

The Province

The Province

TRAVEL

travel@sunprovince.com

The *other* Whistler

YOGA, SPA DAYS, DINING, SHOPPING —
THERE'S MORE TO THIS RESORT TOWN
THAN SCHUSSING THE SLOPES. **B12**

Nita Lake Lodge is the perfect haven for those who love the town of Whistler but have little desire to go carving through fresh powder. — ANNA BEAUDRY PHOTOGRAPHIC DESIGN



Whistler's Nita Lake Lodge was named one of the Top 10 organic spas in the world by Organic Spa Magazine in 2015. — PHOTOS: ANNA BEAUDRY PHOTOGRAPHIC DESIGN

Who says you have to ski?

Whistler is a winter playland even for the most slope-averse traveller

Jane Mundy

SPECIAL TO THE SUNDAY PROVINCE

Yoga pants, swimsuit, cocktail dress — check. I'm packed and ready for a weekend in Whistler. What about skis, poles and parkas? Don't need 'em.

Skiing just isn't my thing, thanks to my first experience with a boyfriend who seemed to forget I was there and went schussing down the hill, leaving me to fend for myself. It took hours to make it down the hill, mostly on my butt, and I vowed "never again."

But that hasn't stopped me from returning to Whistler. I've learned the resort town has lots to offer non-skiers. We're spoiled for choice.

We checked into Nita Lake Lodge just in time for a session at Loka Yoga, which is in the building. If you can swing it, take a class with Tina James, the owner. Her unique style is infused with humour and play, and is truly exhilarating. What better way to begin a few days of indulgence?

After a hearty snack at Fix, we booked massage treatments at the lodge's spa, which also offers naturopathic services. I opted for the "kundalini" treatment that includes a foot scrub and facial. No wonder Nita Lake Lodge was named one of 2015's Top 10 organic spas — the only one in Canada named — by Organic Spa Magazine.

We swanned upstairs to our well-appointed suite, complete with gas fireplace and balcony overlooking the lake. One thing I love about resorts is you don't need the car. Nita Lake Lodge's complimentary shuttle delivers you to the village and will pick you up within minutes (or the trail is a pleasant one-hour stroll).

It was tempting not to leave the



Why bother skiing when you can relax in the hot tub at Nita Lake Lodge in Whistler?

building, but Bar Oso, newly opened by the Araxi team, beckoned. Bar Oso lives up to the high standards of Araxi. Go early because the word is already out — by 7 p.m. the place was packed, mostly by locals, ordering Spanish-style small plates. The house-made charcuterie is exceptional, and you must try the lamb albondigas, a recipe handed down to chef Jorge Santos from his grandmother. And the chick pea purée? I need that recipe.

Back to the lodge's Aura Restaurant for dinner. We followed the freshest oysters with venison chops and sour cherry jus and sturgeon with elk chorizo. Chef Dean split our entrees,

and both dishes paired with wines by the glass. We chose well.

We planned on snowshoeing around Nita Lake (the lodge offers complimentary snowshoe loans) but opted for more indulgence at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler.

It's so exhilarating to breathe mountain air and view the slopes while wallowing in the outdoor hot tubs. There's so much to do without actually leaving the building. With morning yoga classes, afternoon art crawl and shopping at Mountain Galleries (downstairs from the lobby), who has time to ski?

Speaking of art, almost across the street is the Squamish Lil'wat Cul-

tural Centre, built with cedar and glass. Definitely worth a visit. The Audain Art Museum is slated to open in early 2016. More than 200 significant art works, from 19th century First Nations masks to modern works by Jeff Wall, will be housed in a 56,000-square-foot tree house.

The yoga pants came in handy on the drive home — we needed the elasticized waist after an epic brunch at the Fairmont. And don't forget to stop at Fix for a loaf of bread. Whistler has it all!

The writer was a guest of Tourism Whistler. No one from Tourism Whistler reviewed or approved this article before publication.

If you go

Bring the kids

BabysittingWhistler comes to your location and takes the children out and about for fun activities. Evenings the sitter will stay in your room and bring a craft kit. Owner Rebecca Craig advises you book ahead, although they can usually accommodate last-minute bookings. "We have been offering this service for 14 years and it's the first choice for child care from the Fairmont Chateau Lake and Nita Lake Lodge, to name a few," Craig says.

Bring the dog

If your pooch has to be left alone for any length of time, Alpine Dogs offer in-room sitting and adventure hikes. They prefer you book at least one day ahead but can usually accommodate same-day bookings. And evenings you can stay out until the wee hours. Whistler is one big doggie playland.

Nita Lake Lodge: nitalakelodge.com

Fairmont Chateau Whistler: fairmont.com/whistler

Bar Orso: baroso.ca

Art Gallery: mountaingalleries.com

Baby Sit: BabysittingWhistler.com

Dog Sit: alpinedogs.ca