

Fairwinds is a classic resort course, not too long, not too difficult, but beautifully maintained with stellar views and a soothing seaside atmosphere. It's the perfect course when you have players of all skill levels in the group.

For companies really wishing to hit a home run with their staff or clients, upscale golf resorts don't get much finer than Bear Mountain. Here, just 30 minutes from downtown Victoria (40 minutes from the Victoria International Airport), you've got two world-class Jack and Steve Nicklaus-designed golf courses, the luxurious Westin Hotel, the sublime Santé spa, a jaw-dropping 160,000 sq-ft., six-storey clubhouse with enough state-of-the-art meeting space to satisfy a good chunk of corporate America at the same time, and plenty of fabulous dining options. Indeed, life at Bear Mountain is about the furthest thing from "roughing it" you could imagine.

Perhaps the most exciting development at Bear Mountain, a self-sufficient lifestyle community that is constantly expanding and evolving, is the recent addition of the Valley Course, which will celebrate its grand opening in April 2009. Routed through a swath of



Drown Isle No. 6

If you
haven't already
realized it, you'll
know now...
that you've found
a very special
golf destination.



Fairwinds Hole 18

ragged, rock-peppered terrain on the east side of Mt. Finlayson, the Valley Course will be somewhat softer than its big brother, the mighty Mountain Course. Although the scores at Bear Mountain (especially the Mountain) tend to be a little higher than other courses, rest assured, your crew will leave the resort wowed by the experience, especially if spa treatments and juicy steaks from Panache (grilled to perfection with a rare Montague Broiler) are part of the festivities.

If you choose to make the Westin Bear Mountain your home away from home for a few days, a number of other outstanding golf courses in the area can be added to the itinerary. Nearby Olympic View, for example, is good enough for Tiger Woods (he played there as an amateur in 1994), so there's a pretty good chance your gang will enjoy it, too. A beautiful restaurant and deck overlooking the pond is a great place to cap off the round and reminisce about the day's events.

From Bear Mountain, a quick spin over the Malahat into the Cowichan Valley can also be added. The beautiful drive alone is an experience to savour and the warm micro-climate of the Cowichan (stop at a few wineries?) is certainly conducive to a memorable day or two of golf. Try Duncan Meadows, Arbutus Ridge, or the charming Cowichan Golf & Country Club, a classic course with plenty of character.

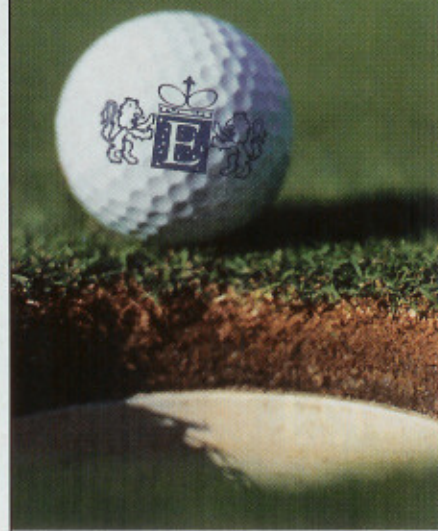
Speaking of character, the old-world feel of Victoria, the Inner Harbour, the stunning architecture - including the beautiful Fairmont Empress Hotel and the B.C. Parliament Buildings, most notably - can make for a special day of sightseeing to conclude your island golf getaway. If you haven't already realized it, you'll know now, amidst

the buskers and the boats, that you've found a very special golf destination.

To book your corporate golf getaway to Vancouver Island, contact the specialists at Golf Vancouver Island at 1-888-465-3239. They are your one-stop shop for golf tee times, accommodation, meeting space, transportation and even après golf activities! **BIC**

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