

# Going to Vancouver?

THE INSIDE LINE ON THE CITY'S GOLD-MEDAL PLACES TO EAT, DRINK, AND PLAY.

by DIANE SELKIRK

**A**S YOU FORM YOUR PLAN OF ATTACK FOR the Winter Olympics, know this: The competitive events are in three locales that offer very different experiences. Vancouver — the cultural hub — houses ice events, while alpine races are in the skiing mecca of Whistler. Richmond, home to speedskating, is party central. But bundle up: Temps hover around freezing. (Best grab the hot souvenir: the red mittens.)

## THE CULTURAL CENTER

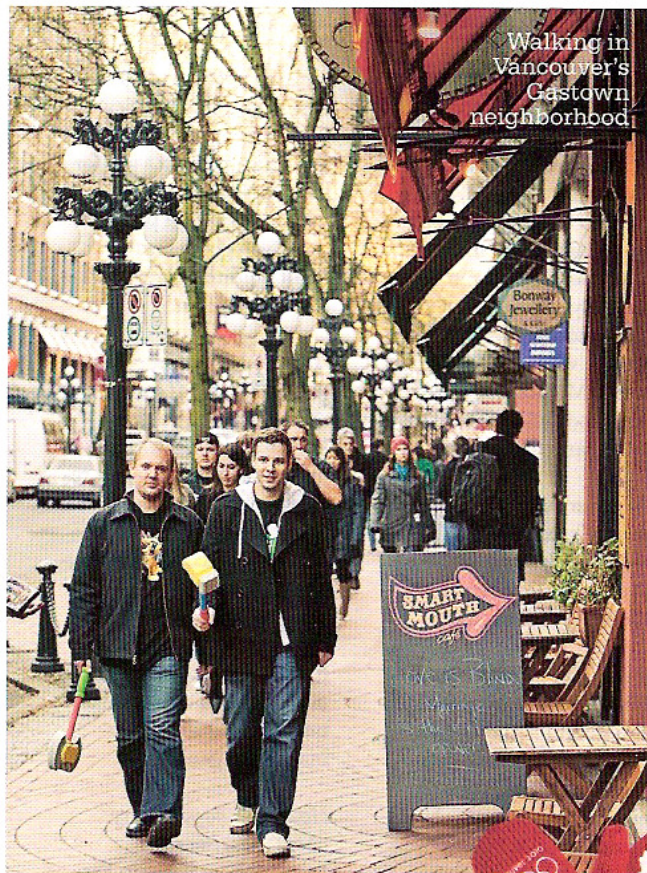
### Vancouver

THIS METROPOLIS OF 2.1 million is one of the largest cities to host the Winter Olympics. The urban setting means that after you take in live hockey or short-track speedskating, you can choose among a huge selection of pubs and restaurants to celebrate with boisterous Vancouverites. (If you've never witnessed a curling

match with a partisan crowd, you really haven't lived.)

### DRINKING

**Yaletown**, an upscale neighborhood with varied eateries, is flanked by celebration sites where huge television screens broadcast medal-winning runs and live bands entertain the masses. But if you're looking for a low-key scene, head to



Walking in Vancouver's Gastown neighborhood



nearby **Gastown**, where some of the city's best pubs are found. Favorites include the **Alibi Room** ([alibi.ca](http://alibi.ca)), with 25 taps pouring the region's best craft brews, and the **Pourhouse** ([pourhousevancouver.com](http://pourhousevancouver.com)), where bartender Jay Jones offers up a Gold Fashioned that

proves maple syrup is even better in a cocktail than on pancakes.

### EATING

**Refuel** ([refuelrestaurant.com](http://refuelrestaurant.com)), in the hip neighborhood of **Kitsilano**, emphasizes local food at a great price. Executive chef Robert Belcham can tell you about the organic farm that provided your slow-cooked pork or which fisherman caught your coho (most entrees are \$20 or less). Or stay downtown and slide up to the circular raw bar in the new 265-seat **Coast** restaurant ([coastrestaurant.ca](http://coastrestaurant.ca)) for the signature seafood platter (\$27 per person) of superfresh prawns, crab, oysters, and fish.

### EXPLORING

The **Cultural Olympiad**, an arts festival featuring more than 600 concerts and performances, includes a celebration of native son Neil Young and a number of comedy shows ([vancouver2010.com](http://vancouver2010.com)).

### INSIDER TIPS

## The Mayor's Advice: Skip the Nude Beach

Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson, 45, was a ski racer and trans-Pacific sailor before becoming an organic juice entrepreneur, politician, and host of the 21st Olympiad.



**Where should visitors party?** Granville Island is a really awesome neighborhood, with a big public market, theaters, and restaurants. There will be a big Mardi Gras celebration while the games are on. A lot of the French-speaking countries are based there, along with the Quebecois crowd. It's going to be a great party.

**Speaking of partying, pot is legal. I understand Vancouver has some pretty great marijuana.** That's the rumor. People around here definitely stake that claim. Word's gotten out.

**What's the best way to get around the city?** I ride my bike everywhere, every day — that's

my mode of transport. I ride a Rocky Mountain mountain bike, converted to street.

**What events are you most excited about?** I'm a huge hockey fan, and I think our chances are excellent. I'm also really looking forward to seeing ski cross and snowboard cross — they're superexciting to watch.

