

The Insider's Travel Guide To The Okanagan Valley

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Nestled in central British Columbia, the Okanagan Valley is one of the hidden gems of Canada. You may not immediately think of Canada when the phrases “sun-drenched,” “summer recreation,” or “getaway” float around, but a visit to the Okanagan Valley in the summertime will change that. Just as alluring in winter, the Okanagan Valley offers ample skiing and indoor opportunities.

The Okanagan Valley is one of the places Western Canadians go to get away from big city blues. It's full of beautiful scenery and opportunities for outdoor recreation, but retains a sophisticated local cultural scene plentiful enough to please the most discerning culturephile. Whether you're hoping to kayak over cool, clean water at Okanagan Lake or wanting to take in an art show, you will find what you want in the Valley.

The Okanagan Valley has given generations of Canadians a traditional summertime escape. The small towns in the valley are connected by a long string of clean lakes ripe for swimming, boating, and exploring. The Okanagan Valley is home to Kalamalka, Okanagan, Osoyoos, Skaha, Swan, Vaseux, and Wood Lakes; some offer more in the way of group fun on the sandy beaches while others provide peace and solitude. Sun-dappled golf courses are also plentiful here.

The sunniest area in the country, the valley is also home to acres of fruit orchards. Grapes in particular thrive here in the Napa Valley of Canada where the terraced hills are dotted with vines and fruit. The fragrances of ripe fruit perfume the air throughout the summer months and hint at the amazingly rich local food and wine offerings; highly-developed palates will have no problem finding dining Nirvana here.



Towards the southern extremities of the Okanagan Valley there is a more arid portion of land. This part of the valley is called Osoyoos and it presents delightful options for nature tourism. Osoyoos is home to an unexpected desert filled with ecological diversity in the form of rare plants and animals.

Kelowna, one of Canada's fastest-growing cities, is situated near the center of the region. For those who don't want to stray too far from urban life, Kelowna is a perfect blend of natural beauty and culture, and of quaint yet modern living. Kelowna is also the center for multiple wine festivals.

Penticton is another great destination in the valley. Crowned by lakes at its northern and southern extremities, the area offers everything from ski resorts to the summer Peach Festival.

In the summer Okanagan Valley days are typically dry and warm; at night the temperature drops to allow visitors to enjoy pleasantly cool temperatures. Winters are snowy but because the area is arid, the dry weather is ideal for skiing and snowboarding. Highway 97 is the primary point of access into the valley and connects most of the local communities. The border with the US is at the southern end of the highway and the border can be crossed there.



Wine Tourism

It might seem like California has the wine tasting market cornered, but that's actually not true. In so many ways British Columbia and its more than 200 wineries make wine tourism in Canada ideal. Whether you're an aficionado or a novice, the many amazing wine tasting destinations in British Columbia and Okanagan Valley in particular have a special edge.

So Many Choices

British Columbia is home to more than 200 wineries, the vast majority of them in the Okanagan, Thompson, and Similkameen Valleys. The wine industry in this area is growing steadily, and that means there are a wealth of local wine-centered events. In fact, along with the Niagara region of Ontario, the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia is the country's most important production area, entertaining more than 1.5 million tourists annually.

Only five hours from Vancouver, the Okanagan Valley is home to more than 100 wineries nestled amongst the green hills and beautiful scenery of British Columbia. Kelowna is the capital of the region as far as wine tasting goes, and it is packed with small craft wine producers. Larger wineries like Cedar Creek, Quail's Gate, Mission Hill, and Summerhill Pyramid Winery are on the outskirts of the area. South of the Okanagan Valley you'll find the "Golden Mile," which is home to about 20 wineries spread over 20 km. And don't leave Vancouver Island off your list; the Cowichan Valley is home to a number of smaller, artisanal wineries like Venturie-Schulze, Blue Grouse, Cherry Point Vineyards, and Averill Creek.

Carefully Crafted Products

In contrast to other wine-producing regions such as Napa Valley, wineries in British Columbia are mostly based on smaller plots of vineyard land. This results in a wealth of hand-crafted wines in the region. The sun-drenched growing season in the Golden Mile in particular makes extended periods of photosynthesis possible. Along with the province's fertile soil this makes local wine production especially successful.

[Extended Introduction continued on next page...](#)

Make Your Trip Complete

Another local feature that sets the Okanagan Valley wine region apart from others is the plethora of local restaurants, leisure areas, spas, and other fabulous tourist attractions. Your wine tour doesn't have to be limited to wine if you crave variety. Sample the high-end regional cuisine in more than a dozen culinary hot spots among the vineyards as you travel. Or you can break up your Bacchanalia with musical events, a trip to the spa, or 18 holes of golf or on your wine tasting vacation—there are more than 50 courses in the area to choose from.

