

Radiant lights
(below) Vancouver
at night; (far below)
Fairmont Hotel



Event Planner's Guide to... Vancouver and Whistler

GETTING THERE

Flight access to Vancouver couldn't be easier, with three direct flights a day from London Heathrow with Air Canada and British Airways, and via London Gatwick with low-cost Canadian carrier WestJet.

Vancouver and Whistler are fortuitously linked by one of the most scenic drives on the planet, known around the world as the 'Sea-to-Sky Highway'. The drive takes just less than two hours with the first half of the journey hugging the Pacific Ocean coastline before veering towards Whistler's stunning mountain range.

ACCOMMODATION

Vancouver's downtown peninsula has numerous hotel options ranging from three- and four-star properties to world-renowned luxury chains, including three Fairmont brands within a five-minute walk of the 43,000m² convention centre.

Canada's west coast has direct flights from London, plentiful luxury hotels and extraordinary experiences as Jack Carter discovers



Nicknamed the 'Castle in the City', the **Fairmont Hotel Vancouver** has been welcoming royalty since 1939, when King George VI and Queen Elizabeth came to visit. The 557-room property casts an imposing figure with its grandiose and gothic brick structure standing tall next to the city's modern high-rises.

A vast renovation project is ongoing at the hotel to update all rooms, as well as expanding its meeting space with an additional 750m².

The **Fairmont Waterfront** can be found adjacent to the cruise port, with its glass façade in keeping with the rest of the modern architecture along the seawall. Other luxury properties include the elegant five-star **Rosewood Hotel Georgia**, consisting of 156 rooms around the corner from the city's famous and lively Granville Street.

Located at the foot of Whistler's Blackcomb Mountain is one of British Columbia's largest ski resorts, the 539-room **Fairmont Chateau Whistler**.

Located on the cusp of Whistler village, it is one of the only ski-in ski-out hotels in the area placing incentive groups in prime position to make the early morning ascent up the mountain.

The hotel company's Fairmont Brand initiative, designed innovatively for groups wanting to enjoy extra exclusivity and luxury, can be enjoyed on the eighth floor with private lounges and deluxe rooms. Additionally, signature restaurant The Grill Room's quaint, 18-person, private dining room is the perfect place to enjoy a unique menu that includes tomato gin soup and sumptuous dry-aged rib eye.

INCENTIVE IDEAS

Vancouver is blessed to have such contrasting scenery as the Pacific Ocean and the North Shore Mountains and what better way to take in both at once than by helicopter taking off from the waterfront. One of the many aviation providers in the city includes SKY Helicopters which can arrange private charter services to fly groups over the city and beyond. Unique to SKY Helicopters is the company's hangar, which has been transformed into an event space used for product launches and fashion shows, as well as private dining and wine tasting with a local sommelier.

When the snow season comes around, incentive groups will want as much time on the mountain as possible, whether its skiing, snow-shoeing or dog sledding, however few mountain resorts have so successfully built a year-round reputation as Whistler.

Such attractions include the Scandinave Spa Whistler, a Nordic-inspired retreat in the hillside that groups can take over entirely in the evenings for treatments amid the sensational mountain views.

For all-action adventure, groups can let fly on Superfly Ziplines' range of courses fixed high in the beautiful Cougar Mountain, taking delegates from a-to-b across gaping chasms at top speed.



Winter wonders
(above) Fairmont Chateau Whistler; (below) SKY Helicopters' hangar

PIPELINE

One of the most exciting openings on its way to Vancouver is Parq, an urban resort consisting of two hotels, eight restaurants and a casino in the city centre. Scheduled to open in November 2017, groups will be able to pick from the 329-room JW Marriott, with the largest hotel ballroom in Vancouver and The Douglas, a 188-room boutique property.

Additionally, Fairmont Pacific Rim, located on the Seawall is readying to unveil its new Owner's Suite Collection, which will include ten opulent suites with king-sized beds and marble spa bathrooms.

Earlier this year, Whistler tabled plans worth £238m to make the resort 'weather independent' by introducing new attractions for non-skiers, including an indoor water-based arena fit with water slides, wave simulators and rock climbing. Ski facilities will also be expanded with new learning areas and a night skiing zone on Blackcomb Mountain.

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