

XXI OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mild west, frozen north

Sea views, ski venues hold gold

By John Powers
GLOBE STAFF

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Since I'm unlikely to venture up to the Rockies, I'm leaving the Timberland boots at home next month, along with the fleece parka, the woolen hat, and the lined leather gloves. I'm packing loafers, a blazer, a raincoat, shorts, and sunglasses. These may be the Winter Olympics, but winter hereabouts is a meteorological lottery. A year ago last month the city was buried in snow. Last week rain and 50-degree temperatures shut down the Cypress Mountain venue for freestyle skiing and snowboarding. And when I was here last February, the sun shone for five straight days.

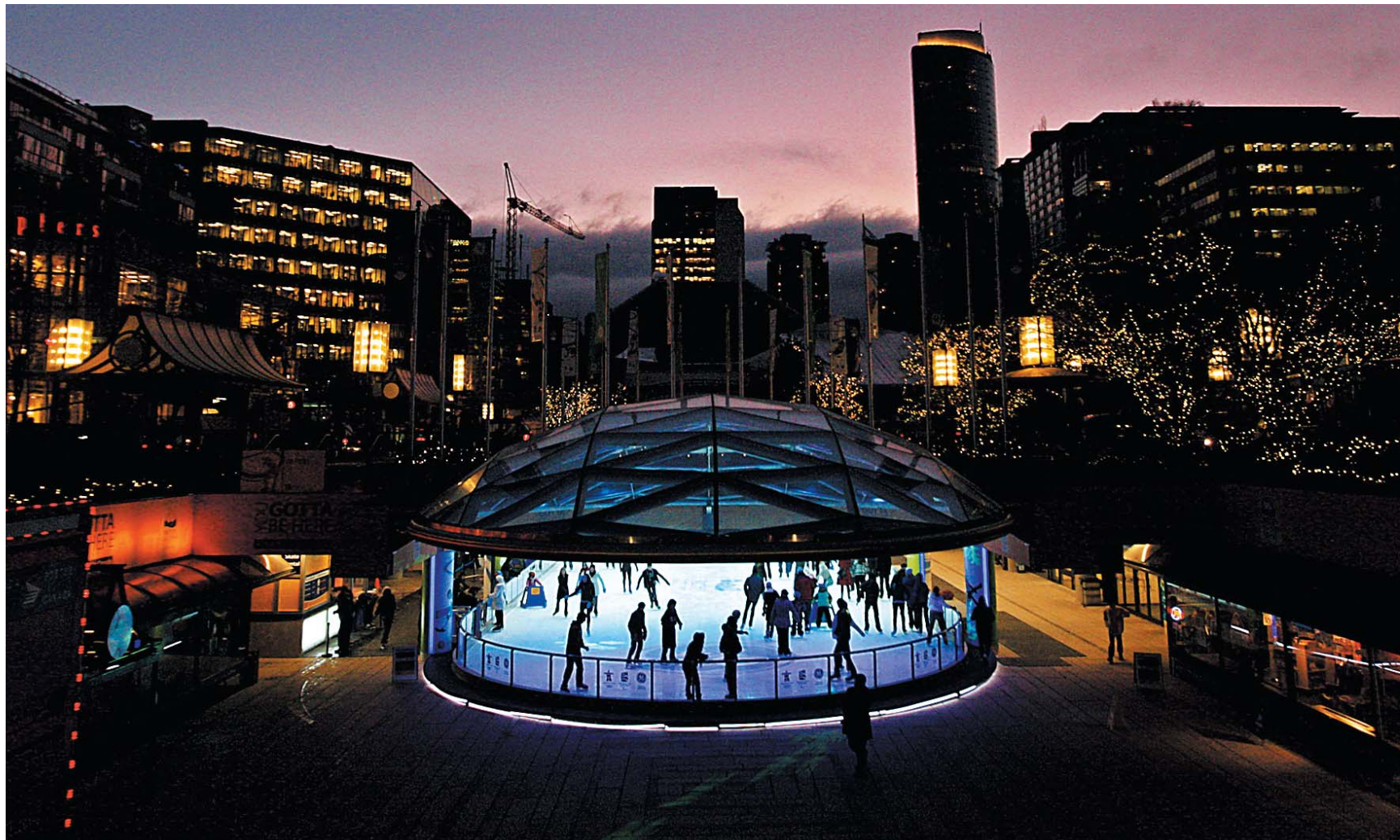
The Games never have been held in a place quite like this, a site surrounded by water but within reach of the mountains amid a climate so temperate that Vancouver conceivably could host the Summer Olympics during the winter. The mercurial weather is a byproduct of the city's unique location, which promises a breathtaking backdrop that no previous host could offer.

