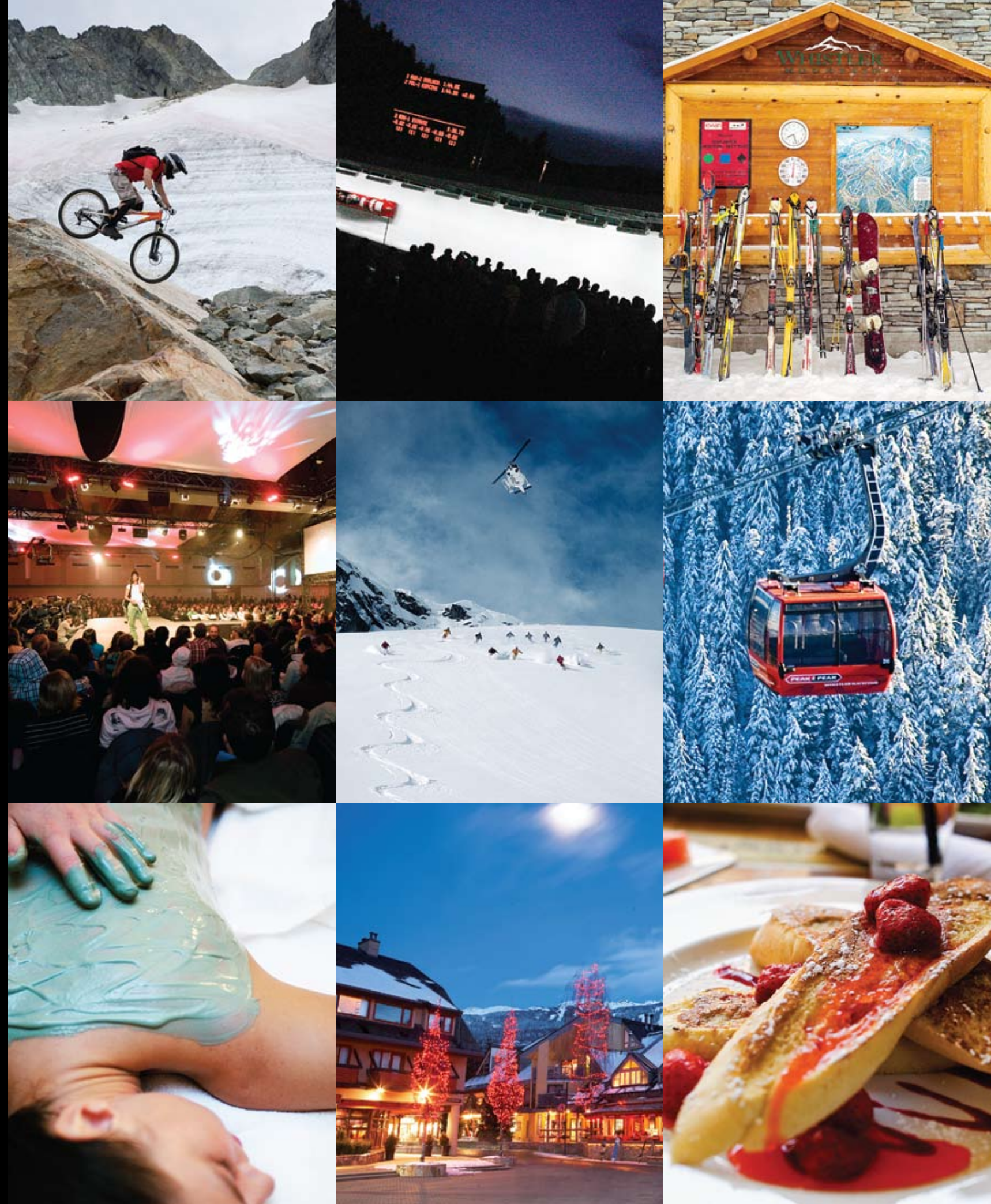


EFFORTS

OLYMPIAN

When Whistler was passed over as a venue for the 1976 Winter Olympic Games — its second such indignity, having also lost out for 1968 — this small town in the stunning, snowy Coast Mountains went into training. It poured its resources into infrastructure and reputation development, turning itself into a stronger, prettier, richer destination — the municipal equivalent of an international playboy athlete, with the bravado and game to back it up. By the time Vancouver, its big-city neighbor some 78 miles to the south, submitted its 2010 bid, the IOC could hardly say no — thanks in no small part to Whistler and its reinvention as a skiing colossus. But Whistler doesn't really need the Olympics to hold Olympic-caliber events. That kind of stuff goes on all the time, from world championships of various downhill stripes to everyday athletic feats. And for the truly intrepid, Whistler has a host of other challenges — the kind that combine the city's adventuresome sensibilities with the Olympic credo of *citius, altius, fortius* (swifter, higher, stronger) to forge an entirely different breed of Olympic-style competition. And yes, almost all of the events feature drinking. ▶ **Story by Leslie Anthony**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DARRYL LENIUK/GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT BENSON/AUROPA; ROB HOWARD/GETTY IMAGES; JAMES HAMILTON/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE CRANE/COURTESY MASTERRILL; COREY HENDRICKSON/AUROPA; MIKE CRANE/COURTESY MASTERRILL; WORLD SKI AND SNOWBOARD FESTIVAL; NORTHSTAR ADVENTURES/AGE FOTOSTOCK





Rubber Down Given vertical, snow, and tons of things on which to slide down them, it's not hard to construct an ersatz sliding event on any old ski hill. Whistler goes one better by having its popular Tube Park conveniently — and, frankly, embarrassingly — located next to the bobsled/luge tracks of the Whistler Sliding Centre, one of the venues for the upcoming Olympics. So you can put in an hour (which is what you get when you purchase a ticket) dragging an inflated truck-tire tube up a short hill and racing your friends down the walled channels of the park — inventing additional criteria like most runs in an hour, farthest slide across the flats, most intense collision — and then hump a short way to the Sliding Centre to see how it's really done. Widening your eyes at the sound of a bobsled rocketing past at nearly 90 mph won't be enough to earn you a medal in this event; for that you'll have to get into one yourself without soiling your pants, as folks will be allowed to do post-Olympics.



