

SNOW PLACE TO GO

Whistler/Blackcomb

Ski Resort

British Columbia, Canada

WHISTLER/BLACKCOMB has a reputation. It's the last to leave the party with a ski season that lasts well into June, long after the others have gone home. It's big, and in an industry where size matters, it wins with over 8000 skiable acres and the largest above-tree line terrain and bowls in North America.

Think mammoth mountains capped with snow and lined with fir trees. Think live music festivals by candlelight, pool halls with home brew, martini bars, terrain parks, freestyle skiers and maple syrup. To Canadians, winter in Whistler is the 'off season'. To Australian boarders and skiers, it's Mecca.

Two mountains, Whistler and Blackcomb, make up this infamous ski resort. A pedestrian bridge and a plethora of ski lifts and gondolas link Whistler village and Blackcomb village, meaning double the snow and double the après action.

Canadian casual is *de rigueur*, though sometimes you may have to prod the locals to make sure they're awake. Real fur is a faux pas and denim is considered formal in the village square lined with open-air bistros for people spotting after the lifts close, but don't be deceived, there are big bucks in these hills (or at least on the menu). The Bear Foot Bistro is a Whistler icon, with a wine list boasting the world's best and a first-rate chef in Melissa

Craig, who spent time with both Tetsuya and Neil Perry.

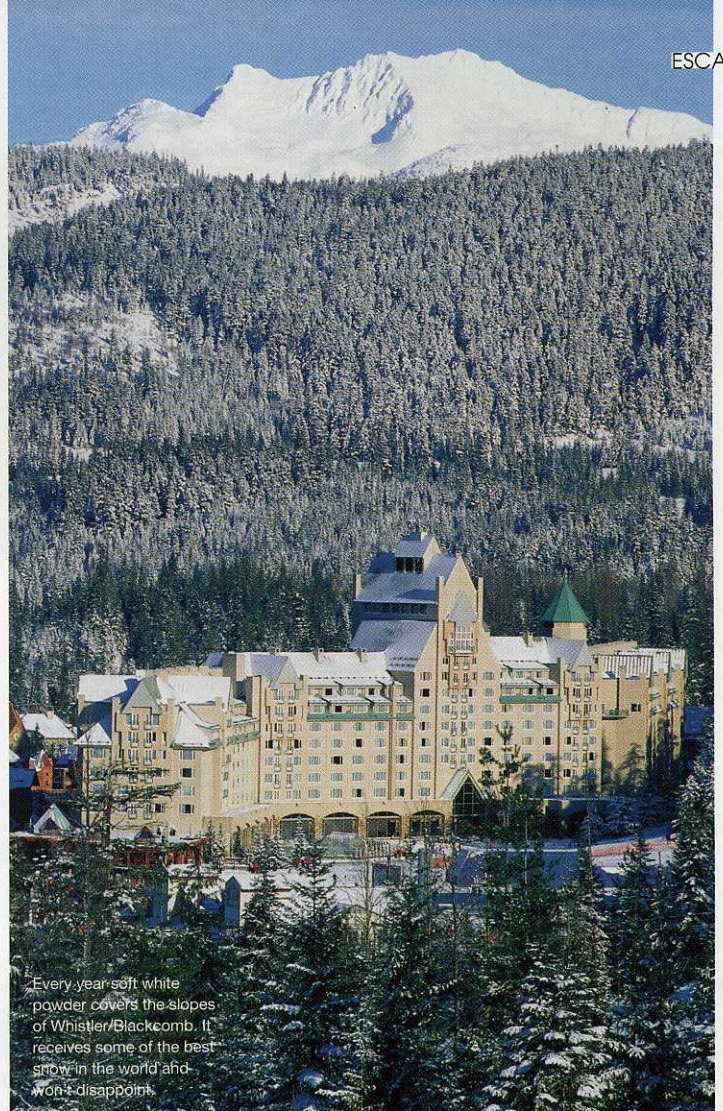
Tempting? It would seem too tempting for some. The restaurant was victim of a well-publicised wine heist last year. The thieves obviously knew their wine and the cellar intimately, cutting security wires and making out with a handful of carefully selected bottles that came to the sum value of \$200,000. Ouch.

This mountain scene is filled with legendary venues and stories. It was here that Seal proposed to über babe, Heidi Klum. It's also home to the infamous gold medalist Winter Olympian snow boarder, Ross Rebagliati, he of the "I didn't inhale" fame. Hang out on Ross' Run on Blackcomb Mountain and you may see the man himself training for his Olympic comeback in Whistler 2010.

Why should you wait that long? Visit Whistler before the IOC move in so you can say, been there, skied that, got the reputation.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE...

Sportsman: In a word – snow. Whistler and Blackcomb have 200 trails altogether, three glaciers, 33 lifts, 12 alpine bowls and over a kilometre-and-a-half of pure vertical. You do the math. If that's not enough, go cat skiing for major boasting rights. Billed as the new



Every year soft white powder covers the slopes of Whistler/Blackcomb. It receives some of the best snow in the world and won't disappoint.



heli-skiing, the tank-like snowcats plough their way up mountainous terrain to take you for a back country or off piste experience.

www.powdermountaincatskiing.com

Romantic: Cosy up under the blankets on a private sleigh ride for two. The sleigh master's up front and not watching.

Businessman: Need to check in? Ski in to Roundhouse Lodge on the top of Whistler Mountain and check out the TELUS Guest Communications Centre for complimentary internet, conference rooms, fax and phones.

Family Man: Whistler kids are happy kids with enchanted forests and magic castles, and that's just at ski school. Rendezvous bistro even has Nintendo.

Playboy: Mavericks impress the women folk and savour their own bottles of bubbly with a gilt-edged sword in the wine cellar of the Bear Foot Bistro. Then they brag about it afterwards while chuffing on a stogie in the restaurant's cigar bar. Everyone else goes dancing at Tommy Africa's. **Rachel Oakes-Ash**

Sleep Over:

Cashed up and spoiled for choice?

The Fairmont Chateau Whistler

Old world service for not-so-old money.

From CA\$169 per night

www.fairmonthotels.com

The Four Seasons

Luxe location and personal ski butlers.

From CA\$245 per night

www.fourseasons.com

Adara Hotel

Boutique chic.

From CA\$109 per night

www.adarahotel.com