Wine Events

You have so many options for your wine tasting experience in British Columbia. The annual Bacchanalia wine tasting event takes place in early May at Penticton Lakeside Resort. Or visit the resort in September and enjoy a five course meal and local wines at the Taste Of Valley View Farm event. Check with the Okanagan Wine Festivals Society or the British Columbia Wine Institute for other events. And if you don't feel like driving while tasting, enjoy a chauffeured experience through Grape Escapes or cycle through the Valley.

The Bottom Line

Many new visitors to Canada are surprised to learn that British Columbia's Okanagan Valley is an ideal destination for wine lovers. A few days in the sunny valleys and on the shore of Okanagan Lake will make you a believer. And for the true wine lover who's looking for something different, you can't beat the hand-crafted wines of Canada.

[Continuing onto Sport And Recreation...](#)



The Okanagan Valley is brimming with opportunities for sport and recreation all year round. Some of the most popular activities here include birding, camping, canoeing, fishing, golfing, hiking, and mountain biking.

Bertram Creek Regional Park

Located east of Kelowna, Bertram Creek Regional Park is popular with both locals and tourists who love being active. This 17.9 hectare day use park is perfect for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers. Park amenities include an amphitheatre playground, BBQ stands, grass lawns, picnic tables, and pit toilets and washrooms. Unfortunately no dogs are allowed in Bertram Creek Regional Park.

Situated on the shores of Okanagan Lake, there are many wonderful shore- and water-based activities including boating, canoeing, playing and sunning on the sandy beach, swimming, and water sports here.

There are also fabulous opportunities for getting closer to nature, including bird watching, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The park boasts three short hiking trails which provide easy hikes along earth and gravel hiking trails. Hiking through the lush trails you'll enjoy gazebos and lookouts that interpretive signs lead you to. Crossing over lovely wooden bridges, look for the kinglet, loon, sparrow, and warbler.

To reach the park take Highway 97 to Kelowna, and turn south on Pandosy Street. Eventually Pansosy turns into Lakeshore Drive, and the entrance to the park will come up on the right.

[Sport And Recreation continued...](#)

Pioneer Walkway

This paved path in the more arid, desert-like region of Osoyoos, explores the community waterfront along the shores of Osoyoos Lake. The path links the town to the surrounding areas, and is a sightseeing route for tourists and a practical route for locals. In fact, the walkway was created by local residents who wanted to be able to get around more easily without ruining the scenic beauty of the area.

This lakefront walkway winds between trees along the lake and passes motels and shops. It is dotted with benches for taking in the views, gardens, and sheltered areas. You'll see locals and tourists biking, skating, and walking along the path, especially in summertime.

To reach Pioneer Walkway take Highway 97 to Osoyoos, and then follow signs that direct you to Highway 3. This takes you to the center of the town where you can park and enjoy the walkway.

Hardy Falls Regional Park

This hiking and sightseeing waterfall park is a popular destination toward the south end of Peachland, another town in the Okanagan Valley. The park is home to a well-maintained primary hiking trail that leads to the waterfall. The 1 kilometre walkway is a well-maintained boardwalk and gravel route of about 15 minutes. The path repeatedly leads over the flowing water en route to the falls. The path is wheelchair accessible so everyone can enjoy the falls. Deep Creek River is also a salmon spawning site.

Hardy Falls Regional Park features ample parking, picnic tables, resting spots, viewing benches, wash-rooms. To reach the park take Highway 97 to Hardy Road; park in the lot at the end of the road. The park is also connected to Antlers Beach Regional Park by a forested hiking trail, allowing walkers and hikers to reach the park on foot.

Giants Head

This former volcano is now a mountain destination and natural landmark known for its excellent views. Located in the town of Summerland in the Okanagan Valley, the 910 metre peak provides fantastic sport and leisure opportunities for everyone.

The more fit among us can hike up the mountain to the summit via the more challenging 15 minute trail; those who want their route to be a bit less direct can take the 25 minute trail which leads to the summit via multiple switchbacks. The reward of either trek is a stunning viewpoint over the communities of Okanagan Lake, Naramata, and Summerland. You'll also see lush orchards and vineyards, and landmarks which include the Kettle Valley Rail Trail, the Okanagan Mountain Park, and Trout Creek Bridge. Both trails begin at the picnic park area.

