



National houses are party capitals at Vancouver Olympics

By [Dennis Moore](#), USA TODAY

VANCOUVER — The gold medal for party pavilions goes to the Molson Canadian Hockey House, according to many partiers around the city.

Several other houses with countries attached to their names offer giant TV screens showing non-stop Olympic competition — usually featuring their own athletes — music, beer and food.

But Molson House, adjacent to [Canada Hockey Place](#), is one of the most raucous, attracting an almost exclusively Canadian crowd of 3,000 a night that forks over \$99 apiece for a Fan Zone pass.

"It's insane, but if you're coming to the Olympics, you have to be here," says Charles Stewart, who came to the Olympics from Calgary for two weeks.

[Bryan Adams](#) arrived after singing at the opening ceremony, [Barenaked Ladies](#) has performed and [Wayne Gretzky](#) made an appearance.

Another house associated with a national beer, the Holland Heineken House, would rate a medal, says Lesley las van Bennekon, who came from Amsterdam and was watching speedskating Sunday. His outfit stood out, a towering orange cone on his head, but his color choice did not. Most fans wear orange, derived from the name of the Dutch royal family.

The facility is more refined than the Molson House. Shops sell Dutch team-themed clothing. Children can ride virtual bobsleds and make virtual ski runs.

The Heineken House is located in the Richmond O Zone, which offers family activities during the day, but at night the crowd heats up inside, with about 3,000 people on the main floor watching the big TV screens. Admission is free, and lines wind in front of the building nightly, but the Dutch can bypass the lines to enter.

The Irish House has no pretensions. It's essentially a giant fraternity party with bands, beer and food in a tent with an artificial turf floor.

The mostly Canadian crowd sang the national anthem when countrymen Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir won the ice dancing gold medal Monday, but the guests' interest quickly returned to drinking and shouting over the band playing on the Sham Rock Stage. There wasn't much Irish attire; attracting the most attention were glasses with blinking red lights. Admission at night is \$20.

The most exclusive of all is the USA House. It caters to American athletes and their families, and it requires almost celebrity status to get in.

MSNBC's Willie Geist, host of *Way Too Early*, showed a segment on NBC's *Today* show that parodied the difficulty of gaining access by showing that the only way he could get into the refined, almost elegant facility was by accompanying *NBC Nightly News* anchor Brian Williams.

The German Fan Fest beer garden, not to be confused with the German Saxony House, is operated by the Thuringian sports association and the German Olympic sports association. The tent, much smaller than the others, is adjacent to the Waterfront train station. It serves German sausage, dumplings and Thüringer Rostbrätl, a flavored pork chop. But, of course, beer is the draw. Admission is \$20 after 6 p.m.

What all of the entertainment houses have in common are large crowds and long lines. If you want to party, arrive early and be patient.

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