

“MOUNTAIN GOLF AT ITS BEST” by Cori Brett, *Special to the AWGA*



As our tiny seaplane began a gradual descent onto Green Lake, I marveled at the lakeside golf course below. The plane gently broke the water’s glassy surface and glided to rest at a wooden dock. We had arrived at Whistler, and the first tee at Nicklaus North was a short walk away. My long-awaited Canadian golf vacation was about to begin.

“Nick North,” as it’s called, was as good as it looked from the air. The Golden Bear created a challenging course with impressive views of mountains and glaciers all around. The most memorable hole, number 17, is an intimidating but gorgeous par-3 with a bunkered island green surrounded by the lake. If the bunkers don’t get you, the lake will.

Black bears occasionally romp on the fairways of the Fairmont Chateau Whistler Golf Club, right at home in the rugged terrain. The course climbs more than 400 feet through mountain ledges, thick stands of fragrant fir trees, creeks and waterfalls. One curious little cub ventured down to the clubhouse and pressed his nose to the window, causing golfers to scatter in all directions.

Whistler’s Upper Village houses exclusive shops and hotels like the Fairmont and the Four Seasons. It’s an easy walk to the Main Village, which has the majority of shops and

restaurants. I lost all track of time standing on the wooden bridge that connects the two, mesmerized by the rushing waters of Fitzsimmons Creek below.



Although the courses are within walking distance, the shuttle comes in handy when you're transporting golf clubs, even to close-in Whistler Golf Course. You will need a car to get to the fourth Whistler course, Big Sky Golf & Country Club, about 25 miles away. It's a long, demanding course set at the base of 8,000-foot Mt. Currie, and well worth the drive.

Whistler offers a wide range of lodging, from hotels to townhomes, condos, B&B's and chalets. (www.whistler.com; 1-800-WHISTLER) It's always a lively village scene with free, family-friendly entertainment like juggling, bike stunts and musical performances both daytime and evenings. In late afternoon it's great fun to watch daredevil mountain bikers from a front row seat at one of the pubs as they navigate the descent from Whistler Mountain Bike Park.

All eyes will be on Whistler as the Host Mountain Resort of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. It's consistently rated the top ski resort in North America, covering more than 8,000



acres of terrain. Whistler will host more than half of the Olympic Winter Games events and over 90% of the Paralympic Winter Games events.

In spring the snow melts to reveal a vast network of hiking trails on both Whistler and Blackcomb Mountains, accessible by chairlifts or the new Peak 2 Peak Gondola. The thrilling 2.73-mile gondola ride through the clouds is definitely an E-ticket any time of year.

"Escape with Cori" on assignment to exotic and fun golf destinations. First-hand impressions from an experienced golf travel writer and AWGA member, available only on the AWGA website. www.coribrett.com