

TWO DYNAMIC DESTINATIONS ON
CANADA'S
WEST COAST

Vancouver and Whistler Offer Plenty While Awaiting the Olympic Torch

Written By Robyn Rochm Cannon

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADARA HOTEL, GARY FIEGEHEN, JOANNA JOHNSTONE, STERLING LORENCE,
BONNY MAKAREWICZ, JOHN SHERLOCK, SQUAMISH LIL'WAT CULTURAL CENTRE, TOURISM WHISTLER



As a Pacific Northwesterner—a Seattleite, to be specific—I sometimes require a visit from a Midwestern relative to remind me that mountain and water views should not be taken for granted.

Indeed, in the midst of all our high-rise development, we do share a great connection to nature. But one of my favorite things about living in Seattle is my close proximity to Vancouver, British Columbia, our Canadian neighbor just over a hundred miles north. Here, cultural diversity, gorgeous snow-capped mountains and water vistas, culinary excellence, and a genuine warmth that welcomes visitors with a sense of small-town cordiality blend to make it a perfect long-weekend escape. A visit to Vancouver is also a great way to stretch my American shopping dollar, which is worth about 25 percent more these days.

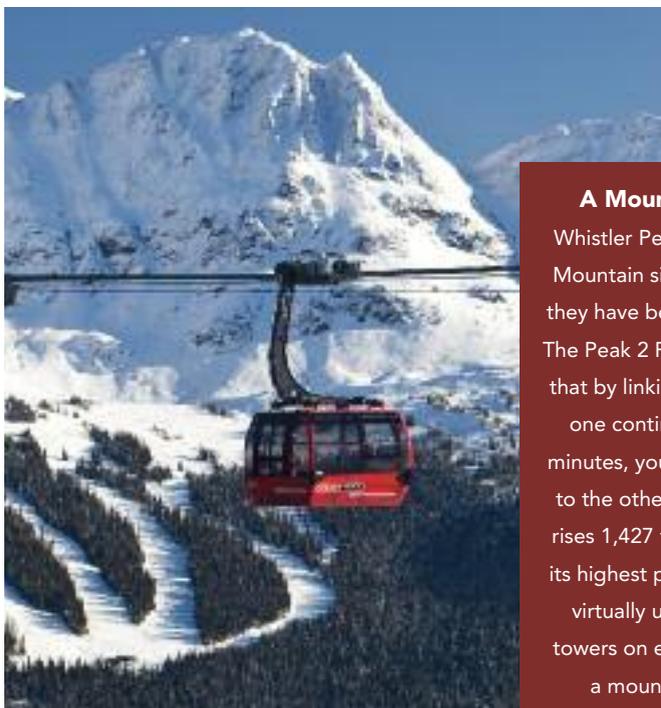
Canada's third-largest city is approximately a three-hour drive from Seattle on Interstate 5, and it is currently in countdown mode for the 2010 Winter Olympics. Events will be shared between in-city venues and the Canadian ski resort town of Whistler, BC, 78 miles north via the new Sea to Sky Highway.

The Lil'wat and Squamish First Nations inhabited this forested, mountainous area long before the arrival of the Europeans in the early 1600s, and a wonderful way to learn more is to visit their newly completed Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre. In addition to being a stunning piece of Northwestern contemporary architecture, this interactive museum links the culture, music, art, and history of these two tribes via colorful tours given by guides who are descendants of early tribe elders.

Just across the road is the Four Seasons Resort Whistler, one of the most beautiful year-round lodges in North America, complete with personal ski valets at the base of Blackcomb Mountain in winter. After a day on the slopes or a summer mountain bike ride, a marvelous way to melt away muscle tension is the spa's ultra-pampering 80-minute *Après Ski* treatment, which combines hot-stone heat therapy with a fantastic healing massage.

