

Isle of Plenty

Superb golf has elevated Canada's Prince Edward Island to the top tier of travel destinations

BY KEVIN ROUSSEAU

When Met Area golfers plan vacations, they often look south to Florida, west to Arizona or even east, across the pond to Ireland or Scotland. Maybe they should start looking north, to Prince Edward Island. In a relatively short time, P.E.I., a tiny 140-mile long province on Canada's Atlantic coast, has gone from near-total obscurity to one of the premier golf hotspots in North America.

Brudenell River Golf Course is routed through dense forest and near its namesake water feature, highlighting the natural beauty of golf on Prince Edward Island.

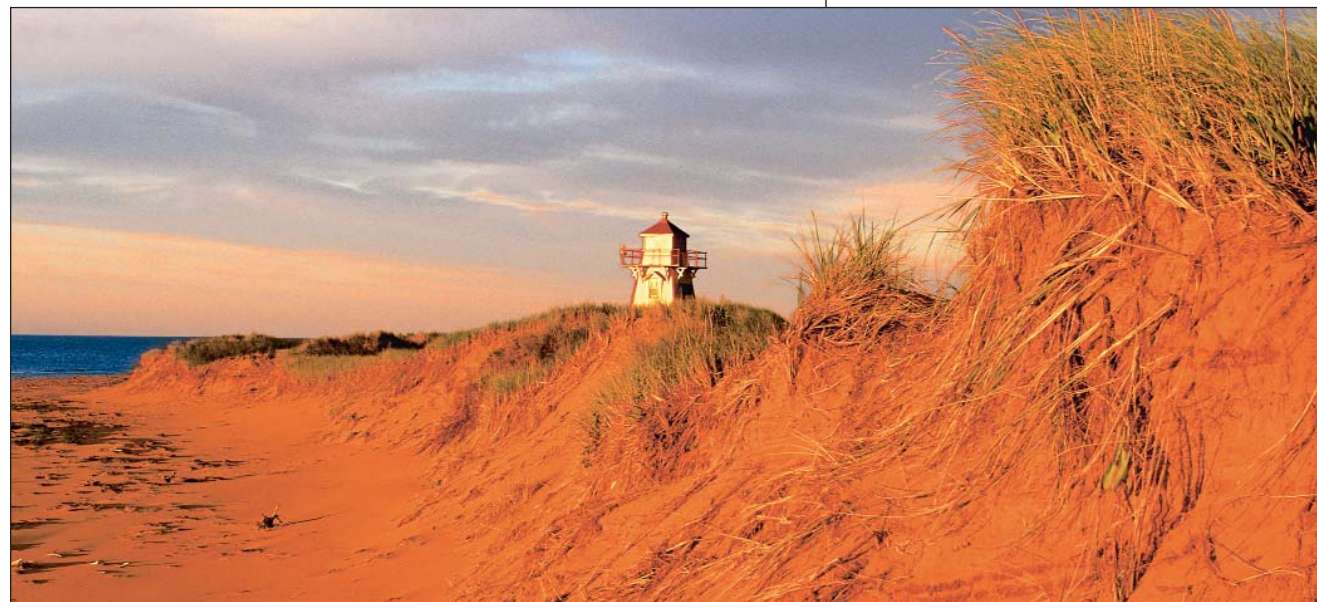
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In a recent Toronto *Globe And Mail* ranking of the top 100 public golf courses in Canada, P.E.I. had an impressive 10 courses listed. At least 26 courses of differing styles dot the island; varying from the modest-yet-visually stunning Glen Afton to the play-if-you-dare championship tees on the Links at Crowbush Cove. And because of its uncluttered pace of life (i.e. a lack of traffic and a relaxed vibe), it's no problem to fit in two rounds of golf at different courses within a day and still have time for a sumptuous lobster dinner.

"It's home. There's really no better place

The famous red-sand beaches of P.E.I. are seen here at Covehead.



to be," says LPGA veteran and P.E.I. native Lorie Kane. "For me, it's a place to get grounded from the hustle and bustle of the tour. We have a simple way of seeing things. And as a people, we love to share the island. You are not going to feel rushed playing golf there. We are going to make sure you have a good time."

