

Summit Lodge – the Zen of Lodging at Whistler

By Susan Wood

WHISTLER, British Columbia – It's hard to imagine a hotel steps away from one of North America's most vibrant ski villages would find its guests sleeping like babies.

But that's the Summit Lodge & Spa in Whistler – tranquil, serene, relaxing and quiet in a big way. It's warm, inviting and comfortable, like the staff – with gas fireplaces in the lobby and rooms, local art hanging on the walls, Asian furnishings and some of the plushest robes ever.



Lobby at the
Summit Lodge.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

For an 11-year-old boutique hotel located in an area about to experience its busiest time by hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics, the staff and even the nature of the place seem to approach the prospect of being on a world stage with a reserved excitement and self-assuredness. It's not meant to be a Fairmont, Westin or Hilton with small villages inside. Instead, the Summit has comfort, style and character of its own. A Malaysian family, who also just opened Whistler's Aava Whistler Hotel near the base of the slopes, owns the Summit.

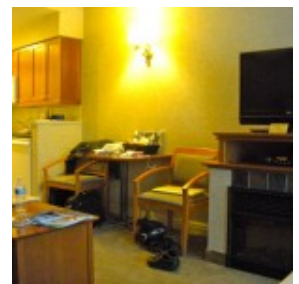
“Sometimes we compete with great difficulty. But the playing field can be very level when you’re quiet,” General Manager Rosemary Cook told *Lake Tahoe News* of competing with so many large hoteliers in a well-known luxury resort market.

A typical day at the Summit may start with rolling out of a comfortable king bed. From there, it’s a flick of a switch for a gas fire and a glance out the two-story balcony at the outdoor heated swimming pool and hot tub. The plush robe competes with the slopes that are within walking distance or a short bus ride away.

Morning continues with coffee in the fully equipped kitchenette. It’s as if a cook furnished the room. But breakfast today consists of a banana to make room for on-the-slopes French fries at noon. Then, it’s save-yourself-for tapas at the Elements restaurant next door later that evening before retiring for the evening in front of the movie “Downhill Racer” starring Robert Redford, which aired a few weeks before the Winter Olympics.

Nice touches make the morning pleasurable, with toiletries like seaweed soap from the Taman Sari Spa, which is located down the hall from the lobby. And yes, it’s nice knowing the thoughtfully placed clothesline across the bathtub shower can dry out a swimsuit in a few hours.

A quick check of emails sitting on the soft sofa was comfy for a limited time. With needing to plug into the free high speed



A room at the Summit.

Internet and not having it automatic, meant not being able to type at the table in a more comfortable business-like setting.

If playing tunes is the thing to do, the room comes with 40 digital music channels. Yoga kits, books and games are also available. Those with a bigger staff will find 866 square feet of meeting space to accommodate 80 people.

Before a day of skiing, the best treat for muscles is a hot tub “ with coffee in hand because one never wants to become too docile before facing a mega-mountain like Whistler Blackcomb.

The Summit provides ski lockers downstairs for an easy out to the city bus or to the hotel’s part-time shuttle service.

A five-minute walk from the Summit Lodge through the invigorating Whistler Village provides access to the largest ski resort in North America with more than 8,000 acres and a 5,000-foot-plus vertical drop.

Only one ski resort comes close – Zermatt in Switzerland. In scenery and magnitude Whistler looks like a distant cousin from Europe.



The Summit is
on the edge of
Whistler
Village.

Providing a desirable environment while helping the environment is a part of the plan. The Summit has implemented

a recycling program throughout the hotel, including the reuse of soap, shampoo and lotion and composting food waste from Elements. High efficiency light bulbs have also been put in fixtures and lamps.

The Summit's general manager knows the feeling of falling in love with the place. The England native arrived from Bermuda 16 years ago and hasn't looked back.

"People will go on holiday and want to walk in and be impressed," Cook said. She keeps that in mind every day.

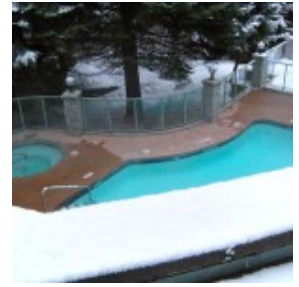
Cook advocates making improvements – whether they involve the property she manages or at the ski resort her guests come to play on. Albeit skeptical at first with its hefty \$52 million price tag, she admits to now being a big supporter of Whistler Blackcomb's most notable mountain enhancement – its Peak-2-Peak Gondola. In 11 minutes, the largest unsupported gondola in the world can whisk skiers and boarders from one mountain to another.

After all, Cook came to Whistler with the sole purpose of learning to ski.

"I couldn't imagine living anywhere else," she said.

The sentiment may well be taken from her guests, who may not imagine spending a winter vacation anywhere else – especially for such a grand occasion as the Games. It may also apply to her vendors wanting to be a part of an event intended to instill peace and goodwill among nations.

Among its artwork, the Summit is displaying the acrylic paintings of Lynn Pocklington. Whistler will feature its ArtWalks during the Feb. 12-28 Olympics, and Pocklington's bears and wolf installed at the Summit are on the route.



The hot tub
and pool
invite weary
skiers.

"I am very excited to be a part of the ArtWalk during the Olympics. The Summit is the perfect place to be displayed being so close to everything in the village" Pocklington told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The local government commissioned artwork of black bears to represent the natural spirit of the mountain town. Prints will be gifted to visiting delegates and VIPs of the Olympic Games.

Where to Go:

The Summit Lodge and Spa is located on Main Street steps away from the Whistler Village off the Sea to Sky Highway about 90 miles north of Vancouver. Rooms – which include 81 suites and studios – start at \$169, with romance packages involving dinner, spa treatments and chocolate.

For more information, call 888.913.8811 or (604) 932.2778 or go to www.summitlodge.com.