Giants Head Mountain Park features amenities that include the well-maintained hiking trails described above, good parking, picnic tables, sightseeing benches, and washrooms. To go beyond the picnic area you'll need to leave your car. To reach the park take Highway 97 into Summerland, and turn onto Prairie Valley Road near downtown Summerland. Take Prairie Valley Road to Giant's Head Road and turn south, and then west onto Milne Road. Giant's Head Park signs will lead you to your destination.



Kettle Valley Rail Trail

This recreation trail was created from an abandoned railway bed. This study in successful repurposing is a popular destination for those hoping to explore canyons, forests, lakes, meadows, and rivers between the communities of Hope and Midway. Also known as KVR or the KVR, this trail is part of the Trans Canada Trail's (TCT) British Columbian leg.

The 600+ kilometre trail is a popular summertime destination for backpacking, dirt biking, hiking, horse-back riding, and mountain biking. As the weather changes and the snow comes, portions of the trail transform into perfect cross country ski, snowshoe, and snowmobile routes.

The Kettle Valley Railway provided a route for transporting people and goods from town to town from the time of its creation in 1914. This throughway winding through southern British Columbia wasn't an easy construction endeavor, especially when it was built; workers had to blast through rock and woods as they connected hillsides with wooden trestles, enduring harsh wilderness conditions as they went.

The KVR has many different access points, making it an ideal point for both day trips and longer journeys. Along the route you will find both provincial campgrounds and wilderness camping sites; there are also more formal accommodations for those who don't care to rough it. The two most popular day trips are the scenic trip between Penticton and Chute Lake and the Myra Bellevue Canyon portion of the trail that navigates 18 railway trestles.

The section of the Okanagan Valley along the KVR stretches between Kelowna and Midway. The trail is populated with historic sites such as the foundations of derelict railway stations and rock ovens. There are also mountain tunnels and wooden trestles, not to mention the classic, lush scenery of the Okanagan Valley itself. Most of the route can be hiked or biked; most of the route is graded evenly although there are some hills along the way as the trail ranges from 1100 to 4000 feet above sea level.

The KVR can be accessed from the south, the middle, or the north. Approach from the south on Highway 3 east of Osoyoos near Rock Creek. The well-marked trailhead is near the Midway Museum, and parking is available. From the north access the KVR via the Myra Bellevue Provincial Park near Kelowna. You can also access the KVR from the middle, using the trailhead where Arawawana Road, Naramata Road, and Smethurst Road meet in Naramata.

Rock Oven Regional Park

This collection of rock and stone ovens is celebrating its 100th birthday this year in 2015. It is situated along the KVR near the town of Naramata. The park is made up of multiple hiking trails between more than 10 rock ovens. These ovens were constructed by immigrant workers, the force who built the Kettle Valley Railway. During the railway's construction these workers used the rock ovens for baking bread and otherwise feeding themselves.

There is no road access to the park, but it can be reached on foot or via bicycle. The trailhead is on Smethurst Road, and the hike to the ovens takes about three or four hours. The trail moves over earth and gravel trails and through Little Tunnel and Adra Tunnel, both made of rock. The trail winds through the McCullough switchbacks, among sage brush and cactus covered hills, through ponderosa pine forests, and between clay cliffs. Many of the ovens are proximal to the Robinson Creek area and the oven trails are all reachable from pull-out areas.

Reach Rock Oven Park from Penticton along Naramata Road, about 15 kilometres towards the town of Naramata. In Naramata take Chute Lake Road to Smethurst Road, and continue for 1 or 2 kilometres until you reach the cattle guard.



