

British Columbia Golf Member Newsletter

May, 2011

Blackcomb Aviation and Big Sky Golf promise an adventure in the clouds

Looking to elevate your game to new heights this season? Step it up with a "Heli-Golf" adventure, courtesy of Pemberton's Blackcomb Aviation and Big Sky Golf and Country Club. Your day of play will go something like this: following a quick shuttle from your home base in Whistler Village, hop in one of Blackcomb Aviation's helicopter "carts" for a whirlybird ride to the operator's exclusive mile-high driving range at the top of Mt. Currie in Pemberton.

At the peak of this adventure, savour the view and swing your clubs for a warm up to remember, sure to give the term "longest drive" a whole new meaning. Post-swing, jump back into your "heli-cart" for a scenic descent to the base of Mt. Currie, and tee up for for 18 holes of manicured bent-grass fairways and lush greens at Big Sky Golf and Country Club (here, more traditional carts will provide your transport, tee-to-tee).

Pause for refreshment on the patio at Fescues, then buckle in for one more flight back to the Whistler Municipal Heliport before a quick shuttle back to your digs in Whistler Village. In all, you'll spend a whole lotta time in the sky, complete with an adventure in the clouds.

To book this, or other custom British Columbia golf packages, email sales@bcga.org or call 1.877.322.1223.

2011 Presidents Cup in Australia

Golf and Australia...What a great combination!

The Presidents Cup 2011 will be held at the historic Royal Melbourne Golf Club, 15-20 November 2011. With twelve of the best players from the United States up against twelve of the best from the International ranks outside Europe, the four days of team match-play competition will be one of the most anticipated events of the 2011 golf season. You have always wanted to visit Australia, now you have one more great reason to visit the lands Down under ...combine your love of golf with your trip of a lifetime!

Goway Travel Ltd have been appointed the official North American travel operator for The Presidents Cup 2011 and we are North America's oldest and most established travel operator to the South Pacific. The Presidents Cup 2011 five night packages start from CAD\$2889 per person and seven night packages from CAD\$3259 per person, including air from Vancouver. Visit our website for more information or call us today and begin your journey... 1 866-5150-2878 and quote your BCGA membership number for a discount on your package price.

<http://www.goway.com/specialevents/golf/index.html>

Canadian Tour Event in Kamloops

The quality and variety of Kamloops' golf courses has attracted the attention of the Canadian Tour and for 2011, Kamloops will host the second BC stop on the tour June 6 – 12 at Rivershore Estates and Golf Links. The Canadian Tournaments Players Association is the governing body of the Canadian Tour and operates a series of tournaments in Canada, the United States and Latin America. The association represents more than 200 members from around the world.

The Western Championship is a new event that will be a natural fit for the Canadian Tour scheduled between the Times Colonists Islands Savings Open in Victoria, BC and the Syncrude Boreal Open in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Hosted at one of the finest tests of golf in Canada, the Robert Trent Jones Sr. designed Rivershore Estates and Golf Links will certainly continue to impress upon visitors, locals and avid golfers that Kamloops is undeniably Canada's hottest golf destination. Don Brett Davies, Director of Operations/General Manager of Rivershore Estates and Golf Links expressed excitement at the opportunity to host this first ever Canadian Tour event in Kamloops.

"The hosting of this event will further enhance Kamloops' prime position as a golf destination, noted Lee Morris, CEO Tourism Kamloops. The event also provides Kamloops golf enthusiasts significant opportunities to engage in the staging of the event and support the game of golf." The tour will attract both Canadian and International golfers representing some of the top PGA TOUR prospects from more than twenty countries.

Tee - and cast - off at Tobiano

Some courses may harbour lakeside locations, but few can lay claim to their own "course-side" marina. Ranked as one of the hottest golf courses in the province, Tobiano joins that exclusive club this summer with the construction of their new full-service harbour development.

Set on scenic Kamloops Lake, this ship-to-shore marina will house 124 slips, a boat launch, and over 200 "boat in/golf out" moorings. Translation? Following a quick "ahoy" on the docks, boaters turned duffers can holler "fore!" to their heart's content on the sprawling Thomas McBroom-designed Tobiano golf course. And what a course.

Perched above, and tracing the washes and swales along Kamloops Lake, this desert layout boasts fairways that funnel through canyons, "Infinity Greens" perched on cliffs as though suspended in mid-air, and challenging ridges dotted with sagebrush and cacti. Throw in a 929-square-metre (10,000-square-foot) clubhouse to match the grandeur of the surroundings and it all adds up to one of British Columbia's "must play" golf experiences. Ship to shore. www.tobianogolf.com

Golf & Wine In Vancouver Island's Cowichan Valley

No, it's not likely the pig-tailed prom queen on the golf course beverage cart is going to be ditching her ice-chilled stock of beer for Australian Syrahs and Oregon Pinot Noirs any time soon. After all, golf and beer go together like cake and ice cream. But, thanks to wine regions like Napa, Niagara - and one you've rarely, if ever, heard about, Vancouver Island's Cowichan Valley – golf and wine are getting paired together more and more often. And, if you're like me, the palate can definitely make room for the combination.

With Victoria sprawling likes it's never sprawled before, the Cowichan Valley, located a short 45-minute drive "up island" over the Malahat, is having an awakening, of sorts. People are coming. People are buying property. People are finding out about the wines. And people are discovering that the fairways and greens here are some of the finest on the island.

