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Wildstone Golf Course

Setting out on a super natural golf experience

By Joel Schlesinger

Will that be camera or club?

It's a tough call, even though you're standing in the middle of the fairway.

Yet this dilemma is likely familiar for the tens of thousands of golfers who visit the Kootenay Rockies region in British Columbia every year.

"You will certainly have trouble putting your camera down," says Rowley Ramey, the general manager of the **Kokanee Springs Resort**, which features an immaculately manicured 18-hole championship golf course.

With commanding views of the Selkirk and Purcell mountain ranges, set along the shores of Kootenay Lake, the resort is one of eight golfing options along what is called the **Kootenay Golf Trail**.

A veritable golfer's paradise tucked away in southeast B.C., the trail includes **Castlegar Golf and Country Club**, **Balfour Golf Course**, **Birchbank Golf Club**, **Creston Golf Club**, **Granite Pointe Golf Course** in Nelson, **Christina Lake Golf Club** and **Redstone Resort** in Rossland.

All offer challenging golf for all levels of players on courses that unfold over undulating terrain set among spectacular scenery.

It's a truly supernatural golfing experience that has many golfers spending almost as much time snapping pictures with their smartphones as they do swinging the clubs. But incredible golfing experiences set among stunning mountain vistas are simply par for the course when it comes to golfing in B.C.'s Kootenay Rockies region.

Certainly, a golfer could easily spend an entire vacation along the Kootenay Golf Trail, but there is so much more to explore through-



The Redstone Golf Resort in Rossland, B.C. Photo by Sara Rainford. Courtesy, KootenayRockies.com

out the entire region that stretches from Golden down to the United States border.

For Calgarians, the Kootenay Golf Trail courses, accessible by the Crowsnest Highway, are a couple of hours' drive farther south than the many popular courses located along the Columbia Valley.

Yet the extra time spent on the road is well worth it.

Many courses have vacation packages offering several days of golfing, accommodation and other activities.

At Kokanee Springs, visitors can split

their days golfing and exploring a region renowned for its artisans.

"We have what we call the 'Kokanee hour' that is everything that you can do within an hour of the resort," Ramey says

"We have one retreat called Fish and Chip, which is charter fishing and golf."

Another is an Indulgence Weekend where visitors can golf half the day and take culinary lessons the other half.

Located in Crawford Bay, the Kokanee Springs Resort is also close a number of small artisanal businesses, including the company

that made the brooms for the Harry Potter films, Ramey says.

Yet it's the golf that is truly jaw-dropping.

"Quite frankly, when I walk onto the course, I'm lost in the beauty; it's like the rest of the world melts away," says Ramey, who has three horticulturalists on staff tending to the gardens at the resort and the course.

"It's breathtaking."

The golfing options a little farther east along the Crowsnest toward the Alberta border are no less stunning, including the **Wildstone Golf Course** in Cranbrook. >>>

The course has only been open since 2011, but it's already earned a reputation as one of the best rounds of golf in North America.

"We've had some really good reviews," says Chris Andrews, general manager of Wildstone.

"Ron Whitten, the senior architecture editor for Golf Digest magazine, played all the new courses in North America in 2011 and called Wildstone his favourite round."

The Gary Player Black Knight Design course is a perfect blend of natural features and length that make it ideal for golfers of all levels.

Perched on Cranbrook's highlands, each of its 18 holes is lined with plenty of pine trees and offers spectacular views of the surrounding mountains.

"You start out with a great look at Fisher Peak and then you play 18 holes, with great views throughout, and you finish up with that same view taking your breath away," Andrews says.

"Fisher Peak stands tall above the green on the final shot, so it's really neat to have it wrap up that way."

Ranging from 4,900 to 7,100 yards in length, Wildstone is as challenging as you want to make it.

The walkable course has subtle elevation changes, Andrews adds.

It's also always kept in pristine shape.