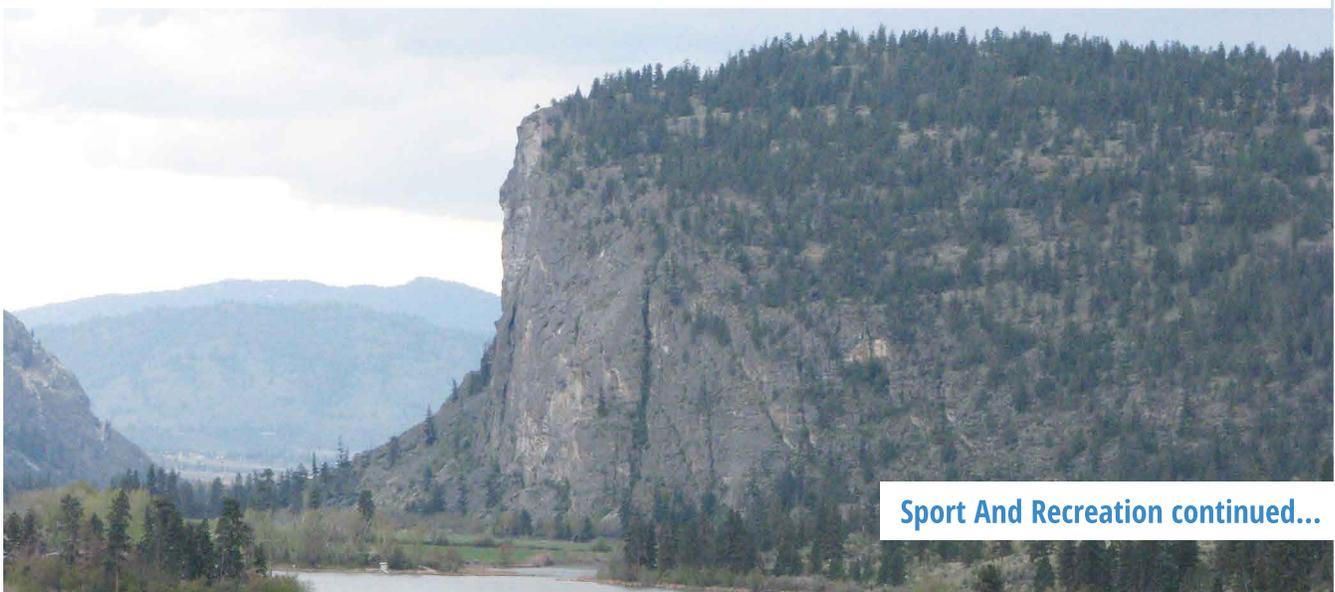
Indian Head/McIntyre Bluff

Called Indian Head by locals and McIntyre Bluff in books and maps, this white granite mountain rises for 265 metres near the towns of Okanagan Falls and Oliver. Carved into its side is the monolithic face of a person that can be seen from a distance; the highway passing through the White Lake Protected Area that is home to the bluff passes directly beneath the face.

The White Lake Protected Area is made up of 3,741 hectares of protected land populated by various endangered animals and plants. The bluff and the lands around it are home to wildlife including badgers, bats, bighorn sheep, and mule deer. McIntyre Bluff is also a location important in First Nation history; the Okanagan and Shuswap First Nations include the bluff as the site of multiple battles in their oral cultures.

The White Lake Protected Area is relatively remote, and requires basic hiking navigation and compass skills from visitors. The best-marked trail in the area is the unmaintained White Lake Trail, and the area also features various other small and unmarked hiking trails. White Lake Trail begins near Okanagan Falls and passes through the town of Willowbrook near Green Lake. The White Lake Protected Area stretches on along the west side of Vaseux lake, and then to Mount Keogan and the bluff, and eventually reaches the town of Myers Flats.

To access the hiking trail to McIntyre Bluff, which is on private land, get approval from Covert Farms and the Willowbrook Society. The trailhead is marked with an information sign off of Fairview and White Lake Road. To see the bluff from the road, take Highway 97 between Okanagan Falls and Oliver.



International Biking and Hiking Trail

The International Biking and Hiking Trail is a one-way multi purpose recreation trail that showcases the south Okanagan Valley region. The trail moves between the town of Oliver and Osoyoos Lake over both paved and gravel areas. The 18.4 kilometre trail is popular for biking, hiking, and horseback riding.

The trail is perfect way to explore the unexpected beauty of the desert as well as Okanagan Valley's wine country. Winding along the shores of the Okanagan River Canal, the trail passes between a southern trailhead at the tip of Osoyoos Lake and a northern trailhead at McAlpine Bridge near the town of Oliver.

The International Biking and Hiking Trail is itself a perfect self-guided wine tour; it meets up with more than 11 wineries in the area. It is also wheelchair accessible for portions of the route. This is a comfortable journey, punctuated with information signs, picnic tables, viewpoints, and washrooms. It is shared by bikers, hikers, and people on horseback.

Reach the International Biking and Hiking Trail from the south using Highway 97 near Osoyoos. From the north, take Highway 97 from Oliver to McAlpine Bridge.

Canal Walkway

This five kilometre walking route looped through Osoyoos. The trail winds along the shores of a waterway once use for irrigating local orchards and wineries. This route is wonderful for biking, horseback riding, and walking. Historically the walkway area was the only source of water for the town of Osoyoos; now it serves the area's residents and tourists as well.

Take the Canal Walkway to experience breathtaking views of the Okanagan Valley, its wineries and orchards, and Osoyoos Lake. The trail is a perfect spot for wilderness tourism; the scenery features many song birds and an array of desert vegetation like sage and cacti. This idyllic spot allows visitors to enjoy the uniquely beautiful desert countryside while still enjoying the nearby amenities of the local communities.

