



TRAVEL

By Mike Cohen

Accessibility is built into former Olympic and Paralympic Games host city Whistler



The Peak 2 Peak Gondola.

WHISTLER, B.C. - My family and I recently made our second visit to Whistler, B.C. (www.tourismwhistler.com), less than a two-hour drive from Vancouver and one of the host cities for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Accessibility is built into the Whistler Village with its pedestrian-only streets, paved access to the Valley Trail and close proximity to transportation. Whistler's bus system includes accessibility features such as space for wheelchairs and easy access buses. Wheelchair accessible taxis are available on request from Whistler Resort Cabs at 1 (604) 938-1515. Meanwhile, wheelchair rentals are available from the Shoppers Drugmart (1 (604) 905-5666) and the Marketplace Rexall (1 (604) 932-2303).

Whistler Adaptive provides programming, equipment and coaching for 18 different para-sport disciplines. The program has become a leader in adaptive sports, not only in the province of B.C., but also in the country. It also provides support for people with disabilities wishing to participate in various recreational activities, including extreme activities like zip lining. Given that some of the recreational activities will require some modification or extra assistance, it is recommended that you book early to avoid disappointment.

Whistler Mountain is wheelchair accessible with gondola service to the top of Whistler Mountain during winter and summer months. The Peak 2 Peak Gondola is available for sightseeing tours only.

Whistler Sport Legacies is responsible for three of Whistler's 2010 Winter Games Venues: the Whistler Sliding Centre, Whistler Olympic Park, and the Whistler Athletes' Centre. These facilities were used during the Paralympic Games and have accessibility features. Whistler Olympic Park is a particularly great destination for the entire family for all levels of ability and provides designated parking, accessible trails and an accessible lodge with accessible bathrooms.

The 4,000 square-metre inclusive playground provides play opportunities for children of all abilities or parents with disabilities to allow side-by-side play with friends, families and caregivers. Located on the perimeter of Whistler Olympic Plaza, the playground has become a gathering place for community and visitors alike.

There is a comprehensive website for visitors with disabilities at www.whistlerforthe-disabled.com. Wheelchair accessible taxis are available from Whistler Resort Cabs. Call 1 (604) 938-1515 to book.

There is no better experience than the Peak 2 Peak Gondola. You first take the Whistler Express Gondola from the Village, which takes 25 minutes. You'll arrive at the Roundhouse, a lodge where you can have lunch or a snack, and take in the spectacular view of the mountains on the opposite side of the valley. We took advantage of that opportunity. The view as I enjoyed my Miso soup was nothing short of spectacular.

Our next move would have been to hop on the Peak 2 Peak Gondola for a thrilling 11-minute ride over to Blackcomb Mountain. Unfortunately for us, there was some maintenance work the day we visited and the Peak 2 Peak was closed.

Besides the Peak 2 Peak Gondola, which still holds the Guinness World Record for longest and highest lift, The Peak Cloudraker Suspension Skybridge is the latest attraction and it was part of our 360 package. It is 130 metres long and goes from Whistler Peak to the West Ridge, which crosses the Whistler Bowl. Upon completion it will have a viewing platform on the West Ridge side. Yes, the bridge does sway a bit, but we all felt very secure. We even saw someone navigating it in a wheelchair.

The Peak 2 Peak is wheelchair accessible in

the summer while a sled is used in the winter to transport those in need to the Blackcomb Lodge.

WHERE TO STAY: We were so pleased to spend some time at The Hilton Whistler (www.hiltonwhistler.com). Our family thoroughly enjoyed a day at the outdoor pool area, which has plenty of very comfortable lounge chairs and umbrella coverage. The water was the perfect temperature and the pool itself a nice size. There are two Jacuzzis, one outside and the other in the fitness center. You can also soothe your sore muscles in the sauna. The pool area is completely wheelchair accessible, with a level walkway from the elevators and lobby to the deck.

