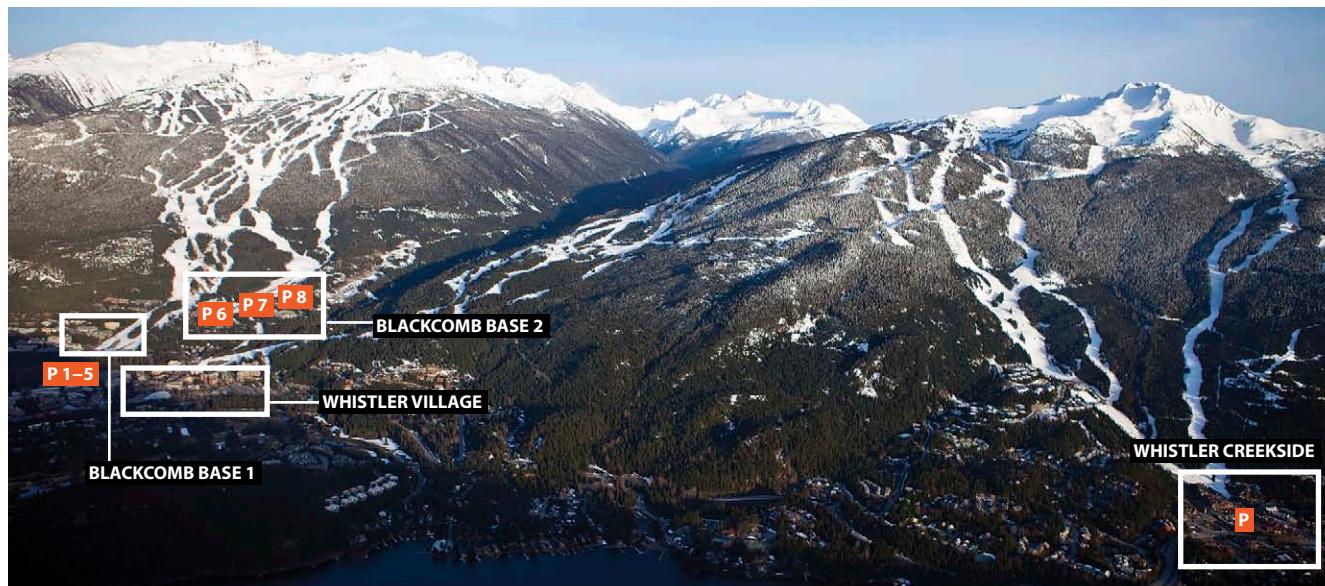


Avoiding Lineups

On powder days, you will most likely have to deal with a few lift lines if you want to put yourself in the fray for first tracks. On other days, there are some basic principles for avoiding lines on the hill. Many people prescribe the philosophy of “get up, stay up, eat smart”. Since your biggest chance of getting tangled in a lift line is at the start of the day in the valley, it is crucial to get to the base early on weekends and holidays. You may also want to consider buying a ticket for Fresh Tracks Breakfast atop Whistler Mountain. For about \$18, you can load the Gondola at 7:30, enjoy a buffet breakfast at the Roundhouse and hit the slopes before the rest of the skiers have arrived. Hey, why not let the queue form in the valley while you’re shredding pow in the alpine.

Once on the upper mountain, stay up top until the morning rush is over. If you want to ride down to the village for lunch or take a ripper on Peak to Creek, make sure you check the light board before going too low. You could be heading into a major traffic jam if you descend too early. The “eat smart” component of the slogan has nothing to do with nutrition but a lot to do with timing. If you can make it part of your daily strategy to avoid the restaurants between the hours of noon and 2 o’clock you will probably be able skip any of the congestion. Whether you want to eat early or late, the choice is up to you, but make sure you are skiing instead of sitting in the middle of the day.



Parking

What was once a nonissue has become the first challenge of the day. And you thought those triple-black-diamond runs were tough!

The Creekside underground parking garage offers a convenient, covered and, at least for the time being, free option for motorists heading up to Whistler. The benefits beyond monetary can include a less lengthy exodus at the end of your day if you are heading south, since you completely avoid the Village. The downside is that the lift capacity is not fast enough to handle the potential volume of the lots. On busy days, this can result in lineups that stretch past the shops of Franz's Trail. One strategy is to pull into the lot and send a runner up to check the length of the line before committing to starting your day at Creekside.

Village Day Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were once the bread-and-butter parking option for all skiers. After the 2010 Olympic Games, however, the lots became pay parking with rates of \$8.00 per day. All five lots require payment, despite protests by the people of Whistler during the summer of 2011.

There are three more parking lots at Base 2 on Blackcomb. Lot 6 is at the midstation of the Excalibur Gondola, Lot 7 is above the staff-housing complex past the valley maintenance shop, and Lot 8 is adjacent to the Whistler Sliding Centre and Tube Park. All three are free and offer skiing directly to and from the lot, requiring minimal walking in ski boots. These are now the most sought-after spots in the Valley and have changed the traffic flow of where people park and upload. If you choose to park here, your best bet for faster access up the hill and smaller lift lines is to ski down to the Wizard Express rather than load the Excalibur at midstation or the Village Gondola to Whistler.

Since it appears that pay parking is here to stay, it looks like the early birds will continue to catch those precious free spots at Creekside and Base 2. Lets just hope Whistler Blackcomb will remain sensible and avoid going the route of the municipality's money-grab parking scheme.