With the opening of the Confederation Bridge in 1997 (see sidebar, page 83), it's now possible to take a road trip and drive onto P.E.I. from neighboring New Brunswick. The bridge was an engineering marvel and was a source of great debate among islanders in the years leading up to its construction. Before it was built, the only way onto the island from New Brunswick was via the ferry. Once you cross the Northumberland Strait (about a twelve-minute drive), you'll be impressed with top-notch playing conditions, scenery, and the small crowds that define the golf experience on the island. But like a trip to Scotland or Ireland, perhaps what you will remember most about P.E.I. is the warmth of the people.

There are a number of accommodation options throughout the island. You can choose from one of two upscale **Rodd Resorts** hotels at either **Crowbush Cove** or **Brudenell**, two of the island's leading golf facilities. In addition to being the most luxurious accommodations on the island, these resorts also offer the convenience of being able to roll out of bed and proceed directly to the first tee. For those who like to truly get away from it all, **Dalvey By The Sea** offers timeless charm, quality dining, and an unbeatable location inside a national park.

Or you can stay in the province's capital, Charlottetown, if you enjoy seeing the sights off the golf courses as well. Charlottetown is a

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The majestic Links at Crowbush Cove features multi-tiered greens with undulating fairways.

walkable and welcoming city. The downtown area is filled with small shops, restaurants and historic sites. Given how small the island is, the city is no more than an hour's drive from any golf course or tourist attraction, including the Green Gables House in Cavendish (the farmhouse that inspired the book *Anne of Green Gables*), the beaches in P.E.I. National Park or the coastal town of Victoria-by-the-Sea.

The premier spot to stay in the capital is the Inns On Great George. Formerly a number

of adjacent townhouses, the Great George transformed itself over the last thirteen years into a boutique property where no two rooms are identical. Its central location, just a few blocks from downtown shops and lively restaurants such as the **Olde Dublin Pub** and the **Merchantman Pub**, allows you the freedom to explore the capital on foot.

Then again, driving around on the island can be a hypnotizing experience. Maybe it's the multi-colored ribbons of lupines that seem to

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Bridging the Gap

When it opened in May 1997, the 17-mile, two-lane Confederation Bridge between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island forever changed the land of red sand beaches and rolling farmland. No longer beholden to a ferry schedule, visitors and islanders can now come and go as they please.



The bridge features 65 piers, 310 lights and was designed with slight curves in order to make sure that you keep your attention focused as you cross over the Northumberland Strait. It is the longest bridge in the world that spans over ice-covered waters, and its piers are specially designed to break up the ice that can last for up to five months of the year. Your first impression of the bridge will be enhanced when you discover that it costs nothing to drive onto the island. But don't get too excited, as it costs \$41.50 to take the bridge back to the mainland.

run for miles alongside the roads in June, or the dramatic vistas of family farms that stop right at the ocean's edge. And thanks to all the new golf courses built on P.E.I. over the past twenty years, the island has become more than just a good place to get lost while driving around the countryside.

For a pleasant warm-up round, try **Fox Meadow Golf & Country Club** in the village of Stratford. It's only a five-minute drive from Charlottetown, making it a good choice for your arrival or getaway day. Opened in 2001, it perhaps is best known for the member-club feel of its beautiful clubhouse.

And then there are those pesky foxes. The starter will warn you: "Be on the lookout. The course is named Fox Meadow for a reason."

Another worthwhile in-town choice is Kane's home course, the semi-private **Belvedere Golf and Country Club**. Recently renovated by renowned Canadian architect Graham Cooke, it gives a true member-for-a-day experience. "To be a member at Belvedere is to be a member of one of the best clubs in Atlantic Canada," Kane noted. "It was established in 1906, and it's been refurbished but is still a traditional layout, with narrow fairways and small greens."

Just a half hour north of Charlottetown is **Eagles Glenn Golf Resort** in Cavendish. Even though it is situated just a few minutes away from the popular Anne of Green Gables tourist attractions, you'll feel miles away from the world of red pigtails and raspberry

cordials. As you navigate the secluded layout, you'll know you are a long way from the commotion back home.

Opened in 2002 and designed by Cooke as well, **Eagles Glenn** presents its challenge from the numerous mounds and roller-coaster hills that characterize its funneling fairways. Be prepared to play a lot of shots from uneven lies.