**And what if people just want to escape the crowds?** There are almost 14 miles of seawall around Stanley Park and False Creek that are extraordinary for walking and biking. And then there's the nude beach: Wreck Beach. It's a little chilly out there in the winter, so people usually go fully dressed. But you might see some dichards exposing themselves to the elements. Not a pretty sight.  
—INTERVIEWED BY MATT POWER

FROM TOP: KEVIN ANHOLD; COURTESY: YANIG COVANI, DAVID ELLINGSEN



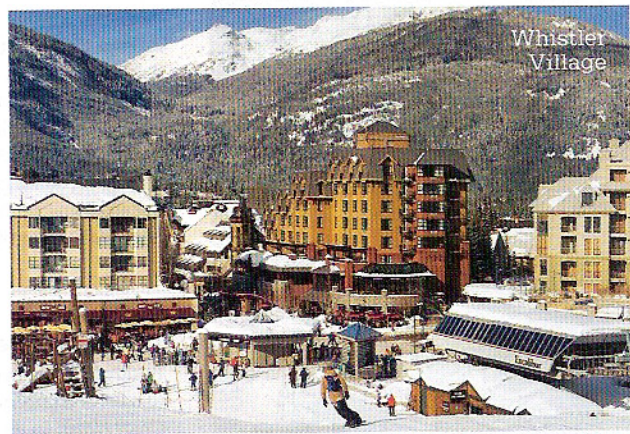
## THE MOUNTAIN EXPERIENCE

### Whistler

SEVENTY-FIVE MILES down the road in Whistler, the party has been 50 years in the making (the ski hill was founded with the goal of hosting the '68 games). The cobblestoned streets of the pedestrian village will be hopping with six sites featuring bands and live events displayed on giant screens.

#### EATING

For hearty fare (including a killer corned beef and cabbage) and a post-event brew, check out the **Dubh Linn Gate** ([dubhlinn.com](http://dubhlinn.com)). Or, for upscale dining, head to the **Bearfoot**



Whistler Village

**Bistro** for chef Melissa Craig's tasting menu. It includes local ingredients (ruby trout), exotic imports (wagyu beef), and homemade ice cream (from \$92; [bearfootbistro.com](http://bearfootbistro.com)).

#### EXPLORING

Bring your skis and boards. More than 90 percent of the

terrain is open, but with all eyes on the games, the slopes won't be crowded. Or mush your own rowdy team of Alaskan racing huskies on a three-hour excursion through the Soo Valley — it's a particularly Canadian way to experience Whistler's wilderness (\$159; [whistlerdogsledging.com](http://whistlerdogsledging.com)).

**INSIDER TIP** Canadian ski team member Robbie Dixon, who grew up skiing Whistler, recommends exploring the village and taking a gondola ride up the mountains. "Don't miss the Peak2Peak strung between Whistler's and Blackcomb's summits," he says. "You'll walk away awed."



### Ski Alternatives

With everyone in Whistler, now's the best time to explore BC's other ski areas.

#### Panorama Mountain Village

Located in the Kootenay region, just 90 minutes from the newly expanded Canadian Rockies International Airport in Cranbrook, Panorama Mountain rises 4,000 feet above the village and offers up views that seem to encompass the entire Rockies. Panorama's new big draw is Taynton Bowl. Formerly open only to heli-skiers, it boasts 700 acres of terrain. \$69; [panoramaresort.com](http://panoramaresort.com)

#### Sun Peaks Resort

The area comprises three mountains that cover nearly 4,000 acres of skiing. The resort's powder (they get close to 20 feet every year) is best taken advantage of with the Three Mountain Tour, a 17-mile series of runs across the three peaks. \$66; [sunpeaksresort.com](http://sunpeaksresort.com)

## THE PARTY CENTRAL

### Richmond

THE BC CITY THAT'S HOST to speedskating is also home to the most talked about party venue: the **Holland Heineken House**, a two-week, nonstop bacchanalia that's so popular, the Dutch contingent had to

annex the local hockey rink, which can hold thousands of people. (Skaters can still enjoy a nearby outdoor rink that will also feature ice sculptures and fireworks.) Set in the heart of Richmond's celebration site (called the **O Zone**), Holland

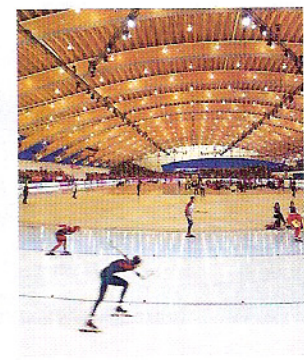
House is just a 10-minute walk from the train station.

#### EATING

The neighborhood around the O Zone boasts several hundred Asian restaurants, such as **Posh** ([303-posh.com](http://303-posh.com)), which serves an all-you-can-eat sukiyaki hot pot. Or head to **Fisherman's Terrace** in Aberdeen Centre for the popular dim sum brunch, which includes *har gow*, *siu mai*, and *ha churn*.

#### EXPLORING

On a sunny day, head out to the neighborhood of **Steveston** to bike the dikes and stroll the



docks. Stop in at **Pajos** for some of the freshest fish-and-chips going ([pajos.com](http://pajos.com)). Or, if you're seeking inner peace after Olympic-size overindulging, visit the **International Buddhist Temple** ([buddhistemple.ca](http://buddhistemple.ca)) for some welcome tranquility.

**INSIDER TIP** Richmond is the home of the airport everyone will be using, and the Vancouver Airport Authority predicts it will be overwhelmed by the March 1 mass exodus. If your flight is delayed, finish up your visit with a final microbrew at the seaplane terminal's Flying Beaver Bar & Grill ([markjamesgroup.com/flyingbeaver.html](http://markjamesgroup.com/flyingbeaver.html)).



Inside the Holland Heineken House

PHOTO: LUPA MATHKELLY (2); COURTESY VANOC/COVAN; COURTESY HEINEKEN N.V.