The Cowichan Valley, or "The Warm Land," as it means in the language of the local First Nations people, is a lush, farm-friendly region that has a surprisingly different character than bustling Victoria. This tiny region (the population of the Cowichan Valley is just over 79,000) is home to quaint, by-the-sea fishing villages, tucked-away towns that haven't changed much in 75 years, and, of course, great golf courses and up and coming wineries – both of which march to their own beat.

In all, the tranquil Cowichan Valley is home to just 12 wineries – some well established and others just starting out. Visiting a winery and trying the fruits of the labour could be participating in a regularly scheduled tour and tasting or a matter of driving down a bumpy gravel road, wedging your vehicle between the vines, waving madly at the owner/winemaker (who's busy trimming and inspecting his vines but will happily come talk to you) and having him unlock the door to the private tasting room to give a sample. Quite charming, really. And certainly unpretentious.

Unpretentious, too, is a good word to describe the golf here. The Arbutus Ridge Golf Club, Duncan Meadows Golf Club and Cowichan Golf & Country Club are all situated within this wine region. The Arbutus Ridge Golf Club is only 20 minutes from the outskirts of Victoria and directly surrounded by 9 Cowichan wineries within 5 to 20 minutes. The city of Duncan is the commercial hub of the Cowichan Valley, which sits close to the Duncan Meadows Golf Club and Cowichan Golf & Country Club.

On a golf/wine trip, wrapping up the day's activities at the golf course is generally not the wisest thing to do. So, on the short drive after your round you're best advised to get off the Island Highway and spin through the back roads. It's here where you'll discover some of the "secrets" of why a visit to the Cowichan Valley is so rewarding. Besides the wineries, family-run farms, (such as Cowichan Bay Farm, where you can pull up and pick up fresh cider-flavoured chicken sausage on the honour system), European-style bakeries (check out True Grain Bakery in Cowichan Bay), native art galleries (a "must" for arts and crafts lovers is Whipple Tree Junction), and strolls along the driftwood-strewn beaches are just some of the possibilities. Certainly, exploring this region will always bring about some memorable, off-the-beaten-path discoveries.

So how do the wines of the Cowichan Valley stack up? Well, for starters, this is a very young wine region. The big reds – the Cabernets, the Syrahs, etc. - simply do not do well here. The climate just isn't hot enough. But winemakers such as Hans Kiltz (one of the pioneers of island wines) of Blue Grouse Estate Winery have discovered it's the German "cool climate" white varietals that really flourish here. Grapes such as Ortega, Muller-Thurgau, and Siegerrebe produce clean, crisp, fruit-forward wines that pair exceptionally well with seafood, especially.

But this isn't to say that red wine lovers will leave disappointed. In fact, one of the best Pinot Noirs in the country comes from this region. Little-known Venturi-Shulze Vineyards (call ahead if you want to do a tasting, there are no regular hours) in rural Cobble Hill is about as meticulously and lovingly operated as a vineyard can be. If you can swing a taste, you won't be disappointed. Unfortunately, because of high demand, their wines are chronically short in supply.

Also in high demand are ciders from Merridale Estate Cidery, another gem in the area. Another favourite here is the Blackberry Port from Cherry Point Vineyards. Recently purchased by the Quw'utsun' Vineyard Development Corporation, a subsidiary of the Cowichan Tribes of Duncan, BC, Cherry Point's beautifully appointed tasting room, gift shop, and larger-than-average production levels make it one of the most popular visits on the "tour."

Certainly, if you're a wine and golf lover, you'll be challenged with balancing your itinerary on a trip to the Cowichan. So alluring are the visits to the tucked-away tasting rooms, farmer's markets, beaches, etc., that the golf can, if you're not careful, slip to the wayside. It shouldn't.

Both Arbutus Ridge, which has a 4 Star Golf Digest rating, and the Cowichan Golf and Country Club have plenty to offer the swingers. And, just like the region's wines, both are very different in style and character. Arbutus Ridge is a contemporary, upscale course that plays alongside the seaside community of Cobble Hill then climbs a ridge that has been specifically designed to take advantage of some of the best vistas on Vancouver Island. The course is aptly named after the characteristic Arbutus tree that frames in the foreground of the terrific scenery. The thought provoking holes twist through the trees and the do-or-die 214 yard tee shot to the peninsula green on the 17th is always something to look forward to. In the clubhouse you'll find the Satellite Bar & Grille boasting island, ocean and mountain views as well as a well-flavoured local wine list. In fact, the restaurant hosts several Winemaker's dinners with local wineries. You'll see that part of the reason Arbutus Ridge won a Sustainability Award is their fresh herb garden, used for culinary creations in the Satellite Bar & Grille. Cowichan is a classic, old-style course with small greens, tight fairways, and towering trees as the main defence. With two fairly distinct nines (the back nine is more in the woods), Duncan Meadows is a championship-ready track that was recently named one of the most underrated courses in Canada by SCOREGolf Magazine.

Another must play if you visit the area is the Bear Mountain Resort in nearby Langford (over the Malahat towards Victoria) and only 25 minutes from the Arbutus Ridge Golf Club. While the courses in the Cowichan Valley are laid-back and rural in nature, Bear Mountain is a hyped-up and exceptionally dramatic experience. Boasting Canada's first and only 36 hole Nicklaus design golf offering in Canada and future Nicklaus Academy, Bear Mountain is a huge, multi-million dollar concoction complete with a

massive Westin Hotel, Santé Spa, five restaurants, Mountainside Athletic Club and now retail stores as well. The mind-bending scale of the Bear Mountain mega-project has to be seen to be believed.

For more information, please visit: www.wineislands.ca. For more information and to book your Golf and Wine vacation, please contact sales@bcga.org or 1.877.322.1223

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