

ONTARIO
Yours to discover

Discover Ontario, create a memory.

Shared with friends and family, our Ontario travel discoveries make magical memories. Here's the sixth in a series of 12 explorations.

Fairway to heaven

Stretch out that summer feeling on a golfer's dream getaway to one of these great Ontario courses.

Golf meets history in Niagara's wine country



Whirlpool

Every summer my wife Sandra and I visit the Niagara Peninsula for a week of wine-tasting, theatre at the Shaw Festival and, most of all, to challenge the top golf courses found within easy reach of the famous thundering falls that attract about 14 million visitors annually.

With more than 40 courses throughout the region, the choice is overwhelming. But our first stop is almost always Legends on the Niagara, the \$27-million Niagara Parks Commission facility just outside Niagara Falls that helped establish the region as one of Canada's hottest golf destinations when it opened in 2002.

As a history buff, I'm fascinated that Legends' two championship courses, Ussher's Creek and Battlefield, designed respectively by Canadians Tom McBroom and Doug Carrick, are set close to the protected site of the War of 1812's Battle of Chippawa, where more than 200 British and American soldiers

lost their lives in 1814. Ussher's Creek is a traditional parkland layout, while Battlefield boasts a mixture of styles accented by dozens of flash-faced bunkers. At Battlefield's fourth hole, which is closest to where the armies met, they say that if you listen carefully you can still hear the distant sounds of battle.

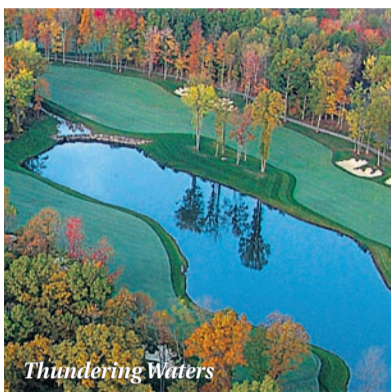
Sandra, who is as passionate as I am about the game, is a big fan of classically built older courses. That's why we never miss the opportunity to play Whirlpool Golf Club, a Stanley Thompson-designed jewel featuring a spectacular backdrop of the Niagara River Whirlpool and Gorge. Operated by the Niagara Parks Commission,



The Legends on the Niagara

this 57-year-old course—one of the last built by Canada's legendary golf architect before his untimely death in 1953—offers plush, tree-lined fairways, Thompson's trademark linked bunker complexes that define the fairways, and greens left open at the front in the traditional style.

After replaying these old favourites, the choices get tougher as our schedule tightens. Royal Niagara Golf Club, The Rees Jones Course at Grand Niagara, Peninsula Lakes Golf Club, Beechwood Golf and Country Club and Hunters Pointe Golf Course all rank among Ontario's most popular public courses.



Thundering Waters

But high on both of our play lists is Thundering Waters Golf Club, a course made famous when its architect, PGA heavy-hitter John Daly, inaugurated its opening three years ago by trying to drive a ball through the swirling mist of Horseshoe Falls across the Niagara Gorge to the United States. The cascade of publicity surrounding Daly's attempt—and the opportunity to challenge an acclaimed course that comes as close as 1,500 yards from the spray of the Falls—is impossible for Sandra and me to resist.

www.niagaragolftrail.com



The tee at #10

Canadian Shield landscape typifies Taboo's rugged appeal

My buddy Frank and I figured that any course personally endorsed by Mike Weir just had to be worth checking out. So, one weekend last August, we made the trek to Taboo, the showpiece of Taboo Resort near the town of Gravenhurst in the Muskoka Lakes tourist district. Every bit as beautiful and challenging as we had hoped, the official "home course" of the 2003 Masters champion took us on a wild 7,174-yard ride through wetlands, rock shelves, and a forest of birch, towering pines and balsam.

Frank, who is hard to impress, stood awestruck on the tee of the seventh hole, calling it the most spectacular par three he'd ever seen. Architect Ron Garl chiseled this uphill 218-yard

beast through two immense walls of striated pink and gray Canadian Shield granite. Miss-hit to the left or right and your ball bounces into orbit.

Just as terrifying—and as ruggedly gorgeous—is the 14th, a 444-yard par four featuring a heroic carry over a ravine, followed by a semi-blind approach shot to a sloping green. And Frank and I were both knocked out by 18, a par five that twists around hills, trees and granite outcroppings in a fitting climax to a thrilling round of golf.

But most impressive is how every hole, one through 18, sticks in our memories to this day. Like a living thing, each hole at Taboo has an appearance and personality entirely its own.

Not only a great player, Mike Weir has excellent taste in golf. www.tabooresort.com



Hole 4 at Taboo

Three outstanding Ontario golf destinations

Golf Blue Mountain

Catch the breeze off Georgian Bay while playing a championship layout. Apple orchards, escarpment views and great accommodations add to the considerable charms of the region's three courses: Monterra Golf Course, Batteau Creek Golf Club and The Raven Golf Club at Lora Bay. www.golfblue.ca

Toronto Highlands

The lush valleys and glacial hills of the Oak Ridge Moraine make this region north of Toronto as scenic as it is convenient. Become a member of the golf trail for special offers to play six spectacular courses: Wooden Sticks, Copper Creek, Angus Glen, Bond Head, Eagle's Nest and Lionhead. www.torontohighlands.com

Hills of Headwaters Golf Trail

At the edge of the Niagara Escarpment horses graze in undulating fields and six unique golf courses punctuate the greenbelt northwest of Toronto. A single pass makes it easy to play them all, including Caledon Country Club, Osprey Valley Resorts, Shelburne Golf & Country Club, Glen Eagle Golf Club, Hockley Valley Resort and Woodington Lake Golf Club. www.golftrail.ca

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