"The golf course is gaining a reputation among golfers in large part because the maintenance of the course is just so good," he says. "The attention to detail is second to none."

Fernie Golf and Country Club is another immaculately maintained 18-hole layout. Nestled in the Elk River Valley in the Rockies, it offers a blend of parkland and links-style play.

"It's a lovely par-70 course with the Elk River running adjacent to the course," says head golf pro Mike Van Horne.

"It's got a fun layout that caters to every level of golfer, from the beginner to the advanced player."

Van Horne says the course has many outstanding and challenging holes, but his personal favourite is No. 3 — a 218-yard Par 3 surrounded by a large water hazard and bunkers.

"There are hazards all around the green so you have to make quality shots," he says, adding the surrounding pond has claimed plenty of balls over the years.

"It is a fairly large green that makes it a little easier to hit, but you might have a long putt at the same time."

A public course, it is beloved by Fernie residents, Van Horne says, while many



Castlegar Golf Club. Photo by Don Weixl. Courtesy, KootenayRockies.com

Calgary golfers simply stumble upon it on their way to other destinations, often in the U.S.

Yet, they're always pleasantly surprised, and often so enchanted by the golfing experience and the town itself, that they make plans to return for a longer visit, he says.

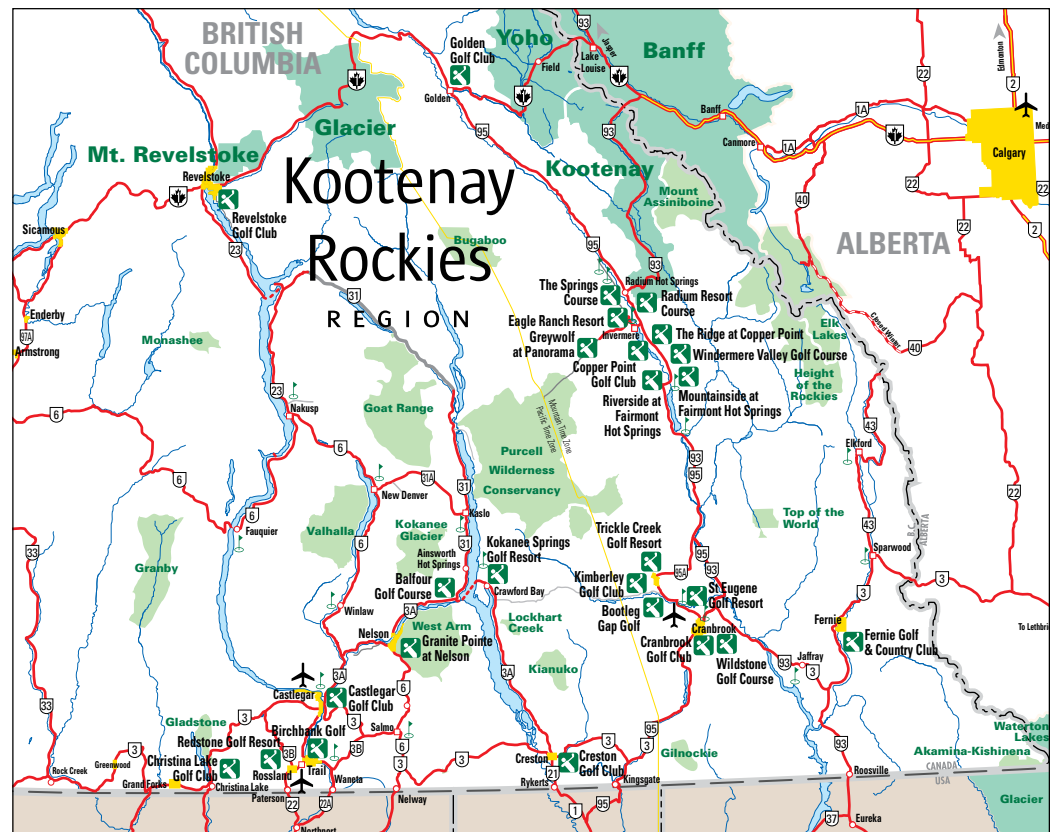
"Fernie is a world-class resort town year-round, with great restaurants, hotels, spectacular skiing in the winter and fantastic hiking and biking trails in the summer," he says. "The economy runs on tourism and the golf course is definitely becoming a draw."

