





Nicklaus North: Bear country, Black and Golden varieties



# Whistler

North America's premier ski resort takes some beating with its astonishing golf

Whistler has come a long way since its birth nearly 40 years ago. Today, it consistently ranks as the top North American ski resort, and it will gain even greater fame as the stage for the 2010 Winter Olympic downhill events.

But when the snows melt away to reveal the rich carpet of green below, it transforms into one of Canada's prime golf destinations.

Golf development began in the early 1980s, when Arnold Palmer chose Whistler for his first Canadian design – a scenic flat track laced through mature cedars, winding creeks and lakes, lorded over by the resort's twin peaks of Whistler and Blackcomb.

Arnie was followed by Jack Nicklaus, Robert Trent Jones Jr and Robert Cupp. Between them they have created a quartet of some of the finest golf in surroundings as beautiful as

golfers will ever encounter. Three are in Whistler while Big Sky is 25 minutes away near Pemberton.

The daddy of them all is just a lob wedge from the resort village. Flat it may be, but you are left in no doubt about its mountain setting. Golfers choosing to walk – and they are positively encouraged to – can rent a natty trolley with giant mountain bike wheels and handy metal basket.

Bear-proof bins by tee boxes underline the richness of Whistler's wildlife. Coyotes and beavers are among other species resident here.

At the 6,908-yard Nicklaus North, signs tell you all about the area's black bears. Even the tee markers are bear-shaped. As opposed to my round, which went pear-shaped the moment my first drive submarined into the lake in



**“Golfers choosing to walk can rent a natty trolley with giant mountain bike wheels and handy metal basket”**

# British Columbia

## WHERE TO PLAY

### Chateau Whistler Golf Club

6,635 yards, par 72  
 C\$225 (approx. £107); free to  
 Chateau Whistler guests  
**Contact:** 00-1-877-938-2092  
 chateauwhistlergolfclub.com  
*Mountain golf par excellence on  
 fairways carved out of the slopes*

### Whistler Golf Club

6,397 yards, par 72  
 C\$99-C\$159 (approx. £47-£75)  
**Contact:** 00-1-604-932-3280  
 whistlergolf.com  
*Arnold Palmer classic which  
 started it all in Whistler 20 years  
 ago*

### Nicklaus North

6,908 yards, par 71  
 C\$85-C\$210 (approx. £40-£100)  
**Contact:** 00-1-604-938-9898  
 golfbc.com  
*Jack liked it so much it's the only  
 course which bears his name*

### Big Sky Golf & Country Club

7,001 yards, par 72  
 C\$74-C\$159 (approx. £35-£75)  
**Contact:** 00-1-604-894-6106  
 bigskygolf.com  
*Big mountains dominate this top  
 track in every direction*

## WHERE TO STAY

### Fairmont Chateau Whistler

**Contact:** 00-1-604-691-1991  
 fairmont.com/waterfront

### Whistler Village Resort

**Contact:** 00-1-604-932-1982  
 whistlervillageresort.com



Big Sky, a flat course amid soaring majesty

front of the 1st tee. Jack must have been like a bear with a sore head when he designed that unfriendly little feature.

In the 10 years since it opened the course has been showered with plaudits; Best New Canadian Course and 9th Best Course in Canada to name a couple. It has also hosted Canada's big-money Skins Game twice, in 1997 and 2005. Jack took part in both.

Such is his affinity with the course it is the only design to sport his name. Sculpted green-side bunkers are a feature throughout, particularly on the photogenic par-3 12th, where the mountains are mirrored in the lake skirting its green.

Big Sky's 360-degree mountain vista is dominated by the dark, craggy slopes of Mount Currie, which rises up dramatically to 8,300ft directly behind the 1st green.

The mountain trolleys are here too, although the only hills are the subtle fairway undulations added by Cupp. The main hazard at Big Sky is water. I fell foul of the agua at the appropriately-named 16th, Deep Breath, but birdied the stroke index one par-5 4th, Purgatory. Heaven, more like. And a massive five-pointer on the Stableford index. Shame it was strokeplay. Even more so that my playing partner suddenly found form and shot one over par gross on the back nine.

Trent Jones Jr's masterful Chateau Whistler, opened in 1993, does feature elevation changes — 400ft of them as it climbs, traverses and descends the side of Blackcomb Mountain.

Exposed rock faces, ledges, ravines, waterfalls and alpine lakes all play their part in making this an uplifting experience to play. You certainly need plenty of lift for the first few holes, which march up the mountainside. The view down from the upper levels over Whistler resort and the striking Fairmont Chateau Whistler hotel, to which the course is affiliated, ⇒



Chateau Whistler, a Trent Jones Jr wonder carved out of Blackcomb Mountain



CHATEAU WHISTLER GOLF CLUB

