

Last Updated: March 17, 2020

## **Member Update: COVID-19 (coronavirus)**

Dear Members,

As you all know, over the last few days federal and provincial measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 have escalated significantly, and today the province of BC declared a public health emergency. A recap of these measures are detailed at the end of this letter.

Locally, Vail Resorts has announced all of its North American resorts and retail stores will remain closed for the 2019-20 winter ski season. There is the possibility Whistler Blackcomb could reopen in late April/early May dependent on the situation with COVID-19 and weather conditions.

Many other businesses in Whistler, including restaurants, accommodations, activity providers and retail stores, are also suspending or modifying their operations. The resort landscape is changing daily.

These are unprecedented times, and the impacts will be significant.

At Tourism Whistler, we have suspended our proactive marketing efforts and have shifted our focus to servicing guests currently in resort. Effective today, the Whistler Visitor Centre, operated by Tourism Whistler, is closed until further notice. However, our visitor servicing efforts will continue via our [Ask Whistler](#) mobile chat service, and our Whistler.com call centre agents, who are available to assist guests by phone at 1.800.944.7853.

We are also working to keep updated travel and resort information posted to [whistler.com/covid](https://whistler.com/covid), to serve as a one-stop-shop for Members and guests, detailing what in Whistler is closed, what remains open, and what business operations have been modified. We are asking Members to keep us informed by emailing updates to [reservations@whistler.com](mailto:reservations@whistler.com).

Whistler.com continues to field cancellation requests from guests, but our agents are also assisting with rebooking leisure reservations for future dates as much as possible.

With the provincial directive that all meetings and conferences be cancelled until the end of May, this triggers a force majeure clause in our contracts which allows meeting planners to cancel programs without financial penalty. Nonetheless, our Conference Sales team is working with these meeting planners to rebook this business for a later date.

All in-person Member Meetings for March and April have been suspended, but we will keep you apprised of updates and actions through ongoing written communications. We therefore encourage you to sign up for our [member newsletter](#) and to check the [Member Meetings](#) page for updates.

At this time, we are recommending the following key messaging:

- It is not business as usual in the resort.
- Vail Resorts has announced all of its North American ski resorts will remain closed for the 2019-20 winter season; however, there is the possibility that Whistler Blackcomb could reopen in late April/early May, dependent on the situation with COVID-19 and weather conditions.
- Many other businesses in Whistler, including restaurants, accommodations, activity operators and retail stores, are also suspending operations. Some businesses are remaining open but with modified operations.
- Guests can call 1.800.944.7853 or use the Ask Whistler mobile chat service to speak with a Whistler.com call centre agent who can answer questions and provide resort information.
- Travel and resort information is available at [whistler.com/covid](https://whistler.com/covid).
- Anyone arriving in British Columbia from outside of Canada, including the United States, are to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days upon arrival.
- Anyone with questions related to COVID-19 or public health in Whistler should consult Vancouver Coastal Health, the health authority for our region.
- Vancouver Coastal Health recommends washing your hands, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and staying home when feeling unwell, as the best measures anyone can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

With the latest safety measures outlined by health and government authorities, we need to support our guests with flexible cancellation policies and full refunds, as these will go a long way towards building loyalty and supporting business recovery once the COVID-19 situation subsides.

These are uncertain times and it is difficult to predict what the coming days and weeks will hold. While focusing on the immediate emergency, we will also be turning our efforts to business recovery.

Sincerely,



Barrett Fisher  
President & CEO  
Tourism Whistler

### Recent Federal and Provincial Announcements:

- Canada will deny entry to travellers who are not Canadian citizens or Permanent Residents. **\*Updated March 18:** The Canada/US Border is now closed to travellers.
- Canadians have been instructed to avoid all non-essential travel outside Canada.
- Air operators have been formally mandated to prevent any travellers with symptoms to board an aircraft to Canada, and only four Canadian airports are now accepting international flights, including Vancouver International, Pearson International in Toronto, Calgary and Montreal.
- Anyone arriving in British Columbia from outside of Canada, including the United States, are to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days upon arrival.
- Gatherings of more than 50 people are not permitted in British Columbia at this time.
- Bars in BC have been ordered to close, and businesses that remain open must take measures to ensure social distancing. Restaurants and cafes that cannot meet social distancing requirements must switch to takeout only.

### COVID-19 Information Resources:

- Vancouver Coastal Health - <http://www.vch.ca/about-us/news/vancouver-coastal-health-statement-on-coronavirus>
- BC Centre for Disease Control - [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))
- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>
- HealthLink BC - <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-covid-19>
- World Health Organization - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Destination BC - <https://www.destinationbc.ca/news/coronavirus-update/>
- Whistler Chamber of Commerce - <https://www.whistlerchamber.com/covid-19-guidance-and-resources-for-whistler-businesses/>