

February 2012
Vol. 13, No. 2

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Grouse Mountain Lodge

An annual migration

**Sports
stars**

Splendor in the Southeast

STS Meeting Guide



Courtesy Grouse Mountain Lodge

Like migratory birds, meetings seem to put Grouse Mountain Lodge on their flight path. For example, the Montana Broadcasters Association's (MBA's) annual convention has been coming to the lodge, located in Montana's northwest corner, every other year for more than a decade. In alternate years, the convention moves to the state's eastern half, a shift designed for parity in a state where east-west borders are some 600 miles apart.

If MBA members were given a vote, president and CEO Greg MacDonald bets most would choose Grouse Mountain as the convention site every year, despite the long trip that would result for some.

"I would tell you that many, many of my members would say, 'Let's just go there every year,'" MacDonald said.

A migratory pattern

by Vickie Mitchell



Grouse Mountain Lodge, with its fire pit and two outdoor hot tubs, makes winter's cold bearable for guests. In the summer, guests play golf on a 36-hole city-owned course that borders the lodge.

MBA members like the lodge for a number of reasons. First, it satisfies two critical requirements: a resort setting and access to good golf.

A city park and a 36-hole, city-owned golf course, one of nine courses in the area, border the lodge. Five minutes away by car or hotel shuttle is Whitefish, a resort town that manages to be Western without being cliché.

Second, the lodge accommodates the broadcasters' technological requirements. "We aren't the easiest guys in the world to work with — we haul in a lot of equipment," said MacDonald.

Whether the hotel staff is dealing with satellites and staging, or flipping a ballroom after a Saturday-night banquet to accommodate an annual televised political debate sponsored by MBA, "it is the people at Grouse Mountain Lodge who make my life easier," said MacDonald.

Fingers crossed, MacDonald hopes that will continue as he prepares for this summer's meeting, his first under the lodge's new owners, Glacier Park Inc. (GPI). So far, his experience has been good, and the new owners have been as accommodating as the old.

In the year since GPI bought Grouse Mountain, some staff changes have been made, and a comprehensive makeover of the nearly 30-year-old property has begun.

Indoors, returning guests will find a lobby that has been enhanced but has also held on to the expected Western touches, like a bear rug above a stone fireplace and chandeliers fashioned from antlers.

More local products such as elk and buffalo are on the menu in the dining room; more Montana microbrews are poured in the bar. The lodge has also become more involved in the community by joining the local convention bureau.

Lynn Erickson, who has held an educational train-

ing session at the lodge for the past three years, has had consistently good experiences at Grouse Mountain yet does look forward to the upgrades, many of which will be in place when her group arrives this summer.

"It has been a great place to work with and has run like clockwork, even under the prior ownership. My attendees love the food, the atmosphere and the beautiful location," she said. "But it is an older place, and though it was always clean and well kept, it was definitely time for some renovations."

This year, Grouse Mountain's 143 guest rooms will get complete makeovers — from furnishings and flat-screen televisions to granite bath counters and high-thread-count sheets — as the lodge pushes toward a goal of achieving AAA Four Diamond status by 2013. A full-time concierge and a full-service spa — fashioned from a former board room and two guest rooms — are improvements soon to come.



Courtesy Grouse Mountain Lodge
Cowboy boots are put to good use.

"The guest rooms are quite spacious; however, they were dated," said Marc Ducharme, director of sales. "The day spa was inadequate in size and in service. We see this as an opportunity to enhance the guest's stay."

To add warmth to guests' arrivals, the lodge will add an outdoor fireplace beneath its new porte cochere, "a welcoming symbol," said Ducharme.

With the exception of adding a boardroom to replace the one used for the new spa, GPI will make no changes to the lodge's meeting space. "We feel it is updated and adequate as it stands," said Ducharme.

Half of the lodge's meeting space is in its midsection, where the lobby, restaurant, lounge and indoor pool are also located. Guest room wings are attached to each end.

The other half of Grouse Mountain's meeting space is in the 3,520-square-foot Continental Divide conference center, which sits to the left of the lodge's entrance and is connected to it by a covered walkway.

A 3,200-square-foot covered pavilion is a seasonal space used for dinners and banquets from April through October and is especially popular for reunions.

The remainder of the lodge's meeting space is small breakout rooms. Among the most memorable is the 1,372-square-foot Glacier Room, with its windows and attached deck that overlook Whitefish Lake Golf Club. A fire pit on the deck can be an after-dinner gathering spot.

GPI's ownership will open new options for lodge guests

Grouse Mountain Lodge

2 Fairway Drive
Whitefish, MT 59937
877-862-1505

What's new: The resort was purchased a year ago by Glacier Park Inc., which has renovated the lobby and will be redoing guest rooms this year. A full spa and a full-time concierge will also be added as the lodge moves toward becoming a AAA Four Diamond property.

Rooms: 143 guest rooms are of varying styles.

Meeting space: About 11,000 square feet, including a 3,520-square-foot ballroom and a 3,200-square-foot covered pavilion. There are also several small boardrooms and private dining areas.

Amenities: A grill, a lounge, an espresso bar, an indoor pool, two outdoor hot tubs, a fire pit, a business center, a fitness center and a day spa. A 36-hole golf course, owned by the city, is next door; lodge guests have tee time priority there.