The scenery was one of Vancouver's selling points, along with its extraordinary ethnic and cultural diversity, when the bidders wooed the International Olympic Committee seven years ago for the privilege of bringing this quadrennial sleighride back to Canada for the first time since Calgary played host in 1988.

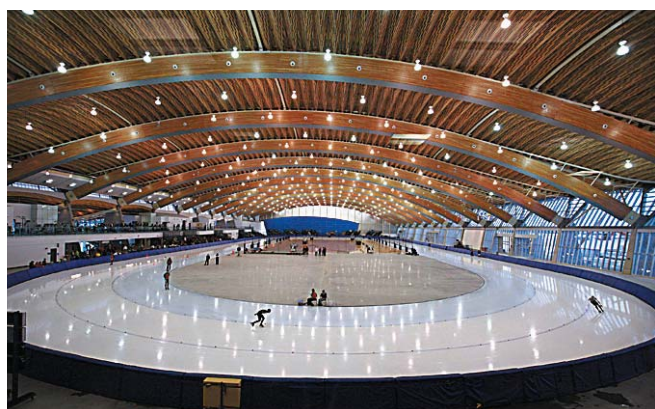
The Sea to Sky Games, which begin Feb. 12 and run for 17 days, will give 3 billion global televiewers a spectacular glimpse of the country's third largest (behind Toronto and Montreal) and most livable city, which has both a cosmopolitan and outdoorsy feel. You can stroll from the center of town into a 1,000-acre wilderness haven (Stanley Park) that has a lagoon, 17 miles of walking and cycling trails, an aquarium, a children's farmyard, and a seawall path looking out on English Bay and Burrard Inlet.

Asian immigrants discovered Canada's western gateway several decades ago, coming from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Philippines to add a distinct Eastern flavor to what was once a British enclave. Yet many residents of Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes have yet to make it across the prairie for a visit.

Canada's massive breadth has
VANCOUVER, Page M3



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: ASSOCIATED PRESS/THE CANADIAN PRESS, DARRYL DYCK; KARI BODNARCHUK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE (BRIDGE, MASK, SNOW); TOURISM RICHMOND; JEFF VINNICK/GETTY IMAGES



GE Plaza Ice Rink in Robson Square; the Capilano Suspension Bridge in North Vancouver; "Redemption," cedar and bark mask by Mike Dangel, a First Nations member, at the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art; Whistler Heli-Skiing takes skiers into back country; the Richmond Olympic Oval, the speed skating venue; and Canada Hockey Place (white) and BC Place (right) downtown.

Live and livelier Olympian offspring

By Kari Bodnarchuk
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

What to do when you're not slopeside or ringside, cheering on the world's best cold-weather athletes next month? We're taking you on a mini-tour through Whistler, Richmond, and Vancouver, highlighting cool neighborhoods near each Olympic venue and offering ideas on sights to see and things to do, from gallery tours and gondola rides to 24-hour skiing

and snowboarding adventures.

Outdoor venues called "Live" sites will host hundreds of special events, like concerts, art exhibits, and real-time feeds of Olympic contests broadcast on giant LED screens.

"Live sites are intended to make people feel as if they have one foot in the stadium," says John Rae, executive producer of Whistler Live! "You could keep yourself thoroughly engaged and entertained during the

Games without having a ticket to any of the sporting events."

Whistler

Whistler Village, located at the northern end of the famous scenic Sea to Sky Highway, will turn into a big block party with an alpine vibe come Games time. A pedestrian-only walkway, the **Village Stroll**, links six outdoor sites in a half-mile stretch that will serve as enter-

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INSIDE

Low boys Schlachthof-bronx, masters of what they call 'Munich bass,' are among the electronic artists powering Club Transmediale in Berlin later this month. **M2**



EXPLORE NEW ENGLAND

Got powder?