We were provided with a menu of items we could conveniently order right from our chairs. The hotel is ideally located in the heart of Whistler Village. Their spacious and newly renovated guest rooms are designed with mountain style elegance and incorporate many natural elements into its design, including indigenous art from the Sea-to-Sky corridor. Many of the rooms offer jetted soaker tubs and fully equipped kitchens with full-size fridges, microwaves, and stove tops. Sales and Marketing Director Allison Brown was kind enough to give me a tour of the

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property, noting that when it debuted in 1982 it was the first large hotel to open in Whistler.

THE ULTIMATE ESCAPE ROOM: Escape Whistler (<http://escapewhistler.com>) was a lot of fun. There are four escape rooms to try: Pirate ship, Pinball Machine, Buried Cabin or Rabbit Hole. Each room is very different in terms of game, difficulty and style! If you are an escape room veteran, you could be confident to try any of the rooms straight off the bat. There are two wheelchair accessible rooms to choose from - The Buried Cabin and The Pinball Machine. The cost is \$30 plus GST per player. Children, four and under, are free. There are two to six players allowed per room. Kids, 12 and under, must be accompanied by a parent or guardian (19 years or older).

They are open seven days a week. For information, call 1 (604) 962-1117.

DINING OUT: We were very excited to return to the Brewhouse Restaurant (<http://www.markjamesgroup.com/brewhouse.html>). This is one of the busiest spots in the Whistler Village all year round. With a separate restaurant, bar and mezzanine, the Whistler Brewhouse is capable of accommodating groups large and small. The pub has a cozy two-sided fireplace and lots of TVs, making it the perfect place to watch the game when you're tired from playing all day. The restaurant is warm and family friendly with a great kids' menu and a huge patio for Whistler's long, hot summers. The cuisine is an inspired and appetizing mix of barbecue and rotisserie classics, with excep-

tional pizza and pasta options. These flavours are complemented by their range of handcrafted ales and lagers, brewed onsite. There are even four kinds of poutine. Our server, Julie was from Sherbrooke, Quebec, and has been there for seven years. Try the huge bowl of matzo ball soup, the Szechuan chicken lettuce wraps and the tempura tuna maki roll, a brick oven pizza or the beef sliders. The terrace and the main level are wheelchair accessible.

One of our favorite and more unique spots we recalled from our last visit to Whistler was the Mongolie Grill (www.mongoliegrill.com). This is the ultimate "fun" dining experience with fresh and tasty ingredients grilled to perfection in front of your eyes! I love the creative aspect to this place, where you go about choosing your own stir-fry combination! Select your favourite ingredients and flavour with your chosen sauce combinations. Your meal will be weighed by the chefs then theatrically grilled to perfection. There is an elevator that can bring clients up to their second level dining room. The terrace is accessible as well.

Hy's Steakhouse & Cocktail Bar (www.hyssteakhouse.com) is always a special dining experience and their Whistler location is no exception. Every ingredient is chosen to highlight the top quality of perfectly grilled steaks and the freshest fish and seafood. A wide range of classic and modern appetizers and accompaniments make choosing difficult, but satisfaction guaranteed. With a hungry four-year-old in our party, we ordered some delicious bread cheese toast to fill his empty

tummy. The adults liked it as well. For appetizers, we shared the Ahi tuna and a nice Caesar salad while our little man requested and received a bowl of kid's macaroni and cheese. For the main courses, two of us selected the eight-ounce filet mignon. It was perfectly grilled and cut like butter. The 20-ounce bone in rib was more than enough for two others to share while the remaining order consisted of prawns



The Hilton Whistler at dusk.

and scallops. While we were all quite full, the six of us happily split a piece of chocolate bourbon cake. The restaurant is wheelchair accessible.

If you are looking for the best sushi in Whistler, consider Harajuku Izakaya (<https://www.harajuku.ca>). We were extremely delighted with the selection. Harajuku has a very origi-

nal menu. For starters we recommend the tuna avocado yukke, the popcorn calamari, the brie cheese, and the black cod. We opted for three kinds of assorted sashimi (Albacore tuna, Sockeye salmon and Yellowtail). Next came avocado oshi sushi, salmon avocado poke, crispy tuna roll and Rock n' Roll. The restaurant is wheelchair accessible. Reservations are recommended. Call 1 (604) 962-7222. ♻️

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