With dozens of world-class courses to choose from across the Kootenay Rockies region in B.C., the toughest challenge may not be the courses themselves. It's choosing among so many options.

Perhaps the best course of action is opting for a little bit of a lot, Van Horne says.

"You can't go wrong with a short stop-over for a round or two."

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This Norman Woods original in Crawford Bay, BC is considered by many to be the flagship of Kootenay golf courses. Residing in a magnificent mountain setting and encompassing 750 acres with over a mile of lakefront on Kootenay Lake, as well as natural wetlands and soaring forests. Every hole at Kokanee is framed by spectacular panoramic views of the Kokanee Glacier and surrounding area, characterized by its long driving fairways, immense rolling greens, immaculate course upkeep, and ability to interest and challenge golfers at all levels.

TEES	●	●	○	L ○	L ●	L ●
YARDS	6,604	6,261	5,922	5,922	5,471	5,228
RATING	71.2	69.6	67.5	74.4	72.1	70.6
SLOPE	130	126	117	139	124	120



Kokanee Springs Resort 16082 Woolgar Road Crawford Bay, BC
1-800-979-7999 www.kokaneesprings.com



Fernie Golf & Country Club, sixth hole. Raven Eye Photography

GOLF COURSES

Here's a look at the major courses in the region **Kootenay-Rockies** region: For more information, including a complete list of green fees or any specials, visit: KootenayRockies.mobi and KootenayGolfDeals.ca

Note: Quoted price range is for 18 holes, adult, non-twilight (taxes extra). Price may include extras such as cart and/or practice facilities. For additional green fees, please visit each course's website.

Balfour Golf Course

Balfour, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, concession with licensed dining and outdoor deck, pro shop, lessons, driving range, putting and chipping greens.

Tee Times: 250-229-5655 or 1-866-669-4653

2014 Rates: \$49 to \$63

www.GolfBalfour.com

Set in picturesque meadows and forested woodlands overlooking Kootenay Lake, Balfour was designed by noted Canadian golf architect Les Furber, the man behind gems such as The Springs at Radium, Trickle Creek and St. Eugene. Several holes perfectly frame the lake and Purcell Mountains, including the par-3 ninth, while the final six holes are deemed by many to be among the best finishing stretches of golf in the Kootenay Rockies.

Birchbank Golf Course

Trail, B.C.

Services: Power carts, CPGA lessons, driving range, club rentals/storage/repairs, licensed

dining and lounge.

Tee Times: 250-693-2255

2014 Rates: \$60

www.BirchbankGolf.com

With the mighty Columbia River, Selkirk and Monashee mountains as a backdrop, Birchbank Golf Course is another Kootenay Rockies classic. Large greens and generously contoured fairways combine with dramatic elevation changes to make for a memorable round of golf.

Bootleg Gap Golf

Kimberley, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, chipping/practice area, driving range, licensed restaurant and lounge.

Tee Times: 250-427-7077

2014 Rates: 18 holes, \$52 to \$62; nine holes recreational, \$19

www.BootlegGapGolf.com

With 27 isolated holes in a gorgeous setting along the St. Mary River, Bootleg Gap Golf is one of the most exciting golf facilities in the Kootenay Rockies. Quiet, peaceful, laid-back, beautiful, well-maintained and natural: these are just some of the words that have been used to describe Bootleg Gap Golf. And, by those same definitions, Bootleg Gap represents all that is good about playing golf in this region.

Castlegar Golf Club

Castlegar, B.C.

