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Four Seasons Hotel Whistler: Contemporary decor in the lobby includes regional stone, wood and art.
STEVE HAGGERTY: COLORWORLD



May 3, 2007, 2:47PM

Perfect combination of city comfort, mountain lodge

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WHISTLER, British Columbia — The Four Seasons Hotel in Upper Whistler Village, close to the base of Blackcomb Peak, is an architectural stunner of stone, slate and wood, more sleek than rustic, more city than country, yet perfectly suited to the heavily forested alpine valley in British Columbia's rugged Coast Range, 80 northeast of Vancouver.

There are no mounted deer heads in the lobby, no moose racks looming over the fireplace and no bear rugs with staring glass eyes, instead the open-beamed lobby and lounges could be a museum, with a first-rate collection of paintings and figurative art. The hotel's 178 rooms and 95 suites, where a blend of earth colors — wheat, coffee, walnut and brick red — echo the outdoors, are quietly deluxe. The cuisine at the Fifty Two 80 Bistro (named for the 5,280-foot vertical drop from the top of the highest ski lift to the village) is stellar, and the apres-ski atmosphere makes the bar a neighborhood favorite. As you expect, of course, at any Four Seasons hotel.

But when I stayed here recently, it was the extra touches — smart ideas turned into reality — none of them essential — that made our visit so very pleasant. My room had a gas fireplace, a cozy companion for a bedtime cup of cocoa and a book. But, as I later found out, all the rooms have fireplaces. The desk, in its own nook, provided convenient high-speed Internet access and a cable that fit my laptop. I had a choice of down or synthetic pillows, which let me choose one that felt like my pillow at home. The bedroom windows opened for a breath of mountain air.

At six a.m., complimentary coffee and biscuits appeared in the lobby. By 4 p.m., hot chocolate and cider had taken their place. When a sinus headache threatened to ruin my day, I cured it with a couple of visits to the steam sauna, in the award-winning spa, a full-service facility with 15 treatment rooms and men's and women's locker rooms.

Though Whistler is best known for skiing, summer recreation predates it by decades. And for that the Four Seasons makes an especially posh headquarters. You can hike in the mountains on miles of back country trail, fish in the area's four lakes, go river rafting or kayaking, mountain bike, or ride on the flat through the valley, on 30 miles of paved paths. The hotel can also arrange horseback riding, and book tee times at one of the four championship golf courses. The valley's four lakes are warm enough for swimming, or you can swim in the hotel's outdoor pool.

The Four Seasons also has a number of two-, three- and four-bedroom private residences, individually furnished, with full hotel services. They're not cheap (starting at \$2,200 per night in low season), but they're quiet, private and posh. Wilderness and comfort; it's a nice combination.

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RESOURCES

IF YOU GO

- Double rooms at the Four Seasons Resort Whistler start at \$245 per night in spring and fall and \$295 in summer.
- The hotel is 80 miles — a 90-minute drive — north of Vancouver. Airport shuttles go directly from the baggage terminal to hotels in Whistler Village. At 4591 Blackcomb Way, Whistler, British Columbia, Canada, V0N 1B4. Call 604-935-3400, or visit www.fourseasons.com.

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