

# Whiteface Lodge radiates Olympic enthusiasm

Ski, skate, shoot and slide where champions competed in Lake Placid

Let the Games begin. We're rooting fervently for our talented Canadian athletes to make it to the podium at the Sochi Olympics, Feb. 7-23, and our hopes and dreams are especially with such Quebecers as Alpine skiers Erik Guay and Alexandre Bilodeau, speedskater Charles Hamelin and the mogul-bashing sisters Maxime, Chloé and Justine Dufour-Lapointe.

But, travel-wise, no town in the northeast embodies the spirit of the Winter Olympics like Lake Placid, N.Y., at the heart of the Adirondack Mountains and the only venue in North America to have held two snow Games, in 1932 and 1980. Lake Placid radiates Olympic enthusiasm year-round, but the excitement is at its peak this month with Olympic flags flying on Main St. and local businesses holding promotions and contests.

Whiteface Lodge was conceived and built by Olympic luger Joe Barile, and today one of its employees, Chris Madzer, is in Sochi, set to compete in the same sport.

Whiteface Lodge is a handsome, luxurious all-suite resort overlooking downtown Lake Placid. It's not even 10 years old, but it has a classic, sturdy design of timber and fieldstone that recalls the Adirondack Great Camps.

The hotel looks rustic but it's thoroughly modern and fully loaded for vacation life. It has 94 spacious one-, two- and three-bedroom suites with designer kitchens, washer-dryers, flat-screen TVs in all the rooms, custom furniture and cabinetry, bathrooms with jet tubs, double vanities and heated floors, and private balconies with mountain views.

Whiteface Lodge is a top-drawer property, with spa life and dining to match. The signature treatment at The Spa at Whiteface Lodge is the Purifying Lodge Retreat featuring a body wrap and hot stone massage. KANU — it uses all-caps spelling for emphasis — is a stunning dining room with a magnificent fireplace and hand-hewn décor. The hearty American gastronomy includes pump-



ROCHELLE LASH  
CHECKING IN

kin bisque with maple syrup and chanterelles and braised venison shank with red currant and white bean purée. The more casual KANU Lounge features such gourmet family fare as a cheddar burger and fries with truffle oil and crispy duck bacon.

Because of the home-away-from-home accommodations, Whiteface Lodge is ideal for families. Kids love the indoor-outdoor-heated pool and the nighttime family bonfires with s'mores. There are luxury lean-tos that I thought would be great hideouts for youngsters, but they're more used by grown-ups as unusual lounges for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres or cigars and cognac.

With competition-calibre facilities still in place for luge, bobsled, biathlon, Nordic skiing and downhill at Whiteface Mountain, visitors can strive to be citius, altius, fortius, (the Olympic motto — faster, higher, stronger — in Latin), even if they're only are weekend athletes.

One of my favourite excursions is the Ladies' 5-K Nordic trail at Mt. Van Hoevenberg, a pastoral five-kilometre trail through thick woods and up and down hills. I'm considerably more plodding than the world-class competitors whose ski time for five kilometres is an astounding 16 minutes or so, but it's a thrill to ski where champions have raced. Later, you can channel your inner hunter and simulate a biathlon with a coaching session at the target range. You'll be up close and personal with a 22-calibre rifle aiming for a bulls-eye that is 50 metres away.

The Olympic Skating Oval on Lake Placid's Main St. is open to the public and this is a delightful activity that is both exhilarating and social. You can skate laps to music and follow with hot chocolate.

You need a truly adventurous spirit to brave Lake Placid's bobsled ride. A driver and brakeman escort you on the five-passenger sled as you



The stunning Adirondack-style dining room at Whiteface Lodge in Lake Placid.



The heated indoor-outdoor pool is a highlight for kids and adults alike.

rocket down a narrow, icy track at almost 100 kilometres per hour for an explosive 50 seconds. It is so fast that you actually feel a G-force tug, but world champions reach

a daunting 140 km/h. You won't catch me bobsledding, thank you very much, but I always love a visit to the Lake Placid Olympic Museum on Main St. That's a lot tamer:

I've saved the best-known for last. Whiteface Mountain Ski Center was an ideal Olympic venue in 1980 because it has the longest vertical drop in eastern North America

## IF YOU GO

Lake Placid is a two-hour drive from Montreal. Take Highway 15 south and New York Highway 87 south to Exit 34.

**Whiteface Lodge:** 800-523-3387, thewhitefacelodge.com; 7 Whiteface Inn Lane, Lake Placid, N.Y.

**Price:** Deluxe one-bedroom suite with living room, kitchen and balcony/patio, starts at approximately \$375 U.S. on Sun.-Thurs., or \$554 on Fri.-Sat., for two to four people, incl. breakfast, indoor-outdoor pool, valet parking, Internet, bonfires with s'mores, skating, movie theatre, fitness centre, game room, bowling alley. Two- and three-bedroom and presidential suites available. Extras: spa treatments, lunch, dinner.

**Whiteface Mountain & Olympic Regional Development Authority:** 800-462-6236, 518-523-1655, whiteface.com, orda.org. The Kodak Sites Lake Placid Passport to all Olympic sites, the Whiteface Mountain gondola ride, and (in summer) the Whiteface Memorial Highway, costs \$32 U.S. for children or adults, and includes one visit to each major venue and discounts on others.

(1,018 metres/3,340 feet), easily fulfilling the 914-metre (3,000-foot) minimum requirement for some of the ski competitions. (Whiteface wasn't part of the 1932 action because the first Olympic downhill events were the combined men's and women's races at the 1936 Games in Garmisch, Germany.)

At Whiteface you can conquer the steep, mogul trails that were part of the Games 20-plus years ago, but now you'll be gliding up on high-speed lifts. Even with those rugged expert runs, Whiteface maintains a strong folksy, family side. In recent years, it has opened Lookout Mountain and expanded its glades. The hot new trail through the trees is the black-diamond Rand's Last Stand. Whiteface also has added considerable snow-making and grooming systems.

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## VERMONT

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