So you don't ski — so what. Get up and go with the flow: Tube, snowshoe, sculpt or surf, fish, climb, gee and haw . . . or just snuggle up in a sleigh. **M5**



Vancouver offers its all to Games fans

► **SIGHTS**
Continued from Page M1

tainment hubs, featuring free live music and performances: Watch artists create giant canvases, see bands like Barenaked Ladies and Bedouin Soundclash, visit the kid-friendly zone for storytelling, and witness skiers and snowboarders leaping through rings of fire.

While Bode Miller and Lindsey Vonn tear up the slopes at Whistler Creekside, the rest of **Whistler Blackcomb Ski Resort** will remain open. Translation: Out of 200 named ski runs, only four will be closed to the public. That leaves you with nearly 7,400 skiable acres to traverse, and bragging rights for enjoying the only glacier skiing and snowboarding in North America. (Whistler Heli-Skiing will also transport upper-intermediate and expert skiers into the surrounding Coast Mountains for guided backcountry adventures.)

Whether you ski or not, don't miss a ride on the new **Peak 2 Peak** gondola, one of the longest and highest in the world, which can whisk up to 28 people 2.73 miles over a forested valley with the glacial-fed Fitzsimmons Creek 1,400 feet below. Transit time: 11 minutes. Your gondola ticket lets you to travel back and forth all day, so you can grab a bowl of chili at Blackcomb's Rendezvous Lodge, explore both mountains, and then get back to Whistler Village in time for the nightly victory ceremony at Whistler Medals Plaza.

Hop a free ride on one of the area's eco-friendly hydrogen buses and visit the new **Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre** in Whistler's Upper Village to learn about two of the four tribes co-hosting these 21st Winter Games. Built to look like a tradi-

tional Squamish longhouse, the museum has a 220-foot glass wall and forest views, and contains ceremonial blankets, authentic clothing, cedar totems, and dug-out canoes. Squamish or Lil'wat guides offer tours of the building in between drumming performances and a short film that discusses modern-day First Nations' culture and lifestyle. Sample traditional dishes in the cafe, including smoked salmon on bannock (fried bread), and peppered chicken with cedar jelly and brie.

Richmond
Just south of Vancouver, in a delta region where the Fraser River meets the Pacific Ocean, the city of Richmond reflects its roots as a vital fishing port and multicultural hub. The cannery boom of the 1800s drew thousands of Chinese and Japanese workers and helped shape Richmond, turning this sleepy community into a lively city where more than 60 percent of the residents are of Asian descent.

Necessary tools for exploring the city: a good pair of walking shoes and a TransLink ticket, which covers the light rail and local buses.

From the Richmond Oval, located in a quiet light-industrial park on the banks of the Fraser River, walk 10 minutes to downtown and catch the 401 bus to **Steveston Village**. In an afternoon, you can wander through the Gulf of Georgia Cannery and nearby Britannia Heritage Shipyard, both National Historic Sites that capture the importance of the local fishing industry. Then stroll along the wharves in this charming village where seafood restaurants line the docks. (It's no surprise the city has Canada's largest commercial fishing fleet.) Small, independent shops offer



PHOTOS BY KARI BODNARCHUK/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Steveston, a village in Richmond, sits on the Fraser River and is known for its seafood restaurants. In Richmond's Aberdeen Centre, Tomiko Nishimura makes American-style Japanese pastries at Beard Papa's. The view from Vancouver's Queen Elizabeth Park.



everything from First Nations artwork (try the native-owned Canoe Pass Gallery for a good selection) to kitschy souvenirs. The harborside Sockeye City Grille and Blue Canoe restaurants specialize in Pacific Northwest fare and serve excellent fish and chips.

Steveston's mellow pace contrasts with the **Golden Village**, a microcosm of all things Asian in downtown Richmond, where you'll find more than 300 Asian shops and eateries. The Aberdeen Centre, an immaculate, bustling mall, looks like it's been transplanted here from Hong Kong (thankfully, most Chinese signs have English translations).

Richmond's celebration site, the **O Zone**, will have live bands,



a public skating rink, the Holland Heineken House where medals celebrations for Dutch athletes take place, and a Winter Games Dome where you can ride in a bobsled, ski through the woods, and experience other Olympic sports in a virtual realm.