Reach Canal Walkway from the town of Osoyoos along Highway 97. The trailhead is in a parking lot adjacent to the local secondary school on Access 62 Avenue.



The Okanagan Valley is truly a winter wonderland, especially for those who like to stay active. There are ample opportunities for snowboarding and downhill, backcountry, heli-, cat-, and cross-country skiing; here you will find unparalleled cross-country skiing terrain and many designated nordic ski areas. Other popular winter choices in the region include ice climbing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and even dogsledding. With choices like that in the stunningly scenic Okanagan Valley, it's easy to fall in love with snow again.

Kootenay Rockies

Some of Canada's most breathtaking scenery lies within the Kootenay Rockies. This region stretches from its western border in the Okanagan Valley to its eastern edge at the Alberta border. Enormous mountain peaks and deep, craggy valleys characterize the area whose awe-inspiring scenery gave birth to both cat-skiing and heli-skiing in the amazing Bugaboos area. This area is also among the best snowmobiling spots anywhere.

Four mountain ranges meet in the Kootenay Rockies, including the Monashees, Purcells, Rockies, and Selkirks. Various National and Provincial Parks populate the region. The stunning area is filled with alpine meadows, beaches, lakes, mineral hot springs, rivers, snow-capped mountains, and waterfalls. This rich and varied landscape features numerous trails for fishing, golfing, hiking, mountain biking, skiing, snowmobiling, whitewater rafting, and wildlife viewing.

Ample accommodations are present among the Kootenay Rockies and luxurious destination resorts to wilderness camping—but all center around the striking natural beauty of the area. There are also many cultural and historical offerings, including heritage towns which have been lovingly restored, gold rush boomtowns, and thriving arts communities.

[Sport And Recreation continued...](#)

Big White Mountain

Near Kelowna you will find Big White Mountain, among the best winter sports locations in the Okanagan Valley. Actually a year-round destination teeming with recreation opportunities, Big White Mountain is known for its excellent wintertime skiing and snowboarding.

Best known for its winter sports, Big White offers skiers and snowboarders more than 118 designated ski trails and an additional 27+ unnamed ski runs. The highest vertical drop at Big White is 777 metres. Best suited for intermediate skiers, more than half of the ski runs are at the intermediate level. Around 18 percent of the runs are green beginner routes, with around 22 percent at the expert level. 6 percent of Big White's ski runs are "Extreme" ski routes. Big White also features a specialized snow board park with a 1/2 pipe, full pipes, and rails. 15 ski lifts and a Gondola service the resort.

The 11,000 acre Big White mountain resort is a full service experience featuring accommodations along with bars, lounges, pubs, and restaurants. Big White is also home to an Adventure Park with a tube ride, gift stores, a skating rink, and ski rental shops. The resort also offers group snowmobile tours, night skiing, and helicopter ski tours.

There are other places to stay on the mountain including condos, cottages, 1 youth hostel, 3 hotels, town houses, and vacation homes. The fantastic winter offerings mean that accommodations can be tougher to secure during the snowy months, so plan ahead.

