

- ✓ PLENTY TO DO
- ✓ BUDGET OPTIONS
- ✓ FAMILY FRIENDLY
- ✓ SPECTACULAR SIGHTS

GOOD TASTE
TOP TRAVEL
DESTINATIONS
DEPARTURE 2007

From sleigh rides to luxury spas, Blackcomb Whistler has something for everyone.

Destination: Whistler

Whistler Blackcomb resort, in Canada's British Columbia, has slopes to suit all skill levels – as well as plenty of activities to keep the whole family entertained.

Why Whistler?

For the snow, snow and more snow. This Canadian ski resort is the largest in North America, with a mammoth 3307 hectares of skiable terrain and a 1.6km vertical drop. Add five terrain parks, one half-pipe, two super-pipes, four glaciers, more than 200 trails, 38 lifts and a new peak-to-peak gondola planned to link Whistler and Blackcomb mountains, and it's no surprise snow lovers from around the globe descend upon this alpine village every northern winter. There's plenty to do on down days, too, with world-class spas, loads of eating options, more than 200 shops and a vast array of adventure activities.

You'll love

The friendly hosts It's hard to know where to start at Whistler, which is why Mountain Hosts (local guides)

take small groups of intermediate and expert skiers and snowboard riders on complimentary orientation tours of either Whistler or Blackcomb. Meet at the Guest Satisfaction Centre on either mountain at 11.15am. The tours start at 11.30am daily.

The spas Whistler is home to more than 20 spas, and all of them are perfect for having a soak and getting pampered after a thigh-burning day of skiing and snowboarding. Choose from the Vida Wellness Spa, the Vital Spirit Spa or from one of the two Solarice Wellness Spas. If you're feeling cashed up, then the spa at the Four Seasons Resort is seriously swanky. It has 15 treatment rooms offering hydrotherapy and other body-indulgence packages, including the exclusive glacial clay wrap for \$AU275. Visit www.fourseasons.com for more details.

The romance Snuggle under a cosy blanket as a horse-drawn sleigh takes you through snow-capped mountains. Giant Percheron horses clip-clop through wooded trails along the banks of the romantic Green Lake, before stopping so you can enjoy a fireside hot chocolate or fondue dinner. The sleigh ride and dinner cost \$AU112 for adults and \$AU56 for children. Visit www.whistler.com/sleigh_ride for details.

Kids will love

Hanging with the kids crew

Whistler Kids ski school has programs specifically designed for kids aged three to 18, while the After Ski Care Program means you get to spend more time on the snow. The littlies can go from skiing to After Ski Care for games, quiet time and a snack from 3.30pm to 5.30pm. Space is limited, so book in advance.



Whistler has a ski school for kids as young as three.



With 17 ski-in ski-out eateries on the slopes, hot chocolate is never far away.



Heli-skiing lets you access an area 60 times the size of Whistler Blackcomb.

The program costs \$AU180 per day. Visit www.whistlerblackcomb.com/rentals/schoolkids for more details.

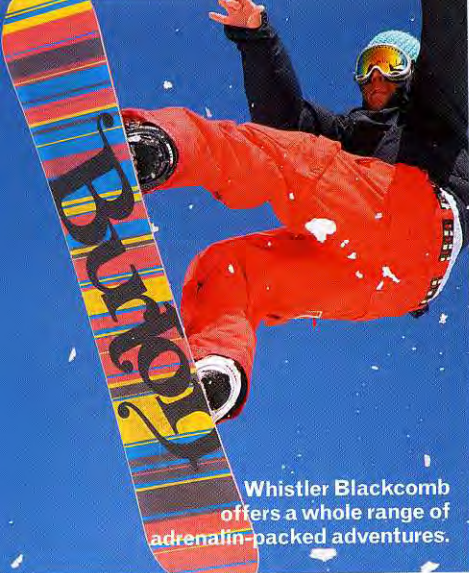
A night on the town Kids aged five to 12 can get a break from the parents with the Kids Night Out, held every Saturday night. For \$AU51 per child, kids get to hang out together, share skiing experiences, take part in a theme night and enjoy good party food. For the older age group of 13 to 18-year-olds there are Ride Tribe ski and board camps in the evening, with activities such as indoor rock climbing. Visit www.whistlerblackcomb.com for details.

Flying through the air Ziplining is an adrenalin-packed activity for the whole family. Buckle yourself into a harness that's hooked up to a cable stretched above the valley floor. It's like a giant flying fox and double the fun as you fly over the slopes. Take the Bear tour or the Eagle tour. It costs \$AU110 for adults, \$AU88 for kids (six to 14-years-old) and tours take up to three hours. Visit www.ziptrek.com for details.

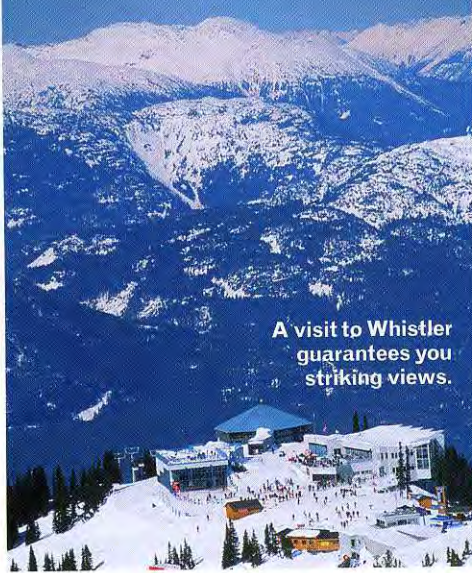
Must-see sights

Powder Mountain catskiing Climb aboard a snowcat for a day of skiing and boarding without a single minute wasted on queuing for lifts. Snowcats are vehicles with caterpillar tracks and a cosy cabin that take 12 intrepid skiers and boarders (plus two guides) to Tricouni or Cypress peaks, half an hour from Whistler Blackcomb. A full day's skiing is half the price of heli-skiing (see p 186) for \$AU541. Visit www.powdermountaincatskiing.com for more details.

