

THE BEST MONTH: June, Whistler-Blackcomb, Canada

By Nichole Bernier

Mother Nature usually makes you choose your sports by the season — grass or snow, don't get greedy. But Mother Nature gets generous in Whistler. If you're going in early June, pack your skis and your sticks, because you can golf in the morning and ski in the afternoon.

Early risers start at one of the three Championship courses — Chateau Whistler, Nicklaus North, Whistler Golf Course — all within a wedge shot of town, and scattered with hazards like ancient fir, glacier-fed lakes and brown bears. Braggarts tackle Nicklaus for its twelfth hole, a short par-three to an island-green that requires a finger to the wind before pulling out your clubs -- arguably the toughest in the province.

Get in as many holes as you can before 11 a.m. (You might even get in a full 18, since the summer migration of campers in their Airstreams haven't hit the Canadian Rockies yet.) Then slip on Gore-Tex pants and head for the lifts. Although Blackcomb is the summer hub of glacier skiing, you can still ski Whistler in the first week of June — meaning, you can still access this year's new 700 acres of hike-in inbounds backcountry at Flute Bowl, and 400 acres of lift-accessed trails on the new west face.

Come mid-June, it's glacier skiing starting at noon (lifts open an hour earlier). Ride the Wizard Express lift to access the 112 acres of glacial terrain, a bleached-out moonscape of groomed terrain, moguls and half-pipes. Better still, do it in the company of the pros: book yourself into Dave Murray Summer Ski and Snowboard Camp, and let the coaches guide you through the Horstman Glacier, terrain that will host Olympians in five years. If you want to try hiking it, book a half-day tour — complete with crampons and ice axes, ropes and harnesses — with Whistler Alpine Guides Bureau (dress in layers: temps range from 40 to 90, depending on sun and wind).

Crash afterward a few hundred yards from the base of the lift at the Four Seasons Whistler, which carves more luxury from stone and wood than Mother Nature ever could.