image via Big White Ski Resort

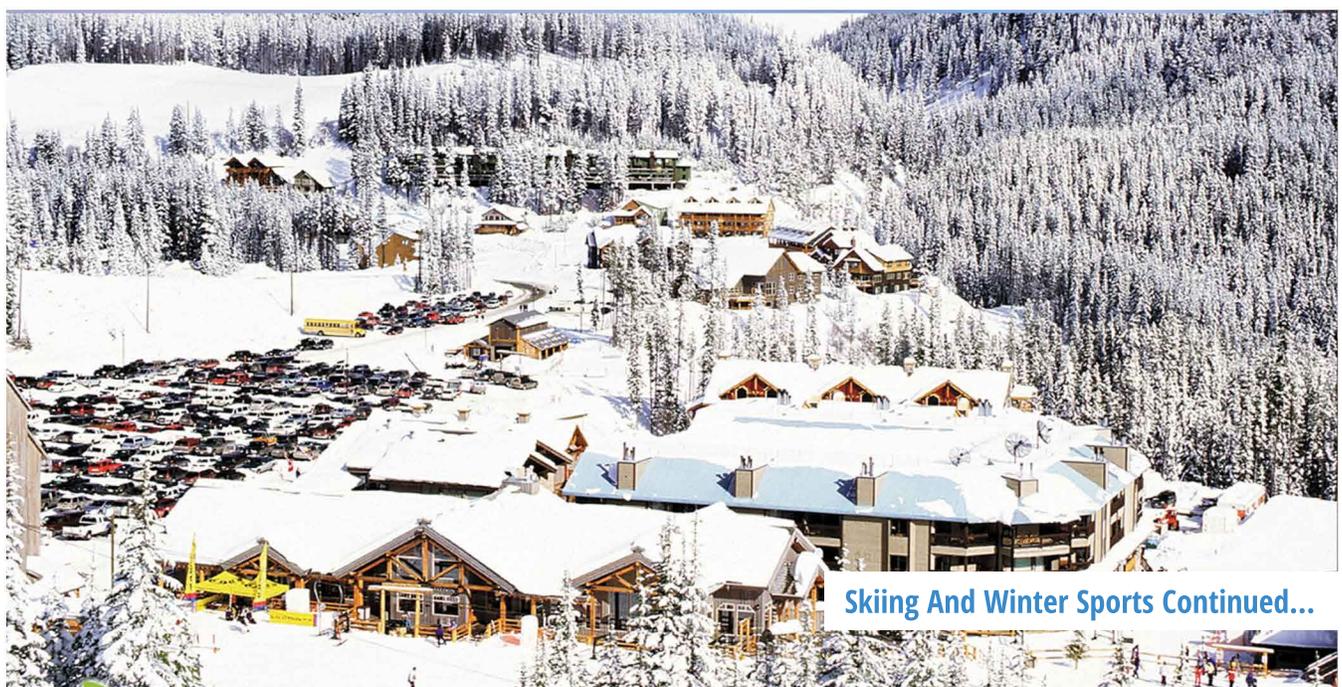


Apex Mountain

Located near Penticton, this year-round recreation paradise is listed here among winter destinations because of its lovely ski resort and snow sports. During the colder months Apex Mountain transforms from a backpacking and hiking destination popular among naturalists and photographers into a playground for cross-country and downhill skiers, snowboarders, and snowmobilers. The atmosphere here is especially nice in that the lines are not typically long and the runs uncrowded despite their idyllic qualities.

Apex Mountain features 1,112 acres of snowy alpine trails and slopes. There are 67 ski runs here with five ski lifts including one high speed quad chair lift. Ski runs on Apex Mountain have a 2,000 foot vertical drop; almost half of the runs are intermediate, with just over one-third designed for experts. Night skiing is also available. This leaves about 16 percent for beginners. The area is also great for snowboarding, and offers a 1/2 pipe.

Apex Mountain also has an inner tube park, a 1 km adventure skating oval, and an outdoor skating rink. Night time options include a saloon and restaurant, and various entertainment opportunities. There is also a small village at the bottom of Apex Mountain which is home to various accommodations and retailers. The village also features an Adventure Centre, a cafe, a kids club, and a school for skiing and snowboarding. Accommodations on Apex Mountain provide a variety of choices for visitors ranging from a hostel on the mountainside and three of the region's most recommended ski lodges.



Skiing And Winter Sports Continued...

Silver Star Mountain

Another popular winter destination, Silver Star Mountain actually also features beautiful hiking and mountain biking opportunities in the summer. Nestled in the Okanagan Valley north of the town of Vernon, Silver Star Mountain and its 11,000 acres of terrain are most popular during the winter months, where ample cross country and downhill skiing, snowshoeing, and snowboarding options tempt snow-lovers.

From the apex of Silver Star Mountain's ski mountain the vertical drop is over 2,500 ft. There are more than 60 ski runs including many expert level runs. They are serviced by multiple chair lifts including the six passenger Comet Express to the top of the summit and the Powder Gulch Quad. Cross Country skiers can enjoy more than 60 kilometres of forested snow trails. Snow Boarders can show off their latest tricks at the new terrain park.

The mountain village and its pastel-hued shops and homes feature accommodations, cafes, galleries, restaurants, and retail ski outfitters. A boardwalk trail winds through the village, connecting everything inside it. Although there are numerous accommodations on the hillside, in peak season they can be hard to come by.

Silver Star Mountain Resort is perhaps the most popular choice for those seeking accommodations; it features a wonderful array of family activities. On the mountain itself children race downhill astride inner tubes, skate and play hockey on the outdoor skating rink, and zip through the Mini-Z track on snowmobiles at the Adventure Park. There are also intimate options for couple on romantic getaways, including a day spa, a fitness centre, a guided snowshoe tour, sleigh rides, an indoor climbing wall, and entertainment and events in the auditorium.

image via Silver Star Mountain Resort



Skiing And Winter Sports Continued...

