

Make it a Canadian club

With Canada's Atlantic seaboard only a five-hour flight away, **Peter Swain** looks at the courses and property scene in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

The opening of a new links is always cause for celebration, and in July there were two: one just north of Aberdeen, the other in Inverness. That's Inverness, Nova Scotia (trans. New Scotland). Cabot Links may not have been launched with the razzamatazz surrounding Trump International but having played the Canadian course, I can report it's an absolute gem.

The flight to Halifax, Nova Scotia, is only an hour longer than the Antalya route, so golf in the Canadian Maritime Provinces is within easy reach of British players. It's definitely worth the price of a ticket.

Created by Mike Keiser of Bandon Dunes fame, Cabot is a true links. With the natural terrain overlooking the Gulf of St Lawrence simply tweaked, the fescue, wind and sand are the biggest challenges to low scoring. And the good news is that it's only the latest addition to superb golf in these parts.

The second world-class course in Nova Scotia is Highland Links, which regularly features on lists of best public courses in North America. The name is deceptive because it isn't in the Highlands and it isn't a links, but it is a stunningly scenic course winding through the hills and forests of Cape Breton.

The third track with an international rep-

utation is Fox Harb'r. In contrast to the other two, it's at the heart of a private and very exclusive gated community with its own mile-long runway.

Fox Harb'r has been wowing visitors, including Tiger Woods, for a decade. Based around the manicured high-end resort course, a large clubhouse with fine dining, luxury spa, 25m indoor pool, 161-foot yacht, and floodlit tennis courts combine to create a high-end country club ambience. There are also spacious apartments to stay in, and an interesting range of property to buy.

Well-proportioned timber and stone New England-style Townhomes opposite the 18th fairway have three large bedrooms, vast open-plan kitchen living rooms, gener-

ous decks, and views both of the sea and the course. The entry price of £480,000 is open to a degree of negotiation, and includes membership of the club.

These same properties can also be bought as quarter fractions, making the initial outlay for 13 weeks usage a year just £120,000. In comparison with similar schemes in Portugal, with equivalent amenities, that represents good value. Beautifully equipped larger mansions with dramatic views start at £634,000.

The downside is that the Canadian golf season is only guaranteed from May to October, with winters in the Maritimes not dissimilar to those in northern Scotland.

Right next door to Nova Scotia sits



(Far left): Designed by Mike Keiser of Bandon Dunes fame, the recently-opened Cabot Links, on the Gulf of St Lawrence, is a course with pedigree
(Left): The 16th at Fox Harb'r, the centrepiece of a high-end resort that has entertained Tiger Woods
(Below): The Brudenell River layout is one of several gems to be discovered on Prince Edward Island
(Insets): Property to suit all tastes and budgets, from the mansions and townhouses at Fox Harb'r to surprisingly affordable units at Green Gables



Prince Edward Island, probably most famous as the home of the fictional Anne of Green Gables, a teenage heroine for generations of Canadian and, rather more bizarrely, Japanese women. The latter learn English by reading the books so flock to PEI in their thousands.

Luckily, very few play any of the 32 courses on this 120-mile long holiday island, even though the 11th hole on the Green Gables course is only a 7-iron away from the Edwardian house on which the series was based.

Weaving through the woods just above the shoreline, it's a picturesque course as well, although not quite in the class of the Links at Crowbush Cove. This 6,903-yard jewel on the north coast has undulating fairways, pot bunkers and challenging greens, making it a regular on lists of Canada's top 10.

The other courses of note, all within half an hour's drive of each other, are Glasgow Hills, Dundarave and its sister set-up Brudenell River, with Mill River in the west a little further afield. The good folks at Golf PEI can do all the deals including hotels and transport.

Clubs are unfailingly hospitable, some with quaint customs such as complimenta-

ry mussels after a round, perfect with a pint of the local Keith's IPA. In fact seafood, especially fresh lobster and clams, is a real feature of the locale.

Adjacent to another friendly club, Anderson's Creek, there's a new and very reasonably priced property enterprise, the Gables. £111,000 gets you a big 1,400 sq ft three-bedroom condo, one of four per building. All units are open-plan with well-equipped kitchens and real fireplaces, as well as hot tubs and barbecues on good-sized decks, perfect for holiday golfers.

36 have been built with 29 already sold, and with high season rental of £900pw achievable, this is a well-crafted scheme with a solid future.

Voted the game's Undiscovered Destination of the Year by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators, the real appeal of PEI is the quantity and quality of friendly, modestly-priced clubs. As a place to stay, play and maybe invest, especially if you treasure links golf, I'd suggest the Canadian Maritime Provinces are well worth a visit.

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