**Whistler Blackcomb**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Families

Non-skiers

Après ski

Summer skiing

Snow reliability

Environmental awareness

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

34

**Intermediate Runs**

110

**Advanced Runs**

56

**Total Runs**

200

**Lifts**

37

**Chairs**

18

**Drags**

15

**Gondola Cable Cars**

4

**Parks**

5

**Pipes**

2

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

10.5m (36ft).

**Overview**

Whistler Blackcomb ski resort is consistently ranked the number one resort in North America, and it's easy to see why. Whistler has the largest skiable area and the second-biggest lift-served vertical drop on the continent, topped-off with an enviable snow record. In addition, 5-star hotels and luxury condos grace the foot of the slopes, attracting more than two million visitors each winter.

The skiing here is spread over two mountains: Whistler and Blackcomb, and there are three neatly arranged pedestrianised bases: the Upper Village (at Blackcomb), Whistler Village and Creekside.

Along with Vancouver, Whistler was host to the 2010 Winter Olympics and unveiled a new hydroelectric power plant in the same year. It now generates more than enough green electricity to meet the resort’s entire needs, with any surplus sold back to the grid.

**Location**

Whistler Blackcomb is situated in the Coast Mountains in Canada's westernmost province, British Columbia. The resort is 125km (78 miles) north of Vancouver, just outside Garibaldi Provincial Park.

**Website**

http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com

http://www.whistler.com

**Piste Map**

http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com/the-mountain/trail-maps/index.aspx

**Hit The Slopes**

Whistler Mountain has the edge over Blackcomb when it comes to beginners' terrain. There's a good learners' area under the Olympic chairlift by the gondola mid-station, while higher up, the Emerald Express chairlift serves a nice range of wide, green runs.

Intermediates have an enormous choice of cruisy tree-lined runs and more challenging powder bowls (55% of the ski area falls into this middle classification). The tree skiing is out of this world too: there are a number of marked gladed trails and plenty of widely spaced trees between runs.

Meanwhile, more than a quarter of the terrain is graded advanced/expert. Several heart-stopping drop-ins lead to steep chutes, bowls and mogul fields. And don't miss Blackcomb's impressive Couloir Extreme.

Freestylers and snowboarders will delight in the five terrain parks in the resort that are spread between the mountains. These cater for all levels, so everyone can have a go.

Whistler has an efficient, modern lift system; although queues at popular lifts tend to build up quickly over holiday periods. However, one of its most impressive lifts is the Symphony Express high-speed chairlift that has increased lift-serviced terrain by over 400 hectares (1,000 acres).

The two mountains are connected at altitude by the remarkable Peak 2 Peak gondola, which travels 4.4km (2.7 miles) in 11 minutes, carrying passengers up to 436m (1,430ft) above the valley floor. This is a world record for the highest point above the ground that a passenger lift travels – and the distance between the two support towers on either side of the valley is another world beater. For the full effect, some cabins have glass floors enabling passengers to look straight down.

The main ski season in Whistler Blackcomb ski resort runs from November to June (only one mountain usually remains open from the end of April), with summer glacier skiing on Blackcomb from late June until the end of July.

**Whistler Blackcomb**

**Resort**

675

**Base**

653

**Top**

2284

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

Whistler has a veritable A to Z of off-slope activities, from aerial sightseeing to zip lining. The latter, run by Ziptrek Ecotours (tel: (604) 935 0001; [www.ziptrek.com/whistler-canada](http://www.ziptrek.com/whistler-canada)), involves criss-crossing Fitzsimmons Creek (which can be seen below from the glass-floored Peak 2 Peak gondola cabins) via a series of suspended cables. Other options in and around the village include snowshoeing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing in Whistler Olympic Park, spa treatments and a cinema.

For some cultural immersion, head to the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre (4584 Blackcomb Way; tel: 1 866 441 7522), a museum that provides a fascinating insight into Canada's indigenous population.

**Family Fun**

The resort’s ski school puts on five-day adventure camps (or ‘ride tribe' camps for teenagers) where kids ski or ride with the same instructor and group each day. Lessons are also offered to children aged three to 18, with a maximum class size of four children on a four-day course.

Easy runs for little skiers include Pony Trail and Bear Cub on Whistler, which meet at the incredible Tree Fort adventure area. The Easy Out run on Blackcomb – which passes the Children's Adventure Park (complete with a castle to explore) – is also a popular route.

There's a fun tube park near Blackcomb's base, while other activities include sleigh rides, ice skating and swimming in the resort’s sports centre.

Childcare (tel: 1 800 766 0449) is available from the resort for children aged 18 months to four years. Other childcare providers include Babysitting Whistler (tel: (604) 902 2229; [www.babysittingwhistler.com](http://www.babysittingwhistler.com/)) and Nannies on Call (tel: (403) 351 0180; [www.nanniesoncall.com](http://www.nanniesoncall.com/)).

