

Tahoe's talk of Vancouver, Jan. 24 pm edition

By Kathryn Reed

WHISTLER, British Columbia – People used to ski Whistler or Blackcomb, but seldom both in the same day. This is because it required a bus to get between the two resorts.



All of that changed on Dec. 12, 2008, when the 52 million Canadian dollar Peak2Peak Gondola opened.

Taking it across on Saturday I was a shutterbug. Today's trip back from Whistler to Blackcomb the nearly full car was rather subdued. Apparently we had all skied rather hard and just took in the beauty without conversation or need to photograph it.

This is the quietest gondola I have been in and most comfortable. The cushy seats accommodate 22 people. There's room for six more to stand.

In 11 minutes riders are transported the 2.73 miles from one mountain to the other.

In this relatively short time span people are 1,427 feet above Fitzsimmons Creek at the high point.



Headed to Whistler, with Fitzsimmons Creek below the Peak2Peak Gondola.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

The creek has the hydrological plant that provides enough power for Whistler-Blackcomb's operations.

Twenty-eight cabins can haul 2,050 people per hour each way. Two of the cars have glass bottoms. Those are the silver cars, in case you want to wait for one.

The 3S ropeway is a new configuration of passenger ropeway to North America but there are four others in the world like it. The 3S stands for three ropes – two track ropes and one haul rope pulling in the middle. The 3S design incorporates reversible tramway technology with detachable grip technology in a new and novel configuration, the gondola's website says.

It has the longest unsupported span in the world at 1.88 miles.

What astounded me were the tracks on both mountains under the gondola. One passenger said how he and a buddy did the Blackcomb side over New Year's weekend. I just shook my head. Not a chance these legs will experience that.



Looking toward
Whistler
Village.

The views from the gondola are stunning. Mountains are everywhere. Whistler Village is below. The creek looks like a river “ even that high up.

In Canada, everything is big.