

Jump start your golf season In Medicine Hat



Desert Blume Golf Club is a must play when in Medicine Hat



**Michael
Cunningham**

How long is too long before Albertans play golf in our province? For many, six or even seven months is an eternity; actually a month away from the game can be exasperating. That is our lot in life to be living in a province where the colder season outlasts the warm.

From the first snowfall, we desirously glance at dormant clubs as winter conditions intensify over the months, defeating any notion for "one last round." We have entered the season of in-home half swings and carpet putting.

It is now April and the revitalizing rays of the sun create optimism within us that frequent snowfall and freezing temperature advisories are now a distant recollection [we hope]. But for many of us, the opportunity to smell the grass, take that perfect divot or putt on true greens is still a few degrees away.

But there is a place you can go, so grab your clubs and make the journey to our province's southeast corner and experience the golf courses and hospitality of Medicine Hat. Known as "Canada's Sunniest City", the hum of mowers, rollers and trimmers, have been artfully grooming the area's courses weeks before more northern links.

This city of 63,000, located on the shore of the South Saskatchewan River, boasts five distinct golf properties, in dividually incorporating the diverse features of the land into memorable golf experiences. Coulees provide the terrain where golfers will discover a wide variety of elevated tees and greens and lush valley floors. The meandering tributaries of Seven Persons Creek and Ross Creek dissect many of the properties creating numerous water features and stands of cottonwood, and multi-coloured native grasses add to the dramatics of the scenery. Medicine Hat is an excellent way to

get your golf season off to an early start. Each of these five courses offers a variety of playing experiences:

Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club is a semi-private course located along the upper banks of the South Saskatchewan River, close to the city centre. The course is

reminiscent of the private clubs of years ago with beautifully maintained fairways and greens. The oldest club in the area, it has been a favourite of golfers since 1913.

Playing to 6695 yards, the course features four sets of tees. The modern clubhouse is well suited for any sized tournament and the course is one of the area's most popular golf destinations.

Located in the heart of the city is Cottonwood Coulee Golf Course. Many people consider the course more of an executive course but course architect, Harold Pasechnik, created a beautiful park like setting incorporating the meandering Seven Person's creek and numerous cottonwood trees into a design that is memorable and affordable.

With only one par five and playing to a par 66, the course offers an enjoyable round whether a newcomer to the game or a more skilled golfer wishing to boast that they shot in the '70s.

Connaught Golf Club was voted as "the Best Golf Course in Medicine Hat" in 2018. This semi-private course is celebrating ninety years of existence and sixty years in its present location. Featuring five sets of tees it plays to 6943 yards. The fairways feature plenty of trees, and the greens are reputed to be the fastest in the area. There is plenty of trouble, but the course is a delight to play, as it is reminiscent of the grand historical clubs, thankfully maintaining a nostalgic, memorable golf experience.



Connaught Golf Club is a traditional tree-lined layout with small quick greens.



+ QUICK FACTS

- Population 63,260 (2016)
- Elevation 2,260 ft
- Widely known as the sunniest city in Canada with 330 days of sunshine on average per year!
- 5 golf courses
- 100 parks & 115kms of biking trails throughout the city
- 2 local breweries
- medicinehat.ca
- tourismmedicinehat.com
- stayinmedicinehat.com

Desert Blume Golf Club's first hole is whimsically named "The Forest" for the solitary tree that stands in contrast to the cacti, sagebrush and native grasses in the coulee formed by Seven Persons Creek. Describing it as "naturally remarkable," course designer, Gary Browning has created one of Western Canada's best and most challenging golf courses. If you only have time to play a few golf courses, Desert Blume is a must.

Paradise Valley Golf Club is an eighteen-hole golf course "with a par-3 on every hole". The course sits in the shadow of the "world's largest teepee" (66 meters [215 feet] tall), a tribute to native heritage. The course's lush fairways sit in sharp contrast to the sand cliffs of Seven Persons Creek that tower above the valley floor - what's not to like about Paradise Valley? It does everything correctly when it comes to attracting all abilities of golfers. They have created a fun atmosphere on a picturesque course. The pace of play is perfect. An exceptional clubhouse restaurant features an outdoor veranda and patio, craft beer on tap, good wine list, excellent food, and live music every Friday evening.

So dust off your clubs, check out the unique offerings from the Medicine Hat Hotel Association online for "Golf and Stay" packages and prepare to play golf in Alberta earlier than you would ever expect.

Michael Cunningham is a Calgary based golf and travel writer. Editor and senior writer of two best-selling books, Spectacular Golf Western Canada and Spectacular Golf Ontario, Michael is a regular guest on Corus Entertainment's, The Informed Traveler radio show.

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