Services: Power carts, premium club rentals, CPGA pros, practice facilities, licensed clubhouse and on-site camping.

Tee Times: 250-365-5006 or 1-800-666-0324

2014 Rates: \$57 to \$67

www.GolfCastlegar.com

Rated four stars by Golf Digest, Castlegar is known for its excellent course conditions. Set in the pine forests, the track has a stellar variety of holes and often serves as a venue for major golf tournaments in the region. An on-site RV park and campground was added in 2011.

Christina Lake Golf Club

Christina Lake, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, practice facility, club repairs and licensed dining, riverfront RV sites.

Tee Times: 250-447-9313

2014 Rates: \$39 to \$57

www.ChristinaLakeGolfClub.com

A summer hot spot for water-sport enthusiasts, Christina Lake is also known for its local golf course, which, due to the region's mild climate, stretches from mid-March to October. Secluded in a ponderosa pine forest near the Kettle River, the course is a beauty with several unique features such as black sand bunkers.

Copper Point Golf Club

Invermere, B.C.

Services: Electric power carts with GPS monitors, golf academy with CPGA lessons and driving range, full-service clubhouse, golf shop, licensed dining and adjacent Copper Point Resort hotel.

Tee Times: 250-341-3392; 1-877-418-4653

2014 Rates: The Point, \$80 to \$138;

The Ridge, \$60 to \$90

www.CopperPointGolf.com

Thirty-six holes of spectacular golf. Both courses at Copper Point are outstanding examples of how good golf can be when architects let the design complement the terrain they're building on and

accentuate its natural beauty. Combine this with dramatic elevation changes, lush fairways, strategically placed bunkers and undulating greens, and it's clear why The Point and The Ridge are two of the finest, most exciting courses in the Kootenay Rockies.

Cranbrook Golf Club

Cranbrook, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, practice green, driving range, licensed dining and banquet facilities.

Tee Times: 250-426-6462; 1-888-211-8855

2014 Rates: \$39 to \$55

www.GolfCranbrook.com

With a reputation as a mature course with a parkland-style layout, Cranbrook provides a great game of golf without a lot of hassle. The course is easy to walk and the efficient layout and multiple tee box choices mean a four-hour round is the norm. And, thanks to Cranbrook boasting the most sunshine hours of any city in B.C., the golf days and season are long.

Creston Golf Club

Creston, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, driving range and licensed dining.

Tee Times: 250-428-5515; 1-888-928-2582

2014 Rates: \$56

www.CrestonGolfClub.com

Featuring a layout that challenges all aspects of your game, the Creston Golf Club stands as an enjoyable test of golf. The diverse nature of each hole also makes for an interesting round, while abundant local wildlife can often be seen. In fact, a cougar once wandered onto the course a few years ago during the B.C. Senior Championship. >>>

GOLF COURSES

Eagle Ranch Golf Resort
Invermere, B.C.

Services: CPGA lessons, driving range, GPS-equipped power carts, club rentals, practice area, licensed restaurant, golf shop, banquet and meeting facilities.

Tee Times: 250-342-0562; 1-877-877-3889

2013 Rates: \$105 to \$139

www.EagleRanchResort.com

The thrilling up-and-down layout, designed by Bill Robinson, incorporates deep ravines, hoodoos and exposed bluffs. Nothing tops the awesome closing run. The 18th, a wild par 5 with a huge ravine bisecting the fairway, will give you an opportunity to leave a hero.

Fairmont Hot Springs

Fairmont Hot Springs, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, practice facilities, licensed dining and lounge, spa, beverage carts, pro shop, RV park, resort accommodation and natural hot springs.

