

# What's new at North American ski resorts for the 2013-14 season



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Canada's top 8 ski resorts

IMAGE: 1 OF 9



**Trying to decide which Canadian ski resort to visit on your winter holiday? The results of the first ever World Ski Awards may hold your answer. The awards honoured the best ski resorts around the world, from Australia and the U.S. to Russia and Japan.**

**See the eight nominees from across Canada in the category of best ski resort and discover which Canadian ski resort was named as the best in the country for the 2013-2014 ski season. (Fotolia)**

With ski areas opening earlier across North America this year, fingers crossed it'll be a big snow, big mountain ski season. Here's a rundown of new features to watch for at some of the largest resorts in United States, Canada and beyond.

## **WHISTLER BLACKCOMB**

B.C.'s Whistler Blackcomb — Canada's largest ski area — has made some improvements for the 2014 ski season, including a new lift on Blackcomb Mountain.

The new Crystal Ridge Express is a high-speed quad chair that promises to improve skiing not only in Blackcomb's Crystal Zone, but also for lovers of the spectacular Blackcomb Glacier. In short, the new lift is taking a different route than the slow-speed triple it has replaced, making it faster and easier for skiers exiting Blackcomb Glacier to get back to the best runs Blackcomb has to offer.

There's also a new lift on Whistler Mountain. The Harmony 6 Express Chair is a bigger faster replacement for the old Harmony quad, and promises to increase uphill capacity by 50% for skiers spanning from the Whistler's Symphony region all the way over to Glacier Bowl. See [whistlerblackcomb.com](http://whistlerblackcomb.com).

## **RED MOUNTAIN**

It's a dream come true for Red Mountain near Rossland, B.C. The ski area has secured the rights and funds to expand to Grey Mountain.

A new chair lift will open this season on nearly 405 hectares of new skiable terrain, putting Red in the same league as North America's largest ski resorts. Red's new Grey Mountain features 360-degrees of skiing off the top — a unique feature for any ski area. See [redresort.com](http://redresort.com).

## **BIG WHITE**

One of Canada's most family friendly ski resorts has a new package that makes it easier on parents of young children learning to ski.

Big White's new Mom, Dad and Me ski package is designed for kids ages three to six who may be nervous about being away from their parents during a ski lesson. The two-hour semi-private instruction introduces kids to skiing with their parents present. A bonus: Parents are offered tips on how to teach their children with games and fun activities.

The program is packaged with two-nights' accommodation, four two-day lift passes and tube park tickets, priced from \$275 per person. See [bigwhite.com](http://bigwhite.com).

## **BLUE MOUNTAIN**

Ontario's largest public ski area, Blue Mountain, is opening more terrain. A \$10-million expansion has added 26 hectares and a new high-speed lift to the south end.

"This is one of the most significant investments in the resort's 73-year history and the largest expansion of a ski resort in Ontario in recent memory," Dan Skelton, Blue's president and COO says.

Snowmaking infrastructure and night lighting will be installed on three of the six trails of the new Orchard area, increasing Blue Mountain's skiable terrain to 147 total hectares across 42 trails — the most in Ontario. See [bluemountain.ca](http://bluemountain.ca).

## **INTRAWEST**

The news that Intrawest Resorts Holdings Inc. is going public has been widely reported as good news for the ski industry.

The company that once owned many major Canadian ski resorts — including B.C.'s Whistler Blackcomb, Quebec's Tremblant and Ontario's Blue Mountain — struggled in the past five years in the wake of the world economic crisis, culminating in efforts to auction its flagship Whistler Blackcomb operations during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

Experts are now saying things are looking up for Intrawest, which still owns Colorado's Steamboat and Winter Park, Vermont's Stratton and Quebec's Tremblant Resort, which is marking its 75th year of operation.

Watch for news of events related to Tremblant's anniversary such as a New Year's event, a Feb. 12 celebration, etc. See [tremblant.ca](http://tremblant.ca).

## **MONT-SAINTE-ANNE**

A new lift for Mont-Sainte-Anne is scheduled to open Dec. 15. The Quebec ski area's new Doppelmayr detachable quad chair — named La Panorama-Express — will cut ride time in half and serve more skiable terrain. See [mont-sainte-anne.com](http://mont-sainte-anne.com).

## VAIL

There's only one word for Vail Resorts' ski holdings: Boundless. The Colorado-based company now has 26 ski resorts in its stable, located in Colorado, Utah, California — and most recently, Europe.

Longtime owners of Vail and Beaver Creek, the firm's Colorado mix also includes Keystone, Breckenridge and Arapahoe Basin. To the industry's surprise, Vail inked a deal last spring to run Canyons near Park City, its first foray into Utah. Add to that its Lake Tahoe, Calif., holdings of Heavenly, Northstar and Kirkwood, and things were getting pretty big.

But the real surprise came in August when Vail partnered with Europe's Trois Vallees. This massive French resort holds eight ski areas, including Courchevel, Meribel and Val Thorens. Trois Vallees has 180 ski lifts, 600 km of skiing and is known as the world's largest ski area. See [vail.com](http://vail.com).

## ASPEN

Colorado's Aspen/Snowmass has also invested recently in a major ski terrain expansion. The new Burnt Mountain at Snowmass adds 93 new hectares, making Snowmass the second-largest ski area in Colorado with a total of 1,361 skiable hectares.

The terrain on Burnt Mountain features rolling, low-angle meadows, glades and views into the valleys between Snowmass and Buttermilk. "This is a powder skier's dream," Steve Sewell, Snowmass mountain manager, says. "Burnt Mountain was formerly backcountry. Now it will be patrolled and controlled, opening up this amazing experience to more of the skiing and riding public."

Spread across Snowmass, Buttermilk, Aspen Mountain and Aspen Highlands, total skiable acreage for the resort is now 2,239 hectares, all available on a single lift ticket. See [aspensnowmass.com](http://aspensnowmass.com).

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