



**White magic:** Whistler on Blackcomb is one of North America's top ski fields and the home of Olympian Ross Rebagliati (below).

Glory awaits Winter Olympians heading to Whistler in 2010. Rachael Oakes-Ash gets there first

# Whistle up a mountain

**W**E ARE standing on Blackcomb Mountain in British Columbia, Canada, and Ross Rebagliati is pumped.

As an Olympic gold medallist he hopes to compete in his signature event in his home town, Whistler, in 2010.

It will be 12 years since he won the first gold medal in Olympic snowboarding — a moment he considers a highlight of his life.

Days later he was caught in a media frenzy after testing positive for minuscule amounts of marijuana, a non-performance-enhancing drug and one that can easily be ingested second-hand.

He kept his gold medal but divided his home nation. He hopes to unite them again with a medal-winning performance.

If Rebagliati succeeds in coming back from retirement and qualifying for both World Cups and the Winter Olympics at the age of 38, he may be a success story of the Games.

**H**E'S in good company. Whistler is home to several elite alpine athletes. Turin Olympians and snowboarding gurus Mercedes Nicoll, Maelle Ricker, Justin Lamoreaux and Crispin Lipscomb live here.

Slalom skiing Olympian Michael Janyk also calls Whistler home, as does his ski champion sister, Britt.

Ski the 32sq km of terrain that make up Whistler-Blackcomb and you'll find yourself schussing down runs such as Ross's Gold, named after Rebagliati, or you may see World Cup legend Rob Boyd in the lift queue.

This is a champion's ski resort where everyone can feel



like an Olympian. Guests can ski both the women's and men's downhill and Super-G courses three years before the big event.

Whistler is the largest ski resort in North America with the greatest vertical span (1600 m), six terrain parks with super and half pipes, and almost 3sq km of back-country area.

Then there are the many peaks for heli and cat skiing.

Long after the other ski fields of North America have packed up for summer, Whistler Blackcomb resort continues to play.

With skiing from spring right through to the start of June and summer glacial skiing throughout June and July, there's a lot of on-snow time in which to train.

Come February 12, 2010, 5000 Olympic athletes and officials from 80 countries will

mingle with 10,000 media representatives and 25,000 games volunteers to bring the 21st Winter Olympic Games to the world.

That's 1.8 m event tickets up for grabs come late 2008.

Thankfully not all of those are on Whistler and Blackcomb mountains. The "Olympic zone" extends 120km from south of Vancouver through the city and north to Whistler.

**I**CE hockey, curling, figure-skating and speed-skating are held off-mountain in arenas. Snowboard and freestyle skiing events will be at Cypress Mountain west of Vancouver.

Whistler already knows how to throw a good party.

The annual TELUS World Ski and Snowboard Festival this month attracts bands such as

## THE DEAL



➤ **Getting there:** Whistler Blackcomb is two hours' drive from Vancouver. United Airlines flies from Melbourne to Vancouver via San Francisco or LA [www.unitedairlines.com.au](http://www.unitedairlines.com.au)

➤ **Packages:** Value Tours offers Ski Canada packages. For spring skiing, summer glacier skiing and winter deals, visit [www.valuetours.com.au](http://www.valuetours.com.au)

➤ **Information:** for updates on event, accommodation and ticket deals, visit [www.winter2010.com](http://www.winter2010.com) For Whistler Blackcomb ski resort, visit [www.whistlerblackcomb.com](http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com)

Jurassic 5 and DJs Dimitri from Paris and Bad Boy Bill.

During Gay Ski Week, Altitude, each February, 5000 gay and lesbians descend upon Whistler.

There's the Whistler Film Festival in December and the Music and Arts Festival in summer.

Add bistro, grill and fine-dining restaurants such as Buffalo Bill's for burgers and the Bear Foot Bistro for degustation wining and dining, and you have a premium alpine resort.

Accommodation ranges from self-contained apartments to the swanky Four Seasons.

If you want to go in 2010 and don't have a ticket, there are plenty of free events and lots of outdoor entertainment.

Just be sure to book your accommodation early.

## Perfect Escapes

### Australia

**Cairns 4½-Star** from **\$285\***  
**INCLUDES** 5 nights accommodation at the 4½-star Inn Cairns Boutique Apartments. **BONUS** Includes 1 FREE night.  
**ADD** Return airfare to Cairns from \$338\*.

**Daydream Island** from **\$345\***  
**INCLUDES** 3 nights accommodation **PLUS** full breakfast daily.  
**ADD** Return airfare to Hamilton Island from \$358\*.

**Gold Coast** from **\$269\***  
**INCLUDES** 5 nights accommodation at the 4½-star Courtyard by Marriott Surfers Paradise Resort. **BONUS** Includes 1 FREE night.  
**ADD** Return airfare from \$218\*.

**Great Ocean Road** from **\$315\***  
**INCLUDES** 3 nights accommodation at the 4½-star Cumberland Lorne Resort. **BONUS** Includes chocolates and Australian wine on arrival.

**Sydney** from **\$185\***  
**INCLUDES** 3 nights accommodation. **ADD** A Sydney Harbour Bridge Climb from \$169\*. **ADD** Return airfare from \$220\*.

### Overseas

**Bali** from **\$1155\***  
**INCLUDES** Return airfare, 7 nights accommodation, breakfast daily **PLUS** return transfers. **BONUS** Welcome drink on arrival and **FREE** shuttle service to Kuta Beach.

**Bangkok and Phuket** from **\$1065\***  
**INCLUDES** Return airfare, 4 nights accommodation in Phuket. **PLUS** 4 nights accommodation in Bangkok with breakfast daily.

**Fiji All Inclusive** from **\$1355\***  
**INCLUDES** Return airfare, 4 nights accom at The Naviti Resort **PLUS** 3 meals daily, unlimited local beer, house wine and spirits and return transfers

**Hong Kong** from **\$1179\***  
**INCLUDES** Return airfare and 4 nights accommodation. **BONUS** 10% discount at all in-house food and beverage outlets. **ADD** Return airport coach transfers including half-day Hong Kong Island Tour from an extra \$67\*.

**NZ Fly/Motorhome** from **\$639\***  
**INCLUDES** Return airfare to Christchurch and 7 days hire of a 2 berth motorhome with unlimited kilometres. **BONUS** Includes 1 FREE day.

**Sabah and Kuala Lumpur** from **\$1479\***  
**INCLUDES** Return airfare to Kota Kinabalu via Kuala Lumpur **PLUS** 4 nights accommodation in Kota Kinabalu and 2 nights in Kuala Lumpur. **ADD** A Kuala Lumpur City tour from \$29\*.

### Airfares

- Auckland** return from **\$565\***
- Brisbane** one way from **\$109\***
- London** return from **\$1845\***
- London Business Class** return from **\$5630\***
- Los Angeles** return from **\$1635\***
- Round the World** from **\$1989\***
- Singapore** return from **\$995\***
- Sydney** one way from **\$89\***

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