Located at the opposite end of P.E.I. National Park, the **Links at Crowbush Cove** opened in 1993 and placed seventh in a recent *Globe and Mail* ranking of Canadian golf courses. Simply put, this Thomas McBroom design is the one course that has to be played on a P.E.I. golf trip. It is both a golf and scenic masterpiece, and offers multiple views of the Gulf of St. Lawrence as well as the adjoining marshes that contrast with the vivid colors of the meticulous fairways and challenging greens. Last year, Crowbush announced itself on the international scene when it hosted a Legends of Golf match between Mike Weir and Vijay Singh.

Just how challenging is Crowbush? "The average foursome loses 18 balls during a round of golf here," smiled golf shop supervisor Ryan Garrett when asked for a local estimate. Crowbush has a Slope Rating of 148 from the back tees, and you should be on the lookout for the ladder that is required to get in and out of the greenside pot bunker on the fifth hole.

Crowbush's sister course, the Hurdzan and Fry-designed **Dundarave**, is about a half-hour east and offers mas-

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The quaint fishing village of Malpeque is one of many picturesque stops around the island.

sively wide fairways, difficult greens, and beautiful views of the Brudenell and Cardigan Rivers. But above all else, the Dunderave layout is characterized by its 121 bunkers, which are expertly positioned and filled with the reddish sand that is seen across many of P.E.I.'s beaches. Like Crowbush, it also was the site for a Legends of Golf event between Tom Watson and Jack Nicklaus in 2006.

Next door to Dunderave lies the equally impressive **Brudenell River Golf Course and Resort**. "I was introduced to the game when my dad was the first club pro at Brudenell. Learning the game of golf there, it has a special place in my heart," recalled Kane. "It's fun because it has six of everything: six par threes,

six par fours, and six par fives."

Rarely will you ever feel like you are being given the brush off when asking for directions or a suggestion for lunch from a local. To the contrary, you'd be excused for thinking that the Provincial government pays its citizens handsomely to convince the visitor that he or she should consider moving to P.E.I.

Then when the topic turns to golf, as it often does, you realize that after a few days spent dashing around the island, you are still amazed at the challenge, scenery and hospitality of Prince Edward Island's unforgettable and diverse group of courses. ■

Kevin Rousseau writes about golf from his home in Whitefield, Maine.

Before You Go: Facts About Prince Edward Island

Getting there: Air Canada flies to Charlottetown from both LaGuardia and Newark. Most flights make one stop in Montreal. Charlottetown is 850 miles (about 15 hours) by car from Manhattan.

Pricing: At press time, the U.S. and Canadian dollars were at equal value, negating the nearly 20-year-long advantage for traveling Americans. Still, you'll find prices in P.E.I. to be quite reasonable, with green fees as low as \$20 at some courses to a peak of \$100 at Crowbush Cove.

Where to Play:

Belvedere Golf and Country Club, Charlottetown; 902-368-7104; belvederegolf.com

Brudenell River Golf Course, Cardigan 800-235-8909; golfinkspei.com

Dunderave Golf Course, Cardigan 800-235-8909; golfinkspei.com

Fox Meadow Golf Club, Stratford 902-569-4653; foxmeadow.pe.ca

Eagles Glenn Resort, Cavendish 902-963-3600; eaglesglenn.com

The Links at Crowbush Cove, Lakeside 800-235-8909; golfinkspei.com

Other Courses to Consider:

Andersons Creek Golf Club, Hunter River; 902-886-2222; andersonscreek.com
P.E.I. native and Dallas Stars forward Brad Richards claims this gem has the best greens on the island.

Glasgow Hills, Hunter River 866-621-2200; glasgowhills.com

Consider doubling up this one with Andersons Creek as they are almost within a stone's throw of each other.

Glen Afton Golf Club, Nine Mile Creek; 902-675-3000; glenaftongolf.com

A scenic, if not especially challenging, layout that is perfectly suited to walking.

Where to Stay:

Rodd Brudenell River Resort, Cardigan 902-652-2332; rodd-hotels.ca/ourhotels/pei/brudenell/index.asp
The balconies of most rooms overlook the golf courses, and there are also 16 cottages on site.

Rodd Crowbush Golf and Beach Resort; Lakeside; 902-961-5600
rodd-hotels.ca/ourhotels/pei/crowbush/index.asp

Prepare to be mesmerized by views of the golf course and the North Shore.

The Inns On Great George, Charlottetown; 800-361-1118
innsongreatgeorge.com

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Dalvay By The Sea, Dalvay 888-366-2955; dalvaybythesea.com

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