Whistler-Go-Round This is the true Whistler Marathon. Skiers or boarders head up Blackcomb Mountain via the Excalibur Gondola and Excelsior and Jersey Cream chairs, across the Peak 2 Peak Gondola, up to the top of Whistler on the Peak Chair, down Whistler all the way to the village, back up Whistler on the Village Gondola, back over the Peak 2 Peak, up to Blackcomb summit on either the Glacier or Seventh Heaven chairs plus the Showcase T-bar, then down Blackcomb to the village. Whoever completes the most laps of this 11,000-vertical-foot circuit in a day wins. You get extra points for variations and diversions, but no off-piste is allowed. Simply completing the circuit earns you bragging rights and automatic entry into Speed Après (or Long-track Après, if you're too tired to shuffle from bar to bar).

MOUNTAIN TRIATHLON

Given the temperature difference between the verdant valley floor and the alpine glaciers located one vertical mile above, this event can take place anytime between April and August. The criteria are simple: Participants must ski five top-to-bottom runs, mountain bike 10 kilometers, and complete 18 holes of golf in the same day — in the fastest time possible, of course. Team competition is encouraged.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDY CLARK/CORBIS; MIKE CRANE/ALAMY; DARRYL LENIUK/GETTY IMAGES



Sushi Toss Whistler's Pacific Rim sensibilities and sea-to-sky location have created a cultural landscape that often defies logic. For instance: How can a town of a mere 10,000 support no fewer than eight sushi restaurants? Until the impending sockeye salmon extinction, you can still participate in the Whistler challenge of eating in all eight establishments in one week. This is a judged event, which means you get extra points for any of the following: [a] amount spent (bills of over \$1,000 are common for party-hearty tables of six); [b] number of menu items consumed (there are more than 100 selections on one menu); [c] exotica factor (things like *ika*, chewy raw squid; *natto*, rancid fermented beans; *shirasu*, boiled and dried baby sardines; *shiokara*, salted fish guts; *uni*, sea urchin; *kazunoko*, herring eggs; *hotategai-kaibashira*, eye of scallop — the list goes on, literally ad nauseum), and [d] going extra big on the booze (in Sushi Village, the large bottle of sake is logically called a “Jumbo,” the virtually unfinishable larger bottle is called a “Dumbo”). Note that b, c, or d — especially when combined — can all result in your tossing your fish a considerable distance.

