'Eye of the Wind'

Towering Vancouver sight is a Seabus ride away

By Robert Selleck, Managing Editor

Vancouver boasts many unique sights and activities, but towering above them all is the opportunity to achieve an up-close view of wind power in action. "The Eye of the Wind" wind turbine at the top of Grouse Mountain, a Seabus ride away across Vancouver Harbour, is the only wind turbine in the world with an elevator-accessible public-viewing platform. Providing visitors 360-degree views, the glass-walled pod sits just three meters in from the rotating blades.

In March, it’s tricky to predict when the Eye of the Wind will be open. Snow and ice build-up make it unsafe to be too close to the structure, so when skiing is good, The Eye of the Wind is often closed. Summer is a more reliable time to visit. Still, even in March, the uniqueness of the turbine makes visiting worth a try.

The Grouse Mountain resort area conducts its daily safety assessment early every morning. So be sure to check in advance to gauge the chances that it will be open when you arrive.

You can get the latest status report at www.grousemountain.com/current_conditions or by calling (604) 980-9311. You also can find out what other winter attractions are open, including skiing and riding, ice-skating and snowshoeing.

If you don’t want to drive or take a cab, you can take the Seabus and a BC Transit bus — routes 232 and 236 from Lonsdale Quay (Seabus) and Pibb’s Exchange — all the way to the mountain. You’ll also need to pay for the Sky-Ride (gondola) and an admission or tour fee for the turbine.

Some more details: The Leitwind LTW77 1.5 megawatt turbine was erected in 2009. The viewing platform (viewPOD™) can accommodate 36 visitors, and the elevator can carry seven people at a time. The site is 1,231 meters above sea level, and during construction, some parts of the turbine had to be brought in by helicopter. The turbine was inaugurated during the 2010 Olympic winter games. The viewing platform is fixed to the turbine carrier, which means it is not fixed to the actual tower. So the viewing pod turns around the tower as the nacelle (the capsule-type cover surrounding the turbine mechanical components) moves with the wind.

There are displays that show wind speed, performance and rotational speed.

Completed in 2009, the 1.5-megawatt Leitwind LTW77 wind turbine on Grouse Mountain in North Vancouver can supply the ski resort at its base with enough power to offset 25 percent of the resort’s annual energy needs — enough electricity to power 400 homes. "The Eye of the Wind" is the world’s only wind turbine with a public observation deck, accessible by elevator and open year-round, depending on the weather. (Photos/Provided by Grouse Mountain)

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