

Why Aussies (Still) Love Whistler Blackcomb

Words Brian Thacker

‘day mate. You hear that a lot in Whistler. It gets that nickname because it seems like most of the staff on the mountain are Australians. You also meet lots of very happy Aussies on the ski lifts. Although sometimes they do look a little bewildered, because the mountain is ginormous. Actually, it’s two mountains: Whistler and

Blackcomb, which are connected by the spectacular PEAK 2 PEAK Gondola. If you have acrophobia, brace yourself - at 436 metres above the valley floor, it’s the highest above ground gondola in the world.

It’s easy to get lost here, but not easy to get bored with 200 marked runs, 16 alpine bowls and 3 glaciers. All up, there is 8,171 acres (3,306 hectares of terrain). If, like me, you don’t know what a hectare even looks like, for scale Whistler Blackcomb is eleven times bigger than Mt Buller. I had no problem about getting lost on my first day, though. I joined a guided day program with adventure outfitter Extremely Canadian, and I have to say it was extremely good. I had no idea where we were most of the time, but our guide MJ raced us down long groomers, while keeping an eye on the Showcase T-Bar waiting for it to open.

That’s when a guide is gold, because even though the snow mid-mountain was firm (a polite way of saying icy), we jumped off the T-Bar into Blackcomb glacier and were soon whooping with delight in a virtually untracked powder bowl. If you are guide-less, there is a new fun way to guide yourself around.



Launched this past season to celebrate the resort’s 60th birthday you can simply follow the coloured signs of the new Seven Wonder Routes that include the Alpine Sampler, Glacier Glades and Peak to Creek, the eleven-kilometre top to bottom descent which is one of the world’s longest blue runs.

After skiing all that terrain you’re probably ready for a drink and a good feed. We hit Merlin’s Bar and Grill in Whistler’s Upper Village for some spirited après ski with long-time

On my last day I got up early to ski with a vampire. I joined Dawn Patrol with Whistler Heliskiing and a guide from Transylvania. There are no helicopters involved, but if you are blessed by the snow gods it’s just as good. With only a maximum of 24 people you head out half an hour before the lifts open to the public and we pretty much had the entire Blackcomb Mountain to ourselves. And with 16cm of snow the night before, the runs were powder heaven.

Besides the amazing skiing, cool European-style village, lively après scene and world-class dining, Whistler is also easy to get to with direct flights from Australia to Vancouver and an easy two-hour scenic transfer to the resort. As the locals in Whistler would say, “It’s bewdy bonza!”

If you’re after personalised recommendations, all-inclusive packages, or custom itineraries for your next snow holiday to Canada’s beautiful British Columbia, speak to the snow travel experts at Mogul Ski World, who can tailor the perfect snow adventure. mogulski.com.au ✨

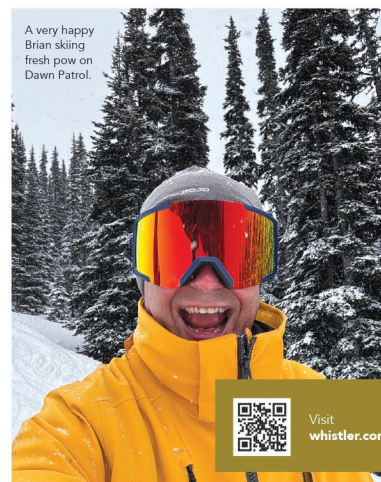
The writer was a guest of Destination British Columbia. supernaturalbc.com

It’s North America’s biggest ski resort - reason enough to visit Whistler Blackcomb, but there’s so much more that makes it a ripper resort”.

resident band The Hairfarmers where you are encouraged to hit the dance floor with your ski boots on - which isn’t easy when you have a large margarita in one hand and a bowl of poutine in the other. For dinner you can go full Aussie at the Australian Bakery Café for a pie and a lamington, but Whistler is also a world class dining destination. My favourite was Wild Blue Restaurant and Bar, which is one of Canada’s 100 best restaurants and is celebrated for its elevated Pacific Northwest cuisine and even won best cocktail for its Negroni Pinoli.

NEED TO KNOW

- Epic Pass includes up to ten days of skiing and riding at Whistler Blackcomb. Visit epicaustralia.com.au
- Extremely Canadian run a one-day Steeps Skiing Clinic for CAD\$339.
- Dawn Patrol is CAD\$399 for half a day (with first tracks and lift priority).
- Getting there. Fly into Vancouver, get a shared shuttle bus up the Sea to Sky Highway.



A very happy Brian skiing fresh pow on Dawn Patrol.



Visit
whistler.com