

Vail Resorts buys Whistler Blackcomb ski area

By Kathryn Reed

Vail Resorts has expanded its ski resort portfolio to include Whistler Blackcomb in Canada.

The Colorado-based company is buying the Vancouver resort for \$1.1 billion.

Whistler, with 8,171 acres, is the largest ski resort in North America. Coming in a close second is the Vail owned Park City-Canyons merged resorts with 7,300 acres.

“Whistler Blackcomb is one of the most iconic mountain resorts in the world with an incredible history, passionate employees and a strong community. With our combined experience and expertise, together we will build upon the guest experience at Whistler Blackcomb while preserving the unique brand and character of the resort as an iconic Canadian destination for guests around the world. We are delighted to add such a renowned resort to Vail Resorts and look forward to expanding our relationships in the Sea-to-Sky community, British Columbia and Canada,” Rob Katz, chairman and chief executive officer of Vail Resorts, said in a statement.

Whistler was the site of the downhill ski events for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games based in Vancouver.

Vail, which owns Heavenly, Kirkwood and Northstar in the Tahoe area, has been on a mission to diversify and expand its ski resort holdings.



Vail Resorts on Aug. 8 announced its purchase of Whistler Blackcomb ski resort in Canada. Photo/LTN file

With this purchase, it means a local competitor just got pushed out of the Canadian market.

KSL Capital Partners, the owners of Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows, bought nearly one-quarter of Whistler Blackcomb in 2012 for nearly \$116 million from Intrawest.

Most of Whistler was owned by Whistler Blackcomb Holdings and Nippon Cable.

Dave Brownlie, Whistler Blackcomb's chief executive officer, will remain at the resort as the chief operating officer for Vail.

"As the No. 1 ranked and most visited resort in North America, Whistler Blackcomb has enjoyed tremendous success by delivering an exceptional mountain experience for our passionate and loyal guests – both locally and from around the world. That's going to continue as we work with our new colleagues at Vail Resorts as well as our employees, local businesses, community and government stakeholders to make Whistler Blackcomb better than ever," Brownlie said in a statement. Partnering with the geographically diversified Vail

Resorts and extending its successful Epic Pass products to Whistler Blackcomb are customer-focused ways of securing the long-term future of our resort, our industry and our community.”