

## Whistler-Blackcomb trip summary: Jan 28-Feb 4, 2016

Morning came early for the Red Eyes on Thursday, Jan 28, 2016 as we began our journey to British Columbia. We left Eau Claire with high expectations and we were looking forward to seeing, skiing and experiencing all that the largest ski resort in North America has to offer. Whistler-Blackcomb is consistently rated as the number one ski destination on the planet by many publications.

Check in was smooth and despite the long TSA line we all made it to our gate with plenty of time to spare. Just as we had wanted our travel to SF was smooth and our connecting flight from SF to Vancouver was effortless.

Landing in Vancouver we found going through Customs no problem and with the exception of one lost bag, which arrived the next morning in time for skiing, we met several other Red Eyes who made arrangements for their own transportation. We gathered together and away we went all 28 of us. The drive out of Vancouver was both beautiful and informative. Our bus driver expanded on a number of interesting facts about the area and said the drive up the Sea to Sky Highway has been voted one of the top five most scenic drives in North America and we weren't disappointed.

Arriving at our hotel check in was smooth and effortless. Pizza was delivered from Misty Mountain along with the beverages. Whistler-Blackcomb staff spoke to the group and provided us with information about the area. We could wait to get started on our 5 or 6 days of skiing. Some took advantage of the day off to go cross country skiing.

Breakfast was included with our stay at The Coast Blackcomb Suites, which provided a large number of options on the buffet that satisfied all for the morning fuel up for the day on the slopes. We had a ski storage facility, which was staffed by two full time employees of one of ski shops in town. After picking up our skis it took us 28 steps, that's right 28 steps to walk to the slope and we were on the hill!! When they say Whistler is big they mean BIG, HUGE and MASSIVE. Over 8,000 acres, 200 plus runs, 37 lifts there is something for everybody and every skiing style. According to the Whistler ski report during the seven days we were there they received 19 inches of snow. The green, blue and black groomed runs along with the trees and bowls provided ample room of untouched snow for several days. The clouds did roll in and out throughout the days making visibility interesting from time to time but certainly nothing we couldn't handle. The sun did pop through the clouds from time to time and gave us glimpses of how big place it really is.

On Tuesday, however was the day to write home about. Not a cloud in the sky till late in the afternoon. With nothing but sun in the sky Whistler provided us with unbelievable views of the mountains in 360 degrees. Everywhere you looked all you could see was mountain tops. Mark and Matt Prissel went heli-skiing on that day and are probably still trying to come down from once in a lifetime experience. We can't wait to see the video.

Whistler village has many bars and restaurants and we all ventured out for the experience on more than one occasion. Nobody had a bad meal and with the exchange rate of the American dollar there was never a better time to eat, drink and be merry. I heard a saying while there that the Canadians like the Americans 30% more because of the strength of the dollar. The staffs at the hotel and around the ski resort were amazing and whatever you need it was “no worries” and it was done. With no lift lines, except for Saturday, everybody got in as many runs as they wanted. From short ones to as long as 7 miles we all left the slopes with a smile on our faces.

Only two minor bumps in the road. Mark Prissel hit a massive rock hidden under a snow drift and took an endo which caused him to have to postpone his heli-skiing from Sunday to Tuesday, which turned out to be the best day of the week as indicated. Fred LaGesse had someone run over the front of his skis and took a tumble on Monday. He was checked out and had to take a couple of days off. He was watched over well by our traveling nurses, Mollie and Susan. Needless to say he was in good hands. The club catered in a very fancy buffet style dinner with salmon and chicken with all the fixings and dessert on Monday night, which gave everybody a chance to touch base, catch-up and share stories of the slopes and village. Looking at everybody eating it was like one big happy family. Beverage also provided by the club of course.

As we left Whistler-Blackcomb we knew we'd be back; as you never truly say “goodbye” we only say, “Until we meet again”.