

## CANADA

HQ for **thrill** seekers

Canadian ski destination Whistler is more popular with those seeking an adrenaline rush in summer than winter, writes **Andrew Fenton**

**C**LINGING to a sheer cliff face 230m above the Whistler glacier, my fingers and toes grasping for holds at cracks in the rock, I resolve to start reading my itinerary a little more closely.

I'd set out that morning in the naive belief I'd be hiking the Whistler summit before taking a quick stroll along the "Via Ferrata". Italian for "iron road" – the name conjures up solid and reassuring images of a large metal walkway full of tourists

ambling about taking pictures. It's only when I find myself at the base of cliff, in full rockclimbing gear and a helmet, that I realise today's challenge is going to be slightly more taxing. I'm clipped in at all times to the safety line and am thus unlikely to plummet to my doom, but I really do have to haul myself 260m up the rock face.

Not knowing the sheer enormity of the undertaking is probably a blessing, as the major obstacles most people

have to overcome are their own fear and doubt. Plenty of would-be climbers become paralysed with anxiety. One guy froze on the ladder, all of 3m from the bottom. "That was a long day," says guide Kyler Connell, who had to talk him through every single step of the way.

"At the end he wasn't relieved, he looked like he'd stared into the heart of darkness," says Connell, who's at the opposite end of the spectrum. He talks about

rockclimbing as if it's some sort of hyper-meditative flow state. "What I love about it is you really can't focus on anything else. You've had a hard day at work and all of a sudden all you can think about is the next handhold, the next foothold."

You'd be surprised how quickly you pick up the basics when faced with a 200m drop. After a nerve-racking three hours, we finally stand at the summit, 2160m above sea level, to be greeted by a panorama of

snow-capped mountains as far as the eye can see. It's a blue sky summer's day and, with the nerves fading to a distant memory, my entire focus switches to a sense of exhilaration and achievement at conquering something I never thought I would.

Rockclimbing is just one of many exciting ways to risk your life at Whistler. A two-hour bus ride from downtown Vancouver, it's even more popular with thrill seekers in summer than in

winter. There are about 40,000 beds here in accommodation ranging from caravan parks to five-star resorts. For the true Canadian experience, I'm staying in a log cabin at the Riverside Resort, eating nothing but pancakes and maple syrup and drinking ice cider.

Whistler village looks a little bit like Disney was commissioned to design a combination resort and shopping mall – the buildings are kind of cute and you can





**MOUNTAINS OF FUN:** (clockwise from main) Downhill mountain biking at Whistler; on the SuperFly Zipline; rockclimbing Whistler's peaks; guide Kyler Connell; and the Peak to Peak gondola between Whistler and Blackcomb.

1.3km, and the highest is 197m above the valley floor (higher than Seattle's Space Needle). I strap myself in to a flying fox-style contraption and push off. I'm whizzing across treetops, hitting a top speed of about 100km/h, but don't really feel the speed until I see the base station approaching. Then I begin wondering why no one mentioned how I'm supposed to stop. The pulley hits a spring-like brake at the end of the ride and I'm pushed backwards a few metres. It's great fun, but not for all; those who prefer their thrills on the milder side can ride the Peak to Peak gondola between Whistler and Blackcomb.

The writer was a guest of the Canadian Tourism Commission and Tourism Montreal.

spend hours shopping for fashion or sports gear. There's endless amounts of great food too, at good value. When I visit, during the shoulder season, you can get a three-course meal for \$25 at Alta Bistro, selecting anything from elk tartare to beef cheeks. The best of the lot is Bearfoot Bistro, under the eye of executive chef Melissa Craig, one of the top names in Canadian cuisine.

A big attraction at Whistler is downhill biking. The MTB park is probably the best in the world with 1500 vertical metres of lift-served descending trails and more terrain than anywhere else in North America. Just taking a ride on the lift is a thrill in itself – the riders are too hardcore to ever put the safety bar down and will look daggers at you if you try. Within a few rides you're

almost certain to spy a bear or two waddling down the runs. The park itself is insanely good fun – and slightly insane. Decked out in a full-face helmet and body armour I hurtle down twisting, purpose-built paths with endless jumps, obstacles, berms and drops in them. The trails here are legendary: A Line, Blue Velvet and my favourite, Crank It Up, are aimed at enthusiastic

intermediates like me. For people who know what they're doing, there are some truly challenging paths. By the end of the day, I've nearly broken my arm; my legs are burning from the workout; and my hands are so worn out from clinging to the handlebars and brakes that I can barely close my fists. Despite this, I have trouble wiping the smile off my face.