Tee Times: 250-345-6070 or 1-800-665-2112

2014 Rates: Mountainside, \$39.99 to \$69.99; Riverside, \$49.99 to \$79.99; par 3, \$15.99 to \$19.99

www.FairmontHotSprings.com



St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino in Cranbrook, B.C. Photo by Image/hux.net

With 45 holes of golf — all nestled between the Purcell and Rocky Mountain ranges — the facility includes two championship courses (Riverside and Mountainside) and the par-3 Creekside course. The spectacular Riverside course offers beautiful emerald greens. The Mountainside course, which was revitalized by famed designer Doug Carrick in 2012, features velvety fairways and a host of riveting holes that will test every club in your bag.

Fernie Golf & Country Club

Fernie, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, practice facility, club storage,

club repairs, lounge, licensed dining, tournaments and groups welcome.

Tee Times: 250-423-7773

2014 Rates: \$57 to \$66

www.GolfFernie.com

One of the oldest courses in the Kootenay Rockies, the Fernie Golf & Country Club is close to downtown yet offers majestic views of the Rocky Mountain peaks that line the valley. Silica sand bunkers, impeccable greens and water on several holes make for a fun and fair round of golf for all ages.

Golden Golf Club

Golden, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, driving range, licensed dining, RV park and soft-spike facility.

Tee Times: 250-344-2700; 1-866-727-7222

2014 Rates: \$61 to \$71

www.GolfGolden.com

Unlike some courses that are lined by residential development, Golden remains mostly surrounded by untouched wilderness. Golf architects Les Furber and Bill Lewis did a masterful job of creating a course that honours its natural setting, highlighted by the wondrous 11th hole that is dramatically lined by the raging waters of Holt Creek. >>>

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GOLF COURSES

Granite Pointe at Nelson

Nelson, B.C.
Services: Power carts, club rentals, club repairs, CPGA lessons, driving range, club storage, licensed dining and tennis courts.
Tee Times: 250-352-5913; 1-877-677-6077
2014 Rates: \$54
www.GranitePointe.ca
 With some of the best scenery in the Kootenay Rockies region, Granite Pointe is a favourite golf destination for people visiting Nelson. Views include towering mountains, the glistening Kokanee Glacier and deep blue waters of Kootenay Lake.

Greywolf at Panorama

Panorama Mountain Village, B.C.
Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, licensed dining, hotel and condominium-style lodging, as well as driving range.
Tee Times: 250-341-4100; 1-888-473-9965
2014 Rates: \$109 to \$129
www.GreywolfGolf.com
 Located in a spectacular alpine setting at Panorama Mountain Village, Greywolf is the kind of course that wins people over. Recognized by Golf Digest as one of the

Top-100 courses in the world outside of the United States, Greywolf is about as impressive as mountain golf gets.

Kimberley Golf Club

Kimberley, B.C.
Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, driving range, club storage, licensed dining and soft spike facility.
Tee Times: 250-427-4161; 1-877-427-4161
2014 Rates: \$49 to \$55
www.KimberleyGolfClub.com
 Since opening in 1924, Kimberley has become known for its gently rolling, well-maintained fairways and greens, and a layout that requires accuracy more than great length off the tee. Kimberley wanders in and out of pine forests with views of the Purcell and Rocky Mountains.

Kokanee Springs Golf Resort

Crawford Bay, B.C.
Services: Power carts, club rentals, club storage, CPGA lessons, practice greens and traps, driving range, dining lounge with patio and on-site resort accommodations.
Tee Times: 1-800-979-7999
2014 Rates: \$89
www.KokaneeSprings.com
 Golf architect Norman Woods crafted

a course with his signature mix of lengthy fairways and large, undulating greens, with space for a variety of pin placements that make each round a fresh challenge.

Radium Resort

Radium Hot Springs, B.C.
Services: Power carts, club rentals, CPGA lessons, licensed dining, patio and lounge, banquet and meeting facilities, fitness centre, pool, spa, as well as course-side accommodations at both the Resort and Springs courses.
Tee Times: 1-800-667-6444
2014 Rates: Resort Course, \$45 to \$67; Springs Course, \$69 to \$110
www.RadiumResort.com
 The Resort course, built in 1957, is undergoing redevelopment, with three new holes and three modified holes already completed. The course offers amazing vistas and unique golf holes on a rugged mountainside site. The Springs course is a Les Furber design that opened in 1988. It skirts the Columbia Valley wetlands and features an unforgettable finish along the bluff. The tantalizing 17th, a short par 3 over a chasm, could make a strong case as the best of its kind in the region.