Two favorite spots for a relaxed dinner in Whistler Village are Araxi and Bearfoot Bistro. In Araxi's contemporary dining room, decorated with huge sprays of fresh flowers and original artwork, the service and the wine list are top-notch. Executive Chef James Walt was once chef for the Canadian Embassy in Rome, and his emphasis on clean, regional flavors never disappoints, with small plates, main plates, a lavish raw bar, and a fresh cheese selection.

Chef Melissa Craig at Bearfoot Bistro was recently crowned Canada's top chef at the prestigious Gold Medal Plates culinary competition. In this romantic and elegant dining room, Craig blends international and regional ingredients in an



A Mountaintop Phenomenon

Whistler Peak and mile-high Blackcomb Mountain sit side by side, but until now, they have been separate ski experiences. The Peak 2 Peak Gondola has changed all that by linking 8,171 acres of terrain into one continuous lift system. In eleven minutes, you can now get from one peak to the other in a 4.4-kilometer ride that rises 1,427 feet above the valley floor at its highest point. This engineering feat is virtually unsupported, with only two towers on each of the peaks. Talk about a mountain high! Learn more at: www.peak2peakgondola.com/experience.



immaculate, delicious, and gorgeous presentation. Bearfoot Bistro is one of only 150 Dom Pérignon Champagne houses in the world, and owner Andre Saint Jacques may invite you into his cellar to saber your bottle, a tradition that dates back to Napoleon's time.

After you enjoy fresh oysters and Champagne at Bearfoot's dramatically underlit raw bar made of ice, you're only a few short steps from the cozy Adara Hotel, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World. This boutique property is like a New York City loft transported to the mountains—its trendy décor, complemented by a friendly staff, makes for a very comfortable stay.

Back in Vancouver, one of the city's greatest attractions is its rich mosaic of culturally diverse neighborhoods. You can sample dim sum and authentic Asian cuisine in Chinatown or explore the boutiques on the historic cobblestone streets of

Gastown. A tiny water taxi will deposit you on Granville Island, where you can spend the day wandering about the bustling Public Market, an eclectic mix of shops, food vendors, and regional artists' studios and galleries, all in view of Vancouver's downtown skyline.

When you're ready for lunch, head to Granville Island Hotel. On a warm summer day, there's nothing like dining on its dockside patio, microbrew in hand from the on-site microbrewery.

Adara's sister hotel, Opus Hotel, is a perfect jumping off spot to explore Yaletown, a fashionable reclaimed warehouse district filled with some of the city's best restaurants and nightclubs. Try Blue Water Café, housed in a handsome brick and beam heritage warehouse, for Chef Frank Pabst's brilliantly executed West Coast plates and Yoshi Tabo's mouthwatering

sushi and sashimi, all made from sustainably harvested seafood.

There are many fun retailers in this area, including The Cross Décor & Design, with its magnificent array of home accessories and custom monogrammed bedding and upholstery.

After poking my head in every shop, I retire to my suite at Opus and draw a relaxing bath in my deep soaking tub. Afterward, a trip downstairs for some of Chef Don Letendre's authentic French fare at Opus's plush Elixir Bistro is a perfectly delightful way to end the evening.

Holt Renfrew is Canada's premiere luxury retail department store, with a rich history that dates to 1837. Its newly designed flagship store, located in downtown Vancouver's Pacific Centre, is the ultimate in sophisticated chic. With glass exterior walls, the store is filled with light, energy, and glorious designer merchandise. I'm fond of spending a Sunday afternoon in the women's shoe salon after a delicious Bloody Caesar and the Latin-inspired brunch at YEW restaurant + bar in the Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver, just a few steps away.

If you're more in the mood for outdoor adventure, why not take a walk in the treetops? At University of British Columbia's new Greenheart Canopy Walkway, you'll get an exhilarating bird's-eye view of the coastal rainforest on a thousand-foot suspension walk that stretches from tree to tree fifty feet above ground level.

There's so much to explore in these vibrant Canadian destinations, you simply can't go wrong. But be warned: Once visited, Vancouver—and Whistler—will beckon you back again and again. ■