



The Bear

The sprawling Bear Mountain resort in Victoria proves there's life after hockey

Essentials

ON THE FLOAT PLANE FROM VANCOUVER TO VICTORIA, OCCASIONALLY THE CLOUDS will part and a spotlight cascades down like ethereal filament, illuminating the small islands in the channel below. Vancouver Island, though massive in size, is still a mystical, relatively secluded place. With mountains, moderate temperatures and pristine natural beauty, it's the perfect setting for vacationers looking for a welcoming escape. Yet, until recently, it was virtually uncharted territory in terms of large resort hotels.

Vision. It's vital to all hockey players. It also separates the mortals from the legends of the game. Great players have the ability to not just see what's happening on the ice, but simultaneously anticipate what every other player is going to do next. Instinctual and spontaneous, this innate awareness allows visionaries to see the ice inside their head, not merely with their eyes.

Len Barrie had vision as a hockey player, scoring 185 points for the Kamloops Blazers in 1990, his final year of junior hockey, and going on to a career in the NHL. But Barrie has vision in real estate, too. In 2001, he mined a

gem right out of the rugged wilderness of Southern Vancouver Island, ripping over the rocky terrain on his mountain bike while dreaming up his Stanley Cup of hotel resorts. In the development game he's no mortal, he's a young Gretzky.

Barrie's Bear Mountain Resort — all 1,400 acres of the mixed-use property straddling two separate municipalities, Langford and the Highlands — is located just outside of Victoria. It's the magnificent fallout from a simple misunderstanding the retired player had with his first home golf course. In search of more sunlight for his yard, he errantly cut down a few trees he believed were on his property,

BY ALISTAIR KYTE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES LABOUNTY

MASTER BUILDER:
Len Barrie,
president and CEO of Bear
Mountain Resort, Victoria