Redstone Golf Resort

Rossland, B.C.
Services: Power carts, club rentals, pro shop, CPGA lessons, licensed dining and patio.
Tee Times: 250-362-9141; 1-877-362-4555
2014 Rates: \$49 to \$61
www.RedstoneResort.com
 Rossland's former nine-hole course has been transformed into a Les Furber championship 18-hole course. With the revitalized and renovated original course as the back nine, and a new track created for the front nine, the result is an instant classic of mountain golf.

Revelstoke Golf Club

Revelstoke, B.C.
Services: Power carts, club rentals, club repairs, CPGA lessons, practice facility, driving range, chipping/putting greens and licensed clubhouse with patio dining.
Tee Times: 250-837-4276
2014 Rates: \$45 to \$59
www.RevelstokeGolfClub.com
 Revelstoke opened in to the early 1920s, and has been a local favourite every season. A tree-lined layout flows gently through the cedar forests and along the Columbia River. But don't let your guard down; holes such as the par-4 sixth, with the river protecting its left flank, can take a bite out of your game. >>>



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 www.golffernie.com**
 photo courtesy Raven Eye Photography

GOLF COURSES

St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino
Cranbrook, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, putting green, driving range, CPGA lessons, tournament and group bookings, food and beverage and a full-service casino resort hotel.

Tee Times: 1-877-417-3133

2014 Rates: Dynamic rates. Prices set daily.
www.StEugene.ca

St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino features a striking 7,007-yard, Les Furber-designed golf course, a beautiful boutique hotel and the only casino in the Kootenay Rockies region.

Shadow Mountain Golf
Cranbrook, B.C.

Services: GPS ower carts, club rentals, practice facility, licensed clubhouse, RV parking, lounge & patio, putting & chipping greens, driving range, lessons, pro shop, tournament & group bookings and a beverage cart.

Tee Times: 250-426-3306; 1-877-426-3306

2014 Rates: \$69 to \$89

www.ShadowMountain.ca

Shadow Mountain has become known for a layout that works in perfect harmony with nature, which was the goal of designer Wayne Carleton. Look for large contoured greens, rolling bentgrass fairways and classic bunkering.

Trickle Creek Golf Resort
Kimberley, B.C.

Services: Power carts, club rentals, practice facility, licensed dining and lounge, lessons, golf

packages including nearby Trickle Creek Lodge.

Tee Times: 250-427-3389; 1-888-874-2553

2014 Rates: \$92 to \$129

www.TrickleCreek.com

Once named the No. 1 daily fee course in B.C. by Acura World of Golf, Trickle Creek intertwines forests, creeks and mountains for a stunning and challenging golf outing. Resort facilities are also only a short walk away.

Wildstone Golf Course
Cranbrook, B.C.

Services: Full practice facility, CPGA lessons, power carts, club rentals, practice facility, licensed clubhouse and deck, pro shop.

Tee Times: 250-489-1282; 1-855-565-4653

2014 Rates: \$65 to \$75

www.WildstoneGolf.com

Located on the scenic highlands above

Cranbrook, Wildstone is the only Black Knight course by Gary Player Design in Canada. The 7,100-yard layout features generous rolling fairways generous rolling fairways and a one-of-a-kind 350-plus yard range.

Windermere Valley Golf Course
Windermere, B.C.

Services: Power carts, licensed dining, CPGA lessons, club rentals, club storage and driving range.

Tee Times: 250-342-3004

2014 Rates: \$31 to \$34.95

www.windermereValleyGolfCourse.com

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