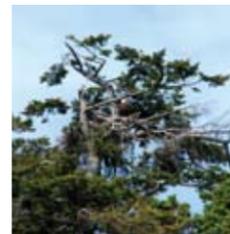




# VANCOUVER ISLAND'S BEAR MOUNTAIN RESORT AND GOLF CLUB

Plan a holiday to the southern tip of Vancouver Island, Victoria British Columbia, where you will find reasonably priced luxury and great golf in a most spectacular setting at the newly opened Westin Bear Mountain Resort. ROSANNE ZINNIGER takes us there. **BY ROSANNE ZINNIGER**



The large island, named after George Vancouver, a Royal Navy Captain who surveyed and claimed the northwest coast for the British Monarch, is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the terrain goes from a sandy shore to heavily wooded areas to granite rocky points and a wide range of natural wildlife including many species of birds, deer, bald eagles, cougars and bears.

Once arriving in Victoria, either by United Airlines or seaplane, it is advisable to rent a vehicle, as there are so many scenic places to visit and many are within a 20- to 30-minute drive. The quaint rugged mountain community of Bear Mountain is situated 900-feet above sea level, and just 20 minutes from beautiful downtown Victoria, is Canada's only resort that features a Nicklaus Group-designed 36-hole golf course.

Bear Mountain's lavish 160,000 square foot quality resort, offers the Santé Spa, three superb restaurants, and a state-of-the-art Mountainside Athletic Club where there are two gymnasiums, swimming pool, hot tub, and men and women's workout rooms, and of course two beautifully sculpted 18-hole tracts. The Bear Mountain community encompasses the resort along with single-family homes, condominiums and townhouses, which will eventually total over

3,300 residences. Soon to be completed is the marketplace square, where there will be a grocery store, fine boutiques, and other shops to serve the growing community and visiting resort guests.

Since the climate is mild most of the year, the ideal times to visit are late spring through early fall; however, if you do visit during the rainy months, you will be pleasantly surprised to find that both golf courses have superior drainage, so they remain playable in spite of the wet season.

## JACK'S COURSES

The Valley course is a par-71 that had been recently completed in May this year. Although, designers Jack and Steve Nicklaus were absent from the opening, Len Barrie, a retired NHL Hockey and CEO/Owner of the resort, was on hand to see that all went according to plan – namely, experiencing the Valley course to its fullest and then dining at Panache, the club's fine dining restaurant.

This meant a lot to the man who he revealed during the opening, "This has been a surreal experience from planning to execution." Back in 2002, Barrie was inspired to build a simple course, however the land he chose for the project offered him a bigger outlook on the design, so with a new vision, he enlisted some of his buddies from the NHL to invest with him. Barrie



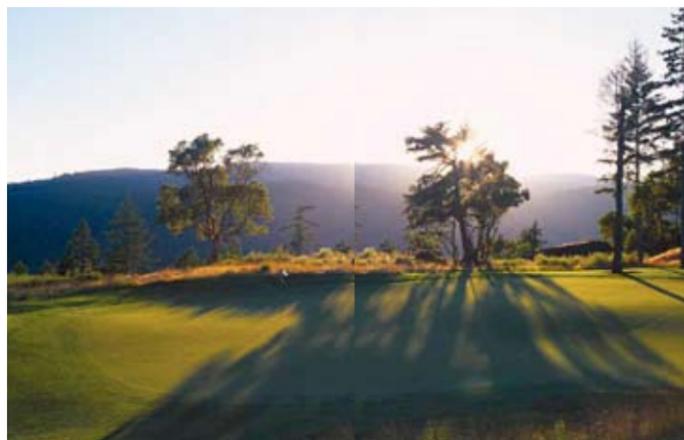
**“Bear Mountain’s lavish 160,000 square foot quality resort, offers the Santé Spa, three superb restaurants, and a state-of-the-art Mountainside Athletic Club where there are two gymnasiums, swimming pool, hot tub, and men and women’s workout rooms, and of course two beautifully sculpted 18-hole tracts.”**

laughingly said, “Had I known what I was getting into exactly, I probably would have rethought the project. However, all has amazingly fallen into place.” Then, more seriously, he stated, “Much of the rocky land had to be blasted and many trees had to be removed, so much money and time was invested to make it happen.”

You will find that all of Barrie’s efforts and of his team were well executed, as the resort and both golf courses are now among the finest in Canada. One integral member of his team is

Nicklaus Design Group Senior Design Associate, Chris Cochran, who worked on both courses, and said, “When we first started Bear Mountain, there was just going to be one golf course and a few houses. The developer wanted a strong test of golf since it was going to be a high and private golf course, so that is what we designed. Not soon after the Mountain course was created, the developer wanted to a new course and all is part of a resort.”

