



Photo: Fairmont Hotels

ARTICLE & PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHANNA READ, TRAVELEATER.NET

The best hotels are ones that go above and beyond, and the Fairmont Chateau Whistler is one of the very best -- the largest true ski-in, ski-out hotel in North America, in the continent's number one ranked ski resort.

What does going above and beyond really mean? How about being able to ski right up to the base of the hotel and trade your skis for a hot chocolate with the ski valet. How about exploring the mountains with a Whistler Experience Guide, a longtime local who takes ability-based groups of skiers and snowboarders to Whistler-Blackcomb's best terrain and freshest snow.

There are lots of summer activities too. Enjoy the outdoors with the hotel's on-site 18-hole Robert Trent Jones, Jr. designed course, or go mountain biking, hiking or adventuring with The

Adventure Group. In all seasons, zipline with Superfly Ziplines or ride a bobsleigh down the Olympic course at the Whistler Sliding Centre.

Back at the hotel, you'll really appreciate Fairmont's extras.

The Fairmont has the largest pool deck in Whistler with an indoor/outdoor pool perfect for enjoying the mountain views, three outdoor whirlpools and one indoor, and an outdoor 60-foot lap pool equipped with underwater music to motivate you to swim extra lengths. Indoors there's a sauna and a steam room fragrant with eucalyptus, and a spa which includes two handcrafted cedar steam cabinets.

DINING OPTIONS

Whistler has only two restaurants with AAA/CAA's Four Diamond Rating -- Araxi in the main village, and the Fairmont Chateau Whistler's Grill Room. Grill Room

guests are treated to Canadian pasture-raised premium Angus beef, organic produce from nearby Pemberton farms, and pairings with the finest wines from British Columbia and the world. Servers will even sabre a bottle of Champagne before your eyes if you're celebrating a special occasion.

In the wintertime, Fairmont guests enjoy alpine fondues at The Chalet, followed by an evening sleigh ride from Blackcomb Sleigh Rides. The Wildflower is the place for incredible breakfasts and extravagant brunches, as well as daily dinners of seasonal Pacific Northwest cuisine. If you want to hit the slopes early, Portobello Market & Fresh Bakery has deliciousness to grab and go as well as made-to-order breakfasts, lunches and dinners. After a day spent outdoors, head to the Mallard Lounge for creative and traditional cocktails and single-sourced chocolate tastings (matched with wines, ports or whiskeys) at the Chocolate Bar.



In every Fairmont restaurant and in your guest room, you can relax with signature Fairmont teas, including Canadian Maple Maple, which tastes as if it is infused with maple syrup, though without any calories.

Speaking of guest rooms, Chateau Whistler's rooms go above and beyond the norm. Each has a window seat to admire the mountain views and windows that open to the fresh air. You'll sleep in your choice of luxurious queen or king bed with 300-thread count 100% combed cotton Italian sheets. You're all set electronically with wifi, an iHome system, flat screen TV, and "On Command" movies. Bathrooms have a full range of deluxe toiletries by Le Labo with a signature scent made just for Fairmont. Suites and specialty rooms go even further with fireplaces, sitting rooms, multiple bathrooms and bedrooms.

To go even further above and beyond, stay on the Fairmont Gold Floor -- what's known as the hotel within a hotel. The rooms and suites are upgraded to perfection (though it is hard to imagine how a regular Fairmont room could be improved!). Guests have access to the Fairmont Gold Concierge who provides superb service and caters to your individual needs and preferences.

Gold Floor guests are in for an even bigger treat -- the Fairmont Gold Lounge. Open all day and evening, the Gold Lounge offers a surprisingly bountiful breakfast, all-day snacks and drinks, an honour bar, evening canapés, and an addictive collection of sweets.

Fairmont knows how to make special events truly special. Easter 2016 will feature not only a "requisite, and seriously extravagant" brunch on Easter Sunday, but an enchanted Easter garden to take photos with fairies and the Easter Bunny himself. Kids will love the massive Easter egg hunt, playrooms dedicated to their age group,

craft workshops, egg tosses and a family Easter bunny hop dance.

FAIRMONT CARES

The Fairmont Chateau Whistler provides its guests with an incredibly luxurious and relaxing experience. But they go even further by also caring for their community.

Fairmont established the Fairmont CARES program -- Community Assistance and Responsibility to the Environment -- to initiate and support a broad range of programs catered to the particular needs of the communities which are home to their hotels.

In Whistler, this takes several forms. Atop the Chateau Whistler, in the roof garden, are more hotels within a hotel. These ones are "hotels" for honeybees and solitary pollinator bees.

The honeybees have been invited to stay on the roof since 2013, and the solitary pollinator bees now have their own hotel too. These tiny bees pollinate a significant amount of the food produced across Canada and over 80% of flowering plants. Their habitats are at risk. Not only has Fairmont created a safe nesting site for the bees, they've provided simple instructions to Whistler's residents to build their own bee hotels to provide a wider range of space for local bees to rest their wings and lay eggs for the next generation.

The Fairmont Chateau Whistler is doing more to protect Whistler's natural and cultural environment.

The land around Whistler Village was first occupied by the Coast Salish First Nations, centuries before the first European settlers arrived. Because of the richness of wildlife and other resources, Whistler was a key stop on the trading routes between the

Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations. The award-winning Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre (SLCC) preserves the cultural identities and histories of these two indigenous nations, and shares them with Whistler's residents and guests.

In the summer of 2015, Fairmont Chateau Whistler and the SLCC opened the Salish Stroll, a pathway to ethnobotanical trails maintained and interpreted by SLCC's Aboriginal Ambassadors. The Salish Stroll takes guests through the forest and allows them to immerse themselves in the arts, culture and heritage of Whistler's First Nations.

Want more art and culture? Walk from the Chateau Whistler to the Audain Art Museum, opening in early 2016, with one of the world's best collections of First Nations masks and the works of Canadian artists like Emily Carr, Jack Shadbolt, E.J. Hughes and Gordon Smith.

Fairmont Chateau Whistler's commitment to sustainability takes many forms. They are currently working with AWARE (the Association of Whistler Area Residents for Environment) on a compost and recycling diversion project that includes standardized bin organization and signage, as well as staff training practices that all Whistler hotels can use as a benchmark.

When will you next be taken above and beyond by the Fairmont Chateau Whistler?

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