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## Buzz puts area in the 'Loops

B.C. Interior tracks drivin' them in

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It's the fresh face of golf destinations in B.C. and Western Canada.

That's because the concept of 'new' seems to agree with the Kamloops area whole-heartedly.

Given its recent track record, if it's built in the Thompson River valley, it's likely to win a rookie course-of-the-year award.

Three area courses -- Tobiano in 2008, Sun Rivers in 2003 and The Dunes in 1997 -- have been named best new course by Golf Digest.

A fourth, Talking Rock, went up against Tobiano for the same award last year, while Rivershore is rated a four-star track by Golf Digest.

"Diversity of product -- with tree-lined, desert, links-style, traditional and mountain courses -- make it a great place to golf," said Sun Rivers GM Ian Henson. "Great weather, tremendous value and the most award winning destinations in B.C. golf make it even better."

Kamloops Towne Lodge GM Tim Rodgers credits Tobiano for the huge increase in golfers to the region recently and the other gems, such as Sun Rivers and Talking Rock, for further driving up interest in the area.

"The golf buzz is incredible here," Rodgers said. "We're seeing a pick-up in the economy in our golf packaging. People are heading home with smiles and wows."

"The best part is you can golf here in April and May. It's a drivable market, and WestJet is huge for us now."

Either by car or by airplane, Calgarians are finding their way out there to what's being described as Canada's newest hottest golf destination.

"Alberta represents our second largest market," said Tourism Kamloops CEO Lee Morris. "The golf market has really begun to change our traditional leisure markets. And the addition of Talking Rock and Tobiano has taken our market to new attention levels."

Check out [kamloopsgolfpackages.com](http://kamloopsgolfpackages.com) or [golfkamloops.com](http://golfkamloops.com) for more info.

"It's a lower price-point here than in the Okanagan, but it's equal in quality if not better," added The Dunes at Kamloops director of golf Mike Porco. "People are starting to notice."

### SUN RIVERS GOLF CLUB

Sun Rivers was once the only golf talk of the Kamloops area.

Economic challenges aside, it still holds a deserving spot in the conversation of the golfing landscape.

Where Tobiano and Talking Rock are much more than a John Daly drive from the B.C. community, Sun Rivers is a chip shot from the city centre.

And location isn't the only attractive quality of the six-year-old track, which was named the best new course in Canada by Golf Digest in 2003.

"Location, yes," said Henson, when asked what sets his gem apart from the other golf jewels in the area. "We also have great greens, great service level for the value and great overall amenities for the value."

Off the course, the aptly-named Hoodoos restaurant highlights Henson's claim of outstanding service and value.

On the desert-style links, its beauty, challenge and unique layout lend credence to Sun Rivers' potential as one of the nations' top courses.

The back nine in the shadow of hoodoos is especially distinct, with magnificent vistas of the Thompson River valley and holes carved through natural canyons. But don't be caught admiring the environs for too long, because a stray shot off the fairway can land you in a heap of sagebrush -- and trouble.

The untamed hazard keeps you honest, demanding the need for accuracy on many holes on the 7,023-yard par-72 track that opened in 2002.

Highlights include the 438-yard 14th hole, a downhill par-4 monster that keeps you guessing on club selection right from the tee shot, and the 235-yard 15th, a par-3 hurdle cut right into the natural landscape.

### THE DUNES AT KAMLOOPS

It's the tried and true track of the area -- even if it isn't all that old.

Established in 1997, the Dunes at Kamloops immediately won accolades as Golf Digest's Best New Course in Western Canada.

And it's easy to understand why given the 7,131-yard track's lushness set against the desert-esque conditions of the region.

As the name suggest, it is a course cut through the sand. But thanks to the careful eyes of designers Graham Cooke and Les Furber, it's a natural links-style gem, with its lush fairways meandering through the valley landscape to dancefloors surrounded by wild fescue and wheat grass.

"The majority of our customers say they come back because of our conditions," Porco said. "There's a lot more rolling terrain out here, so you never really get the same shot after every drive."

And it won't even be the same course much longer.

Although no timeline is in place, the Dunes is working towards becoming a 27-hole facility.

The plan is to create six new holes for the championship layout while redesigning part of the original nine into an executive course 3,000 yards in length.

"We're hoping to draw a different kind of crowd with our executive course," Porco said. "We get all walks of life here, and we can accommodate."

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