Downtown Vancouver
Yaletown turns pedestrian-only during the Olympics as Mainland and Hamilton streets link two of Vancouver's LiveCity sites. In this renovated warehouse district, hip furniture stores and chic boutiques occupy old red-brick buildings, and cafes and espresso bars spill onto loading-dock-style patios. Visit the Coastal Peoples Fine Arts Gallery for native jewelry and carvings, stop into the Yaletown Brewing Co. for a pint, grab an artfully prepared steak or salmon dish from the trendy new Society dining lounge, and then head to LiveCity Yaletown at David Lam Park for the nightly laser and water show. Or hop an Aquabus to nearby **Granville Island**, where you can visit the Swiss and Francophone Olympic pavilions, stroll through the public market, and poke around shops selling organic chocolate, outdoor clothing, native carvings, and "everything for dogs and cats under one roof," in the funky Woofles & Meowz red caboose on Cartwright Street.

Lace up your ice skates a few blocks northwest of Yaletown in **Robson Square** and glide around the outdoor rink at GE Plaza. Skating is free; rentals cost \$3. Next door, the Vancouver Art Gallery hosts a free exhibit of Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical drawings, with their remarkably precise details, and the nearby Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coastal Art displays works by one of the province's most renowned First Nations artists.

Take a 10-minute taxi ride from the **Pacific Coliseum**, located in a working-class neighborhood due east of downtown, to **Commercial Drive**, an eclectic neighborhood with everything from a Turkish coffee lounge, a take-out sushi joint, and an all-organic Indian eatery to old-time pizza shops and fresh produce markets, with an Italian shoe shop and the People's Co-op Bookstore in the mix. Hop out around **Venables Street** and, with the mountains at your back, walk south about 15 blocks to the big SkyTrain station next to **North Grandview Highway**, enjoying the whimsical wall murals en route. Refuel at Stella's Tap and Tapas Bar, which serves 60 imported Belgian beers and some of the best mussels in town.

Enjoy one of the best panoramic views of Vancouver and its mountainous backdrop from the city's tallest hill (Little Mountain, 550 feet), located in **Queen Elizabeth Park** near the Vancouver Olympic Centre. Snap a few cityscapes next to the playful bronze statues, visit **The Bloedel Conservatory** where hundreds of exotic birds fly free under the geodesic dome, and enjoy a mountaintop meal at Seasons in the Park, which has an extensive wine bar, creative Pacific Northwest fare, and an outdoor patio

with stone fireplaces and city views (President Clinton dined here with Russian President Boris Yeltsin). Then walk or catch a bus to nearby **Main Street**, an edgy, up-and-coming neighborhood known for its antiques and where low-end storefronts mix with trendy lounges, fair trade coffee shops, a United Nations roundup of restaurants, and boutiques and boutiques selling everything from vintage clothing to Buddha supplies. Don't miss Burgo, a bistro specializing in comfort food from around the world, like Irish stew, Swiss fondue, and "the best mac and cheese in the Northern Hemisphere," according to one Vancouverite.

The **University of British Columbia (UBC) area** near Thunderbird Arena has lush parks and gardens (much stays green here year-round), picturesque drives, several of the city's top beaches, and more elbow room and a mellower pace than downtown. Wander the trails at the **UBC Botanical Garden**, where you can stand under massive trees found only in the Pacific Northwest, and discover Japanese katsura trees, which have heart-shaped leaves and smell like blackberry crumble. UBC students offer hourly tours of the new **Greenheart Canopy Walkway**, a "tree-friendly" collection of elevated platforms and bridges that form a 1,010-foot loop around the forest. The newly renovated and expanded **UBC Museum of Anthropology** captures the splendor of First Nations art, with two-story-high totem poles and canoes.

Ask the locals where to hang out after a snowboarding or aerial event at **Cypress Mountain**, located in a quiet provincial park, and they will probably point you to **Grouse Mountain** in **North Van**, a ski area north of the Lions Gate Bridge that offers 24-hour skiing, snowboarding, zip-lining, and full-on entertainment throughout the Olympics, and easy access by public transportation. The city and ocean views are so stunning, NBC's "Today" show will broadcast from here daily. Catch the best view from an observation deck on the world's first elevator-accessed wind turbine, **The Eye of the Wind**, located near the top of the Peak Chair at 4,500 feet. A \$145 after-hours ticket gets you unlimited mountain access for 17 nights between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. Reach the mountain chalet via the **Skyride**, North America's largest aerial tramway, which whisks 100 people a mile up the mountain in about 5 minutes.