The golf courses If you're visiting during the warmer months, you'll be thrilled to know that Whistler is home to four championship golf courses set among winding creeks, pristine lakes and looming mountains. Tee off at the Jack Nicklaus-designed Nicklaus North Golf Course on the shores of Green Lake. This par 71, 18-hole course is moments away from downtown Whistler. All four courses have junior tees and three offer Kids Play Free ▶



Whistler Blackcomb offers a whole range of adrenalin-packed adventures.



A visit to Whistler guarantees you striking views.

“ As long as you can ski a blue run competently, you can try heli-skiing. ”

when accompanied by a paying adult. Green fees at Nicklaus North are \$AU130 to \$209 per day. Visit www.golfbc.com for more details.

The Olympic runs Take on the Olympic downhill and super G courses before the 2010 Winter Olympics that are to be held in Whistler. The International Ski Federation World Cup races will be held in Whistler from February 18 to 24, in which men and women racers from around the globe compete in downhill, super G and giant slalom. The runs are open all season, so you can compare your time with that of the champions.

Holiday eating

From budget to fine dining, it's possible to eat at almost any time of day or night at Whistler. You'll find more than 90 restaurants and bars in the village and 17 on the mountain for ski-in ski-out dining. Dinner is the big meal of the day to replenish energy lost on the slopes. Choose to nibble with après drinks and oysters or save yourself for a big three-course meal later in the evening. The resort is divided into Whistler Village, Upper Village and Village North, with Whistler Creekside not too far away. Most of the restaurants are found in or just off the main village square.

Modern tapas For family-friendly service and atmosphere, head to Elements. It has an impressive martini list for the adults and a selection of contemporary tapas-style fusion-flavour dishes that are designed to be shared. Meals cost between \$AU23 to \$33. Visit www.wildwoodrestaurants.ca for details.

Cheap & cheerful Relax in the Attic Bar of the 21 Steps restaurant before dining on pasta, seafood and meat dishes that are served in "small-plate" or "big-plate" portions. Meals start at \$AU17. Visit www.21steps.ca for details.

Fine dining The Bearfoot Bistro is an institution in Whistler, with the restaurateur personality Andre St Jacques at the helm. Choose your own bottle of champagne, drink it, sign it and add it to the restaurant shelf. This is dining with flair, theatrics and memorable flavours. The five-course tasting menu costs \$AU111, with an \$AU90 matching wine supplement. Visit www.bearfootbistro.com for details.

Holiday highlight

Heli-skiing gives you access to runs that can only be reached by helicopter. In Whistler, heli-skiing means access to terrain 60 times the size of Whistler Blackcomb. You don't have to be James Bond to try it either – if you can ski a blue groomed run competently then you can heli-ski. Save your pennies and try a set of three runs for \$AU824 or go the whole hog with the Ultimate Excursion of six runs for \$AU1160. Visit www.whistlerheliskiing.com for details.



STAY ON BUDGET

Canadian prices are normally quoted excluding taxes of six to seven per cent. So, remember to factor this in when you're adding up how much spending money you need.

Travel planner

WHEN TO GO

December to March is the peak season but spring skiing goes from April well into June on the glacier. The TELUS Ski and Snowboard Festival is on April 11-20. Visit www.whistler2007.com for details.

GETTING THERE

Air New Zealand flies from Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne to Vancouver via Auckland. Fares start from \$2125. Call 132 476 or visit www.airnewzealand.com.au for details. Qantas fares start from \$2359. Visit www.qantas.com.au or call 13 13 13 for details. It's about two hours by coach (\$AU76 one way) from Vancouver to Whistler. Visit www.perimeterbus.com

GETTING AROUND

It's possible to walk to most places in Whistler if you're staying around the pedestrians-only village. Taxis are available to surrounding areas for a flat rate (subject to season). Call (1604) 932 3333 for details.

WHERE TO STAY

- **Whistler Village Inn and Suites** is a boutique-style 89-room hotel in the heart of the village. Suites have kitchens for self-catering. During winter, discounted rates start from \$AU237 depending on availability and room type. Visit www.whistlervillageinnandsuites.com for details.
- **Slopeside Crystal Lodge** boasts a heated outdoor pool and hot tub for soaking ski-weary muscles. Rooms start from \$AU157 per night depending on the season. Visit www.crystal-lodge.com for details.
- **The Hilton Whistler Resort & Spa** has everything you'd expect from a five-star hotel. Rooms have fully equipped kitchens, and start from \$AU180. Visit www.hiltonwhistler.com for more details.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit www.whistlerblackcomb.com and www.tourismwhistler.com for more information.

PRICES ARE CONVERTED FROM CANADIAN DOLLARS AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE ACCORDING TO THE EXCHANGE RATE.