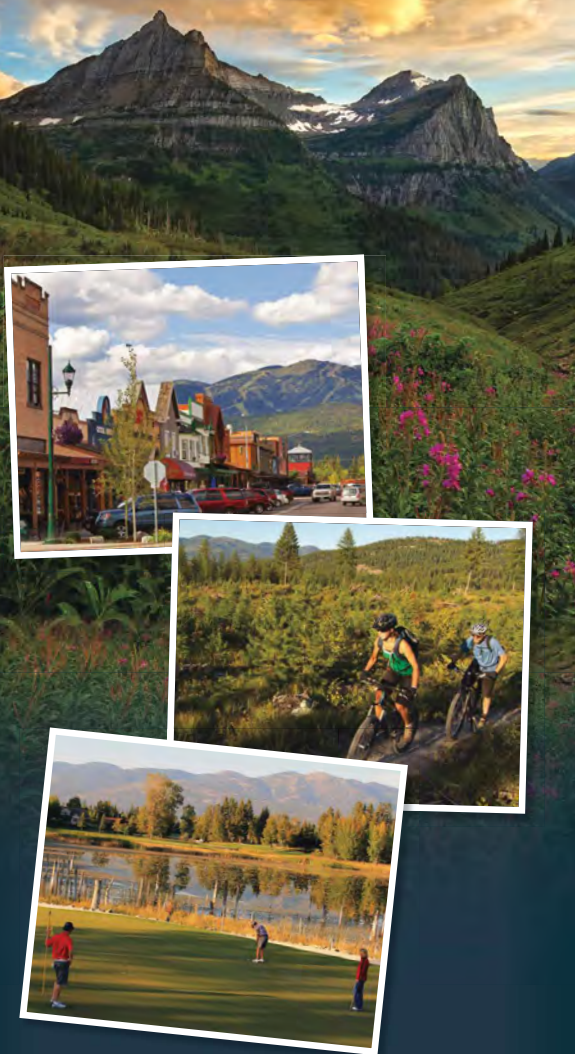
Location: The 28-year-old lodge is in northwest Montana, about 45 minutes from Glacier National Park and five minutes from Whitefish. It is 210 miles from Helena, Mont., and 245 miles east of Spokane, Wash. **Getting there:** Glacier Park International Airport, 11 miles from the lodge, has direct flights from Salt Lake City, Seattle, Denver, Las Vegas and Minneapolis, Minn. The lodge offers a complimentary shuttle to the airport and into Whitefish.



Courtesy Grouse Mountain Lodge

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and groups. The company owns eight other area hotels, most notably the historic lodges in nearby Glacier National Park. Grouse Mountain is its only year-round property and has much more meeting space than any of GPI's other properties.

GPI also operates Glacier National Park's beloved Red Buses.

The lodge shuttle will transport groups to the park, where they can ride the Red Buses and hear the stories told by "Jammer" drivers, so named because the buses used to have standard transmissions, and drivers had to jam their way through the gears as the buses climbed the "Going to the Sun" Road. Groups will also be able to opt for an off-site dinner at Glacier Park Lodge in East Glacier, a scenic 90-minute drive from the lodge.

"Our ownership will enable meeting planners and attendees to experience the park with seamless planning," said Ducharme.



Courtesy Grouse Mountain Lodge
The Wine Room is available for private parties.

Nothing boring along Whitefish's main drag

On Central Avenue, Whitefish's main street, the Great Northern Brewing Co. stands out among the clapboard and brick storefronts. All glass and completely contemporary, it claims to be Whitefish's tallest building — all three stories of it — which tells you a little about this Western resort town, overshadowed by the Northern Rockies.

There's more brewing at Great Northern than Buckin' Horse Pilsner, Going to the Sun IPA and Big Fog ESB. The brewery's bar and restaurant, the Draught House, is abuzz as skiers and shoppers stop by for drinks and appetizers. Its second-floor Mezzanine, which overlooks the brewing operation and downtown Whitefish, is in demand for parties and receptions for 50 or

fewer guests. With dartboards, skeeball and shuffleboard, it can be a place to unwind; or with its 56-inch plasma-screen television, DVD player and speakers, a place to award and reward employees.

At Central Avenue's Crush Wine Bar, the drink is different, but the view of Central Avenue is much the same. Groups of up to 100 can enjoy wines, handcrafted beers, appetizers and desserts in its loungelike space, overlooking downtown. The bar is outfitted with a stage, a sound system and three large-screen televisions.



Courtesy Great Northern Brewing Co.

406-863-1000

www.greatnorthernbrewing.com

406-730-1030

www.crushwhitefish.com



Downtown Whitefish, left, is a five-minute drive from Grouse Mountain Lodge. Visitors appreciate the town's authenticity and its interesting shops and restaurants. Among them is Great Northern Brewing Co., center, known for its Big Fog ESB beer.

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Our Lodge features 143 beautifully appointed guest rooms, event space, 11,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, a substantial list of services and amenities including 36 holes of championship

golf on-site plus excellent fishing, whitewater rafting, and downhill skiing just a short drive away.

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Grouse Mountain Lodge

Whitefish, Montana | GrouseMountainLodge.com

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