"It's so good, it's like a legal drug," my instructor Leo Herbert says. Literally a third of the people you'll meet are Australians – there are so many that people jokingly refer to these parts as "Whistralia". I head up to Cougar Mountain to again confront serious heights. Superfly Ziplines operates four tandem ziplines here – the longest is







See the world as only a fortunate few ever will with Azamara Club Cruises. Longer stays, more overnights and a host of up-market amenities. Journey where larger ships can't reach and experience unique destinations, uniquely delivered.

# 5\* ULTRA LUXURY ASIA CRUISE SALE

All inclusive luxury cruising offering on each voyage an Azamazing Evening, Gratuities, Selected Standard drinks and more!

### ALL INCLUSIVE VIETNAM & THAILAND DISCOVERY

Azamara Quest® • 20 nights • 01 January 2015



**PACKAGE INCLUDES:**

- Flight from Australia to Hong Kong
- FREE 3 night stay in Hong Kong
- 15 Night cruise from Hong Kong visiting Hanoi (Ha Long Bay - 2 day/1 night stay), Hue (Da Nang - 2 day/1 night stay), Ho Chi Minh City (2 day/1 night stay), Bangkok (Klong Toey - 3 day/2 night stay), Ko Samui and Singapore
- All Meals, Drinks and Entertainment on board
- Superb choice of restaurants and bars
- Onboard gratuities
- FREE Azamazing Evening Event
- Flight from Singapore to Australia • All taxes

**BROCHURE PRICE**  
**\$10979PP**

**CRUISE1ST PRICE**  
**\$3499PP**

Search for this cruise on our website - Cruise Ref No: AZ001

### ALL INCLUSIVE THAILAND & INDONESIA VOYAGE

Azamara Quest® • 16 nights • 02 February 2015



**PACKAGE INCLUDES:**

- Flight from Australia to Singapore
- FREE 1 night stay in Singapore
- 14 Night cruise from Singapore visiting Ko Samui, Bangkok (Klong Toey - 3 day/2 night stay), Semarang (Borobudur), Celukan Bawang, Lombok and Benoa (Bali - overnight stay)
- All Meals, Drinks and Entertainment on board
- Superb choice of restaurants and bars
- Onboard gratuities
- FREE Azamazing Evening Event
- Flight from Denpasar to Australia • All taxes

**BROCHURE PRICE**  
**\$10990PP**

**CRUISE1ST PRICE**  
**\$2899PP**

Search for this cruise on our website - Cruise Ref No: AZ002

### ALL INCLUSIVE INDONESIA TO JAPAN EXPLORER

Azamara Quest® • 18 nights • 16 February 2015



**PACKAGE INCLUDES:**

- Flight from Australia to Denpasar
- Free 1 night stay in Bali
- 16 Night cruise from Bali (Benoa - overnight stay) visiting Komodo, Sandakan, Puerto Princesa, Manila (2 day/1 night stay), Hualien, Okinawa and Kyoto (Osaka, 2 night stay)
- FREE upgrade to Club Oceanview
- All Meals, Drinks and Entertainment on board
- Superb choice of restaurants and bars
- Onboard gratuities
- FREE Azamazing Evening Event
- Flight from Osaka to Australia • All taxes

**BROCHURE PRICE**  
**\$12809PP**

**CLUB OCEANVIEW**  
**\$3999PP**

Search for this cruise on our website - Cruise Ref No: AZ003

### ALL INCLUSIVE JAPAN, CHINA & VIETNAM

Azamara Quest® • 18 nights • 04 March 2015



**PACKAGE INCLUDES:**

- Flight from Australia to Osaka
- 16 Night cruise from Kyoto (Osaka - overnight stay) visiting Hiroshima, Shanghai (2 day/1 night stay), Hong Kong (2 day/1 night stay), Ho Chi Minh City (2 day/1 night stay) and Singapore (overnight stay)
- All Meals, Drinks and Entertainment on board
- Superb choice of restaurants and bars
- Onboard gratuities
- FREE Azamazing Evening Event
- Flight from Singapore to Australia • All taxes

**BROCHURE PRICE**  
**\$11929PP**

**CRUISE1ST PRICE**  
**\$3499PP**

Search for this cruise on our website - Cruise Ref No: AZ004


CALL TODAY ON 1300 947 234
quote Telegraph


Opening Hours: Mon - Fri 9am - 7pm • Sat - Sun 9am - 5pm

All prices are 'from prices' and are per person based on a twin share and were correct at time of going to print, are valid for new bookings only and subject to change. Prices are inclusive of taxes and port charges. Brochure price advertised is based on the cabin price from the Worldwide Cruises 2014-2015 brochure plus flights. Transfers may not be included in the price, check at time of booking. Visas are required for certain destinations, and are the responsibility of the customer. Cruise 1st recommends all travellers purchase travel insurance at time of booking. Itineraries, including hotels, airlines and advertised prices are subject to availability and subject to change/increase at any time. Airfares are based on economy flights.