

## Tee up and land the big one in British Columbia

World-class salmon fishing and golf come together on Vancouver Island

By Chris Baldwin

[TravelGolf.com](#)

updated 8:00 a.m. PT, Fri., Sept. 5, 2008

CAMPBELL RIVER, British Columbia - As rain pelted Storey Creek Golf Club, emptying the parking lot and transforming a round of golf into a test of endurance, the group of 16 still out on the fairways kept turning to each other with one thought.

"I hope the weather's better when we're fishing tomorrow."

And you thought golfers' minds never ventured far from the fairways?

Think again. If you love to golf and fish, Vancouver Island is one of the best places in the world to practice both. Vancouver Island's golf offers an interesting mix of courses — including one designed by Jack Nicklaus ([Bear Mountain](#)) and another soon-to-be-opened layout by Greg Norman ([Cliffs Over Maple Bay](#)) — and Canadian countryside.

Its fishing is even better.

Vancouver Island has what's widely regarded as some of the best salmon fishing in the world along the Campbell River. And that's just one of the spots on this island where you can do big-time fishing. It's possible to stay right in downtown Victoria — the hip, happening, water-surrounded city that serves as Vancouver Island's capital and tourist hub — and take a half-day fishing trip while still having plenty of time to play golf courses like [Olympic View](#).

You can take fishing charters right from Victoria's picturesque harbor.

Vancouver Island's golf tourism center calls these fishing and golf combination trips Fins & Skins. You'll just call them fun. You may also find your priorities suddenly changing. Like that large group at Storey Creek golfing through the rain with little moaning, only hoping that their fishing trip isn't spoiled.

### Vancouver Island + salmon fishing = Painter's Lodge

Those 16 guys at Storey Creek were staying at Painter's Lodge, a fishing retreat that's world renowned among serious anglers, one that attracted celebrities like John Wayne and Bob Hope back in the day.

"If you know about fishing, you know Painter's Lodge," fishing guide Andrew Woods said. "It's a pretty special place."

Painter's Lodge is fishing's version of [Pebble Beach](#). Not that they're going to put on any airs. One of the best things about Painter's Lodge is how unpretentious it remains. This place is still firmly focused on fishing, first, foremost and always.

The setting for the lodge is striking, right on the Discovery Passage waterway with a long wooden dock leading right from the main building to the water. But no one feels the need to spruce up rooms with plush, high-thread-count sheets or a hulking HDTV.

You're here to fish, and while you'll be comfortable, you'll also get a rustic feel. The rooms right near the aquatic center provide a great view of the dock and other guests getting into the 17-foot Boston Whalers (three seats, including one for the guide, and a motor) that are small enough to zoom into the tight spots where salmon run.

You don't have to be a diehard fisherman to fall in love with the scene, though, and you definitely don't have to watch those fishing competitions on ESPN.

"We do get a lot of guys who are going to fish and golf," said Andrew Gilchrist, the general manager at Storey Creek, the golf course that's closest to Painter's Lodge. "You'll get the big-time regular fishermen, the guys who are fishing a lot at home too. But you'll also get the golf lovers who just want to fish because they're in British Columbia and they want to try something different."

"A lot of times those golf guys cannot stop raving about what the fishing was like though. It's so different from what they're used to from every other golf trip."

### Vancouver Island's fish/golf convenience

There are other destinations where you can golf and fish, of course. But there may not be another one where you can do this type of world-class salmon fishing with such ease on a golf trip.

Painter's Lodge supplies all the gear. All you have to do is go to that aquatic center at the resort to buy your fishing license (it's less than \$15).

During prime salmon season (which is running right now), dock jams can be more common than tee-time rushes.

The difference is there's a lot of ocean. You're not going to have to wait for somebody else to finish fishing to take your shot.

Of course, at Painter's Lodge sometimes you don't even have to be fishing to get a close encounter of the aquatic kind. Taking the water taxi across to Painter's Lodge's sister resort April Point (guests at either one get full use of the other's facilities), the captain of the tiny boat noticed some dolphins in the water nearby.

After checking with his six passengers to see if it was all right, the water taxi suddenly turned into a dolphin viewing excursion with the detour bringing the taxi within feet of jumping, playful dolphins.

Arriving at April Point brought a dinner sitting along the water in a setting romantic enough that one vacationing couple changed into a suit and tie and frilly dress.

"You golfers probably think this is roughing it," one guy cracked when he recognized a few golfers getting into their second bottle of wine.

Hey, nobody noticed the devout fishermen vacationers eating with their hands on the docks.

Besides, you're on Vancouver Island. The line between golfers and fishermen can blur quickly. So much so that you're playing through a downpour — more than happily, if that means the weather will be fine the next day on the boat.

For more information on Vancouver Island's Fins & Skins golf and fishing vacation options, visit call (866) 992-5566 or visit <http://www.golfvancouverisland.ca/worldgolf/>.

URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26408160/>

