

Tahoe's talk of Vancouver, Jan. 27 pm edition

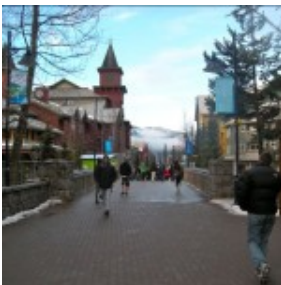
Publisher's note: *This is the final installment of Tahoe's talk of Vancouver.*

By Kathryn Reed

WHISTLER, British Columbia – I'm a convert.

I've never been a fan of ski villages. They seem like a make believe, developer construed, concrete morass with little attention paid to the locals and dollar signs the end goal.

Much of this might be true for Whistler Village, but the feel is so much different.



Whistler
Village is all
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pedestrians.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

For starters, the size of the village is in proportion to the mountain that looms above. It's huge by California standards. There are 134 restaurants and bars in Whistler Village, 164 hotels-condos-B&Bs and 218 retail shops.

All of these businesses rely on 9,877 full-time residents, 2,500 seasonal residents and 11,522 second home owners.

Whistler Village is a place to be – to walk. Yes, walk. It's all about pedestrians. California villages are for walking, too, but the limited lodging at some of them make it easier to drive to the village, necessitate crossing a state highway, or the walk to the village is cumbersome in some other way.

At Whistler, skis and snowboards are sitting outside restaurants-bars that are slopeside as well at ones in the interior of the village.

This doesn't happen at Mammoth because the village is a drive or bus ride from the resort.

It doesn't happen at Heavenly because just the gondola empties into the village and there aren't many places to eat-drink there. And that village has nothing lively like what's going on at Whistler – and its mid-week here.

Northstar with all of its single-family residences and focus on family isn't that upbeat.

Squaw had eateries at the base long before the village went in. But the addition of the village hasn't made it much of a happening place.

One can't say Tahoe skiers are more serious and therefore less likely to indulge in apres ski fun. I saw more excellent skiers at Whistler-Blackcomb in the past few days than I ever do at any Tahoe resort in a season.

A major difference is locals frequent Whistler Village.

Many travelers like to go where the locals are. They want to be part of the scene, part of the in crowd, to live like a local if only for a short time.

Whistler Village has a combination of chain and independent stores and restaurants. Storefronts are of various sizes. It's a mix of T-shirt shops (nice ones), souvenir shops, a grocery store, theater, ski shops, restaurants, clothing, ice cream,

cigar and other specialty shops.

Street signs and lights are fun and easy to read.

An information booth has a real person in it.

Bear-proof garbage and recycling bins are everywhere.

All ages are out and about – though mostly adults. It's couples, groups of friends – men and women.

Every Sunday night through March is a free event called Fire and Ice – where riders do tricks and then do them again through a ring of fire. Fireworks go off. It's all on the lower part of the run. Hundreds are huddled outside. More are sitting outside or in nearby bars.

Apparently, non-weekend events are a draw for people in Whistler.

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