Crystal Mountain

Crystal Mountain is among the smaller Okanagan Valley ski hills. It is located near the towns of Peachland and Westbank south of Kelowna. Crystal Mountain is a favored location for snowshoeing, snowboarding, and skiing; the top elevation of the recreational peak which stretches over 65 hectares of slopes and terrain is 1,433 metres.

Crystal Mountain has 2 chair lifts that service 24 ski runs. Atop Crystal Mountain the longest ski run is about 1,600 metres long, with a 232 metre vertical drop. There are ample beginner-level trails—about 30 percent of the runs—and fully half are intermediate level. The remaining 20 percent are the expert level “Black Diamond” variety. Snow boarders won't be left out as there is a snow park and pipe for use; Snowshoe fans will love Crystal Mountain's remote, scenic areas and fresh powder.

The Crystal Mountain Lodge features a cafe, rentals of skis and snowboards, and a kids' ski school. The area can be accessed from Highway 97.

Baldy Mountain

Nestled near Osoyoos and Oliver, Baldy Mountain is more popular in the winter season for its snowboarding, downhill, and cross country skiing. This small ski area is best for serious skiers who want to avoid the crowd; the basic amenities allow users to focus on their boarding and skiing.

The mountain features lifts including the Eagle double chair which takes skiers to the 1,500 foot vertical drop at the peak. There is also a T-bar on the mountain for beginner skiers which provides plenty of room for wipeouts over 600 vertical feet of skiing. There are also more than 20 kilometres-worth of well-maintained and scenic snowshoeing trails on Baldy Mountain which are groomed by a local nordic club.

Accommodations on Baldy Mountain are in cabins and cottages, all located near the village of Baldy. Snow sports enthusiasts can take a break in the village, socialize over coffee at the cafe, attend the snow school, live it up at the lounge, and rental or buy gear in the retail shops.



British Columbia is famous for its breathtaking provincial and national parks and abundant vegetation and wildlife; Okanagan Valley is the heart of wilderness and nature travel in the region. Home to alpine meadows blanketed with wildflowers, ancient old-growth forests, majestic mountains, mysterious hoodoos and caves, quiet, sandy beaches, relaxing natural hot springs, and awe-inspiring waterfalls, Okanagan Valley is a mecca for nature and adventure travel.

Vaseux Lake And Vaseux Provincial Park

Vaseux Lake, located to the south of Okanagan Falls, is the valley's wildlife epicenter, home to an incredible variety of plants and animals including many rare species. The best birdwatching location in the Okanagan Valley, between the Vaseux Wildlife Centre and the Vaseux Lake Provincial Park there is extensive protected habitat space for more than 220 bird species. The lake itself is crucial to migratory birds in the area, providing an important staging area in both spring and fall.

Vaseux Lake Provincial Park is home to many bird species including Canada geese, catbirds, golden eagles, hummingbirds, kingbirds, orioles, partridges, sage thrashers, trumpeter swans, and woodpeckers. A fantastic birdwatching trail stretches from the the north end of the lake and its Wildlife Centre to the two-story enclosed bird blind on the boardwalk near the marsh.

Birds aren't the only wildlife in this beautiful park; you can expect to find other rare species of wildlife here including the badger, beavers, California bighorn sheep, deer, the Lazuli bunting, muskrats, the Night snake (Canada's rarest), the Pallid bat, rabbits, toads, and turtles. Also protected in the park are 10 plant ecosystems which have been red listed from wetland to desert with almost everything in between: antelope brush, balsamroot, bluebunch wheatgrass, big sage, Idaho fescue, Marsilea, pinegrass, red osier dogwood, threetip sagebrush, and water birch.

[Nature And Adventure Continued...](#)

More Birdwatching

For more top-notch birdwatching, visitors have many choices. Kelowna is home to Chichester Waterfowl Sanctuary and the Woodhaven Nature Conservancy and Knox Mountain Nature Park. The latter two are home to California quail and a variety of songbirds, along with chipmunks, squirrels, and yellow-bellied marmots. The Vernon area Ellison Provincial Park, Silver Star Provincial Park, and Swan Lake are also filled with engaging wildlife. Finally, in April White Lake, in the Okanagan Falls area, is becomes the temporary home of thousands of Sandhill Cranes.

Myra Bellevue Provincial Park And Protected Area

South of Kelowna is the Myra Bellevue Provincial Park And Protected Area, a popular destination for recreation and 7,829 hectares of stunning wilderness scenery. This area protects the Kettle Valley Rail Trail (KVR) described in the "Sport and Recreation" chapter of this book, the Okanagan Basin, Myra Canyon, and the Okanagan Valley Highlands.