The Spa-Athlon is the only event that's routinely performed nude, though nudity is not strictly against the rules in the others.



THE SPA-ATHLON

Highest number of back-to-back hot mud sessions? Largest pile of hot stones strategically placed on your aching back? Longest massage without falling asleep? Greatest variety of consecutive treatments? All are in the realm of possibility in Whistler, where there are a dozen spas — plus more under construction — leading one to wonder which will ultimately be the bigger driver of local commerce: activity or inactivity. This is the only official event routinely performed nude, though nudity is not strictly against the rules in any of the others.



Super Luxe Smackdown This free-form freestyle event revolves around demanding as much as possible from one's accommodations for as long as possible. Individuals do not compete for the title simultaneously, but over longer periods of time — even entire seasons — thus enshrining many of these accomplishments as legends. Take, for example, the American family who, over the course of a weeklong stay at the Four Seasons, ordered room service an average of eight times per day. Strong medal contenders, yes, until they were out-indulged by a Saudi prince who commandeered all the suites on the top floor of a famous hotel for a month, and frequently rented the entire mountain and a snowcat for himself for a couple of hours after the lifts closed.

FROM LEFT: AMANA IMAGES/CORBIS; PRESTON SCHLEIBUSCH/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY FOUR SEASONS RESORT WHISTLER



Heli-ski Rodeo There are all sorts of ways to prove who's king of the heli-pad: most money dropped, most days skied, and most runs made each offers instant notoriety in any number of quarters. Whistler Heli-skiing, a day operation with one of the largest territories in the province (432,000 acres) has plenty of tales of clients vying for medal status. For instance, in an operation where three-, four-, or six-run packages are the norm, someone once skied an astounding 26 runs, racking up 75,000-plus feet of vertical in a single day — a record that has remained unbroken for 12 years.* There are clients who have shown up every year for 20 years, some skiing a week or more at a go, and it's rumored at least one of them went every day for an entire season. Rarely — though usually at least once a year — a chopper gets rented privately for a day, setting back the client \$7,285.



KEVIN ARNOLD/GETTY IMAGES; OPPOSITE: RANDY LINCKS/GETTY IMAGES





Speed Après A tough, fast-paced event in which participants are required, starting at 3 p.m., to stop in and consume at least one drink at each of Whistler's acknowledged après haunts: Dusty's in Whistler Creekside, Merlin's at Blackcomb Base, and four venues in the village's main plaza: the GLC, Longhorn, Black's Pub, and Dubh Linn Gate Irish Pub. In order to validate your passage you must collect a coaster from each establishment, with an in/out time notation verified by the bar manager or a waitress named Tiffany, of which there are many. You will doubtless encounter the classic Whistler bar band the Hairfarmers or their solo-act constituents, Guitar Doug and Grateful Greg, along the way, at which point you are required to have one of them autograph a coaster from wherever it was you found them.



WSSF COMBINED

Attending the annual 10-day April party known as the World Ski & Snowboard Festival is a marathon unto itself. Try as you might, you'll never cover all the daily on-hill ski and snowboard events, never mind the skate events and weekend Big Air shows in the village. Or all the arts and entertainment multimedia, such as the Pro Photographer Showdown, Pro Filmmaker Showdown, and Chairlift Revue. Likewise it is logistically impossible to see all 50 live bands, or attend all the premieres and industry parties — as many as a dozen each evening. Winning in this event is mostly about surviving.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY THE HAIRFARMERS; MASON MASHON/COURTESY WORLD SKI AND SNOWBOARD FESTIVAL

Long-track Après As opposed to the Speed Après, Long-track is an endurance event. The acknowledged record belongs to a couple who arrived at an eponymous but anonymous eatery for lunch at 11:45 a.m. and departed at midnight, having consumed nine martinis, six bottles of wine, four cognacs, and a good portion of the menu. They were still in their ski boots when they were poured into a taxi. Runner-up honors go to an Irish film director* who appeared with a friend at the same establishment for après, polishing off four bottles of expensive Italian red before being discreetly ushered out the side entrance, whereupon he stepped directly onto the blue plastic cover that had been rolled over the outdoor swimming pool. When he was fished out, his clothes froze instantly in the frigid air, and were still frozen when he was delivered to the concierge at The Fairmont Chateau Whistler.