**Retail Therapy**

Shops selling everything from high-street fashion to stuffed moose line the pedestrianised streets of Whistler Village, with a handful of other retailers located in the redeveloped Creekside area.

Popular Canadian clothing shop Roots (4245 Village Stroll) is a great place to buy branded casual wear. In the Upper Village, the Fairmont Chateau Whistler Hotel (4599 Chateau Boulevard) has an arcade hosting upmarket boutiques.

Unsurprisingly, there's no shortage of ski shops in Whistler Blackcomb, which stock the latest ski gear. Showcase Snowboards (4340 Sundial Cresent) has all the top brands and houses the Burton Women's Store. A good bet for skis, boots and jackets is CAN-SKI (100-4253 Village Stroll – among other locations).

**Splashing Out**

Head to a remote backcountry log cabin for a fondue dinner with Blackcomb Snowmobile (tel: (604) 932 8484; [www.blackcombsnowmobile.com](http://www.blackcombsnowmobile.com/)), which has offices in the Fairmont Chateau Whistler and Hilton Whistler Resort. To reach the cabin, drive a snowmobile or travel in the luxury snowcat, complete with a flat screen TV, DVD and games console.

**Apres Ski**

There is a good selection of lively venues for après-ski in Whistler, including the legendary Longhorn Saloon (tel: (604) 932 5999; [www.longhornsaloon.ca](http://www.longhornsaloon.ca/)) and the Garibaldi Lift Company (4165 Springs Lane; tel: (604) 905 2220) at the main base.

Merlin's at the Blackcomb Day Lodge (4553 Blackcomb Way; tel: (604) 938 7707) and Dusty's (2040 London Lane; tel: (604) 905 2171) at the foot of the Creekside gondola are other animated venues that host regular live music.

There are several clubs. The free *Pique News Magazine* lists all the best deals, latest news and gigs.

**Eating Out**

On the mountains, there's a mixture of large canteen-style restaurants serving typical North American fare and a clutch of smaller huts with hot drinks, soup and snacks. The resort has upgraded its mountain dining in recent seasons to promote fresh, local cuisine and nutritional options.

A good start to the ski day is the Fresh Tracks Mountain Top Breakfast, which gets you to the top of the slopes before everyone else, where you eat breakfast at the Roundhouse Lodge as the slopes open to the other skiers. There are also a couple of full-service eateries on the slopes, while restaurants in Whistler Village itself cater to all budgets and tastes.

For fine dining, try Araxi (4222 Village Square; tel: (604) 932 4540; [www.araxi.com](http://www.araxi.com/)) or the Bearfoot Bistro (4121 Village Green; tel: (604) 932 3433; [www.bearfootbistro.com](http://www.bearfootbistro.com/)).

Among the ‘worldwide cuisine’ restaurants is the Mongolie Grill (201-4295 Blackcomb Way; tel: (604) 938 9416; [www.mongoliegrill.com](http://www.mongoliegrill.com/)), where chefs whip up a selection of stir-fries. The innovative Elements Urban Tapas Parlour (4359 Main Street; tel: (604) 932 5569; [www.wildwoodrestaurants.ca](http://www.wildwoodrestaurants.ca/)), which offers a Canadian-inspired small-plate menu, is also popular.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airport: Vancouver International Airport (YVR).

Distance to resort: 140km (87 miles).

Driving time: 2 hours 15 minutes.

**Getting Around**

Pedestrianised Whistler Village is easy to explore on foot. A scenic route is the Valley Trail, a 30km (19-mile) footpath/cycling track that connects the main village with several other neighbourhoods.

There is a shuttle providing a free bus service around the village centre. Some hotels also offer shuttle transport to the lift base. Public buses travel to Creekside (which has direct access to the slopes) and the outer areas.

**Hotels**

There is a wide range of hotels in Whistler, including top-end options, rental apartments (some with ski-in/ski-out facilities) and luxury lodges with private hot tubs and saunas.

**Adara Hotel**

Tucked behind Village Square just minutes from the slopes, this stylish pet-friendly boutique hotel has 41 contemporary rooms and suites.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

4122 Village Green

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Whistler

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Canada

**Telephone**

(604) 905 4009 or 1 866 502 3272.

**Website**

http://www.adarahotel.com

**The Westin Resort & Spa**

This all-suite hotel sits in the ultimate slopeside location right next to the village gondola. One of the more luxurious options here, this resort has a spa, popular restaurant and cosy lounge bar.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

4090 Whistler Way

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Whistler

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Canada

**Telephone**

(604) 905 5000.

**Website**

http://www.westinwhistler.com

**HI Whistler**

Previously part of the athlete’s village for the Olympics, this modern hostel offers an on-site café, free pool table and big screen TV to watch sports events.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

1035 Legacy Way

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Whistler

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Canada

**Telephone**

(604) 962 0025.

**Website**

http://www.hihostels.ca