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Choosing vacation rental property in Whistler

By Henry Schlee

Whistler is perhaps North America's best ski resort; certainly there is nowhere close for vertical drop, acreage of groomed runs and variety of expert terrain. However there is also a tremendous variety of rental accommodation, and before you make a choice it would be as well to be educated about the options and their implications.

Whistler properties vary along 3 key dimensions: size, quality/style and location. We don't need to say much about size; there are properties on the rental market ranging from shoeboxes of 350 sq. ft to imposing chalets of 6000 sq. ft. or more. Quality is another question altogether. Much of the Whistler rental inventory was built in the 80s and 90s when the profile of the resort was lower and cost was the name of the game. Most developments were built with indifferent design, cheap materials, poor quality fixtures and fittings and décor that is unimaginative at best. You do not want to spend your vacation in a condo with a blue carpet, magnolia walls, formica countertops, shiny brass bathroom fittings and garishly-coloured sofas. So you need to seek out either one of the more recent developments, such as Taluswood, that were built to a much higher specification, or you need to find a unit that has been recently renovated (or 'Whistlerized', as the local term has it). 'Whistlerization' typically involves installing slate floors, granite countertops, stone fireplaces, wooden cupboards, beams and trim, and painting in earthy autumnal tones of café-au-lait, caramel and burgundy. These units have a much more mountain-cabin feel. The top-of-the-line properties in Whistler go a stage or three beyond this, with spectacular designs and extremely high-end finishes, although only a few of these properties are on the rental market.

Location is perhaps the key issue in choosing your Whistler rental. Although only a small town, there are many different areas you can choose for your vacation, and each of them has advantages and disadvantages.

The Village is the place for proximity to bars and restaurants, and for being a relatively short walk to the lifts. However most of the inventory in the Village is small, with one or two-bedrooms units dominant in the mix, and it was all built to a cheap standard. It is critical to find a unit that has received a recent quality renovation. There are also one or two units that are larger, but you may have to search hard to find them.

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The Upper Village is on the lower slopes of Blackcomb Mountain. This is the location for ski-in, ski-out units that are also reasonably accessible to the Village. However, if you want ski-in, ski-out make sure that you check what this means. Some properties are actually on the slopes; others, still styling themselves 'ski-in, ski-out' may be up to 5 minutes walk away. Still others are ski-in, but not ski-out.

The second main location for ski-in, ski-out units is Taluswood on the lower slopes of Whistler Mountain. This is a very upscale area with a variety of accommodation, but all of a high quality standard using peeled logs, natural materials and quality décor. Access to the slopes is very easy, with no more than a 2 minute walk from most properties. However you need a vehicle to get to shops and restaurants, as this area is not served by either the free shuttle or by municipal buses.

The fourth location is Creekside, the original location of Whistler. This used to be a very downmarket area, but recent heavy investment has made it a decent alternative to the Village. The Creekside

gondola is always less crowded than the lifts in the Village, and there is now a great selection of shops and restaurants in town. The quality of accommodation is very mixed, with many unattractive older properties and a few newer, luxury chalets that are equal to any in Whistler. You can walk to the lifts from most locations in Creekside.

Finally, there is a selection of other locations, including Blueberry Hill, Nicklaus North and Alpine Meadows. Here you will generally find larger homes, but they are not ski-in, ski-out and you will have to drive to the Village as well. However, you will get more for your money in terms of the quality and size of the property itself here.

As with most things, it pays to consult an expert. If you are looking for Whistler ski accommodation, give a call to the folks at Holiday Whistler. They will be able to help you out with sound advice.

Henry Schlee is the owner of Holiday Whistler. If you want a great

Whistler condo rental

or

somewhere to find a choice of

Whistler ski accommodation

, give them a call on 1 877 697 7776.

Choosing a Property Manager for a Vacation Rental Home

By Henry Schlee

So you are the proud owner of a vacation home - congratulations. But just as with your own home, a

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vacation home needs a lot of tender loving care. Who is going to look after it when you are away? And, perhaps, how is it going to pay its own way? Thoughts like these tend to push vacation home owners into thinking about appointing a property management company. So what should you be looking for in a property manager, and how do you go about finding one with the qualities you want?

First and foremost, you have to decide if you just want the property taken care of, or if you also want it rented out. This will determine what kind of property management firm you want, and whether you need to check their credentials for marketing your firm, or just for looking after it. Assuming that you would like your home to generate some income for you, you need to look for several key capabilities

- A firm which will ensure the highest standards of care and attention to the fabric and contents of your property. Lots of rental income will not make up for the damage caused by careless renters. Make sure that your chosen firm will keep on top of every
- Personal check-in and check-out of every rental. Many firms take advantage of the availability of keyless coded locks to allow renters to check themselves in and out. This means that they never know who is in your property, and whether your four-bedroom home which is supposed to have a maximum of 8 guests actually has 16 grad party celebrants all over the floors
- The highest standards of cleaning. Cleaning a property thoroughly is time-consuming and expensive. Many property management firms cut corners here, and if they do, you will eventually pay the price in worn-out carpets and other forms of dilapidation.
- Superior marketing capabilities. Marketing vacation rental properties has become a sophisticated business these days. Make sure that the primary website on which your property will appear is ranked highly against the most popular keywords for your location. A local firm without much experience in search engine optimization may be able to take good care of your property but they won't generate a lot of income since no-one will know that they exist.
- Great service for guests. Look for a manager who knows how to offer excellent service to guests: arrival baskets of food and drink, pre-booking of activities, restaurant reservations etc. If guests feel they are well looked-after, they will be more inclined to come again, but also feel more of an obligation to take good care of the property they are in
- Great service to you. You should expect VIP treatment when you are using your own property, but also VIP service when you call up your property manager to enquire about availability, discuss renovation and maintenance issues, query your income statements or any other matter. Make sure you will always get to speak to someone senior who knows you and your property.

Have a look at this page:

Whistler property management

for a company which looks as if they know

what they are doing. But make sure you talk to them in detail and go over the management contract with a fine tooth comb before you sign on the dotted line. You should expect to pay 35–50% of gross rental income to the management company; if they charge less you might want to be suspicious of what they are offering; if more, they're probably too expensive. This may sound a lot, but remember that they are looking after your property for no fixed outlay to you, and they only make money when you do as well.

Good luck with your search.

Henry Schlee owns the leading property management company in Whistler, BC, North America's #1 ski resort.



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