Cochran continued, “With all this in mind, we designed the Valley course to have wider fairways,



## What to do in Victoria

British Columbia’s capital Victoria is a wonderful city to explore. With a mild year-round climate, the city is surrounded by lush rainforests and ocean coast. British Columbia’s largest city on Vancouver Island, it was named for the reigning monarch, Queen Victoria in 1843, and boasts the best kayaking in the world, easy access to miles of scenic trails for hiking and cycling, 48 parks, over 20 golf courses, and is a great city for walking.

Stay at the centrally located Grand Pacific Hotel right across from Inner Harbor. Begin with a city tour and discover a fusion of European and Asian influences from parliament buildings, Old Customs House, The Fairmont Empress Hotel and Chinatown, all of which can be viewed from a horse-drawn carriage, a double-decker bus, or a tour van.

The Prince of Whales, located in the Inner Harbor, offers whale watching on the north coast and around the local islands on a zodiac. Since guides chart the local whale spotting, all whales are documented and named, and you are sure to see a local Minka Whale, as guides know exact whale locations. However, the whales do have their own schedule, and may choose to stay in warmer waters at certain times. After the ocean tour, take a walk about the harbour, have a fish wrap at Red Fish, Blue Fish cafe, and stop in at the Royal BC Museum to take in a little history.

**To get full information on Victoria, visit [www.tourismvictoria.com](http://www.tourismvictoria.com)**



fewer bunkers, and bigger greens that tend to collect the golf ball better. Therefore at Bear Mountain you have two distinct golf courses. The Mountain course sits higher on the mountain, and is a sterner test of golf. The Valley course sets lower at the base of the mountain with no homes around it therefore has a bit more of a wild and natural feel to it."

### THE VALLEY

The more sporty Valley course, a par 72 at 7,000 yards, has some short par 3's and par 4's, with unique challenges. From holes one to 18, you will find that the course is well undulated from fairways to the greens. The famous Nicklaus bunkers are strategically placed throughout, with some of the quickest greens in the West.

Memorable holes include #6, #13, and #17. On the 200-yard par 3, 6th, elevation will stretch the unusually long par 3 even longer. The picturesque setting will also soothe nerves, as there is a lovely creek nearby that runs toward the lake beyond the green. Water will come into play on Hole 13, a par 4, as it winds through the full length of the hole and empties into a large lake just right of the green. You will also be challenged with a downhill tee shot where you will have to avoid a huge exposed rock just short and left of the dance floor.

Hole 17, a par 4 that doglegs to the right a little and is downhill with trouble to the right tempts the player to drive the green, but the smart play is to the left, using the sloping terrain to feed the ball back to the centre. The carry over water and a bunker on the approach will allow you a perfect sinking shot to the pin. Beautiful maple trees and a waterfall is the view from here back across the fairway.

### THE MOUNTAIN

The Mountain course is co-designed by Jack and Steve Nicklaus, an 18-hole, par 72, 7,212 yards framed by towering pines, rivers, rocks, and valleys. This course is a bit more challenging compared to the Valley course, however all skill levels will enjoy panoramic views while playing on rolling fairways among lush forest and natural wildlife – which include Cormorants, Blue Herons, Osprey, Bald Eagles, Ducks, Geese, and a variety of birds. Major trouble on this course is water, however the scenery is so breathtaking that you will enjoy the challenges.



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**- Chris Cochran, Nicklaus Design Group Senior Design Associate**



Signature holes here include #8, #11, and #14. The par 4, 483 yards, 8th, is a lovely but tough. Drive over water to reach the fairway for a long approach shot to the pin. The 11th consists of a 124-yard par 3 that is completely surrounded by (again) water. A look east on Hole 14 provides a nice view of Mount Baker and a glimpse of Victoria, Port Angeles and the ocean, and all play is uphill and a long way to the pin. There is actually an upper and lower fairway up to the green to confound the player.

### SANTÉ SPA

After long days of playing spectacular courses, it is definitely time to have some quality relaxation at the Bear Mountain Resort's Santé Spa. Experience their signature treatment, the Pacific Ocean Body Wrap, which uses seaweed harvested from Victoria's coastal waters, seaweed body butter, and ingredients that are locally grown. For a cute throwback to the game, try 'Mulligan', a river rock foot soak with lower leg massage while enjoying a cold beverage. Pun fully intended, this could be just the ticket for rejuvenation for the next leg of your journey! 📍

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