Before heading back downtown, save a couple of hours to explore the **Capilano Suspension Bridge** and surrounding park, just 2 miles south of Grouse, where a canopy walkway and boardwalks take you through a coastal temperate rain forest and past 200-foot Douglas firs. To reach the park, you have to cross the wide and sturdy suspension bridge, which passes over a gaping canyon and the Capilano River 230 feet below.

Kari Bodnarchuk, who lives less than an hour from Vancouver, can be reached at travelwriter@karib.us.

If you go . . .

Whistler
www.whistler.com: Information about resort and village
www.whistlerblackcomb.com: Ski and snowboard information
www.whistler2010.com/whistler-live: Events
Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre
4584 Blackcomb Way
866-441-7522; www.slcc.ca
Adults \$17.35, 13-18 \$10.60, 6-12 \$7.70, under 6 free.
Whistler Blackcomb Ski Resort
Lift tickets: \$89.65 per day, minus 20 percent for advanced bookings; includes Peak 2 Peak access. **Peak 2 Peak:** adults \$43.30, ages 13-18 \$33.70, 7-12 \$18.25, under 7 free.
Whistler Heli-Skiing
4241 Village Stroll
888-435-4754
www.whistlerheliskiing.com
Full-day rates \$900-\$1,085 for four to six runs.

Richmond
www.tourismrichmond.com and **www.allinrichmond.com:** City's official tourism sites
www.richmondzone.com: All Live site events
Gulf of Georgia Cannery
12138 Fourth Ave., Steveston
604-664-9009

Sockeye City Grill
108-3800 Bayview St.
Steveston
604-275-6790
www.sockeyecity.com
Lunch entrees \$5-\$19.
Canoe Pass Gallery
115-3866 Bayview St.
Steveston
www.canoe-pass.com
International Buddhist Temple (Guan Yin Temple)
9160 Steveston Highway
604-274-2822
www.buddhisttemple.ca

Vancouver
www.vancouver2010.com: All things Olympic related
www.granvilleisland.ca: Information on Granville Island
www.translink.bc.ca: Schedules and rates for SkyTrain and public buses
www.travelsmart2010.ca: Information on getting around during the Games

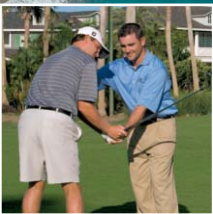
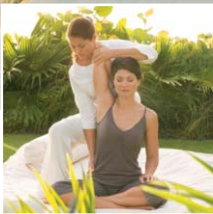
www.tourismvancouver.com: Travel information
University of British Columbia Botanical Garden and Greenheart Canopy Walkway
6804 Southwest Marine Drive
604-822-9666
www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org
UBC Museum of Anthropology
6393 Northwest Marine Drive
604-822-5087
www.moa.ubc.ca
Bloedel Conservatory
Queen Elizabeth Park
Off 33rd Avenue between Cambie and Main streets
604-257-8556

Burgoo Bistro
3096 Main St.
604-873-1441
www.burgoo.ca
Entrees \$7.70-\$15.45.
Stella's Tap and Tapas Bar
1191 Commercial Drive
604-254-2437
www.stellasbeer.com
Tapas \$4.80-\$12.55; lunch entrees \$10.60-\$13.50.
GE Plaza Ice Rink
Robson Square
Free to skate; rentals \$3.

Vancouver Art Gallery
750 Hornby St. 604-662-4719
www.vanartgallery.bc.ca
Free during the Olympics.
Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art
639 Hornby St.
604-682-3455
www.billreidgallery.ca
Yaletown Brewing Co.
1111 Mainland St.
604-681-2739
Entrees \$11.60-\$22.20.
Coastal Peoples Fine Arts Gallery
1024 Mainland St.
888-686-9298
www.coastalpeoples.com
Grouse Mountain
Nancy Greene Way
604-980-9311
www.grousemountain.com
Admission \$43.45, lift \$58, Olympic after-hours \$145.
Capilano Suspension Bridge
3735 Capilano Road
North Vancouver
604-985-7474
www.capbridge.com

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