The Kettle Valley Rail Trail is the largest and best known of the park's trails. The eight kilometres of the trail that are in the park make up the most scenic portion of the trail, featuring two mountain tunnels, a few steel bridges, and 16 wood trestles. This area is also the spot to see the ghosts of the railway days through the many historic artifacts left there. The most famous are the "rock ovens," railway workers built for baking bread. However, there are many other historical points of interest there including building foundations, irrigation flumes, railway station sites, train wreck sites, and water towers.

The Bellevue Access Trail, Crawford Trail, Lost Lake Trail, and Pink Highway are also popular. The trail system draws many visitors for birdwatching, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and sightseeing in the warmer months. During the winter, the trails transform into tranquil routes for cross country skiers and snowshoers.

Other activities of interest include viewing the damage from the 2003 forest fire that ravaged the area so much that its affects are still visible. Angel Springs is an intriguing spot with many caves and sink holes. Bellevue Creek Corridor and the Devil's Elbow attract avid hikers and those who want to observe nature that is almost untouched by outsiders. Crawford Falls is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in the province, and Little White Mountain offers a fun and challenging climb.

[Nature And Adventure Continued...](#)

Myra Bellevue Provincial Park And Protected Area Cont...

The park's wildlife is active and varied, with plenty of birdwatching and multiple self-guided wildlife tours. Wildlife in the park includes the bat, cougar, grizzly bear, elk, mountain goat, moose, owl, and woodpecker.

Reach Myra Bellevue Park from any of three access points: June Springs, Myra, or Stewart Road.

For the June Springs access point take Highway 97 into Kelowna to Richter Road near the main bridge over Okanagan Lake. Then take Richter Road south to KLO Road. Next take KLO Road east to McCulloch Road. Then take McCulloch Road to June Springs Road. Finally turn right on June Springs Road and take that to the Little White Forest Service Road and the gravel road that eventually dead ends at the parking lot and pit toilet.

For the Myra access—the most commonly used point of entry—take the same directions as for June Springs, only take McCulloch over KLO Creek to Myra Forest Service Road rather than June Springs Road. Myra FSR is a gravel road that dead ends in the large parking lot which has two pit toilets.

For the Stewart Road east access point take Benvoulin Road out of Kelowna to Casorso Road. From there take Bedford Road to Stewart Road East which dead ends in a parking lot with two pit toilets.

Allan Brooks Nature Centre And Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park

Near Vernon you can watch and learn about more wildlife in the Allan Brooks Nature Centre And Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park. This area's grasslands are home to a variety of reptiles, plants, birds, and animals. The rest of the area is populated by various bird species, including owls, falcons, and hawks, and between April and September yellow bellied marmots.

Mission Creek Greenway Trail

The Kelowna area is home to many wilderness and recreation trails, but one of its most popular is the 17 to 22 kilometre Greenway Trail. This trail meanders through many ecosystems and along the shores of Mission Creek. As it does, it visits canyons, forests, hoodoos, ponds, and wetlands.

Motor vehicles are forbidden from the Greenway Trail in its entirety, but almost any other form of transportation and recreation can be seen there. It is popular for biking, birdwatching, dog walking, hiking, jogging, and skating in summer. As temperatures drop and snow flies, the Greenway Trail becomes the perfect snowshoeing and cross country skiing route.

The Mission Creek Regional Park serves as a de facto halfway point on the Greenway Trail which can be accessed from many residential streets in Kelowna as well as the designated parking lots along the trail which are paved.

The trail itself has two “halves” in this area, the second section more challenging than the first. The 7 kilometre long first section runs between Lakeshore and Ziprick roads. It features very little elevation hiking and is considered an easy grade trail. Great for any fitness level and age, this first section is dotted with viewing benches, information signs, and scenic views. Points of interest along the trail include the Ben-voulin Woods, Hall Road Ponds, Casorso Wetlands and the Father Pandosy Mission.

The second and more challenging section of the trail runs over 9 kilometres from KLO Creek to Ziprick Road. It features some elevation hiking and runs narrow in many places. On this portion of the trail visitors can explore canyons and forests passing over creeks and up stairs and switchbacks. Information signs, resting benches, and spectacular views are present along this portion of the trail. Points of interest include the Scenic Canyon Regional Park with its canyon views and Layer Cake Mountain.

Reach Mission Creek Greenway Trail via the Gerstmar Road parking area, Lakeshore Drive, the Hollywood Road parking area, or the Ziprick Road parking area near Highway 97 and Highway 33 and Kelowna.

The Osoyoos Desert Centre

This 67-acre interpretive facility for nature allows visitors to educate themselves about the conservation of South Okanagan Valley's endangered ecosystems, the delicate ecosystem of the desert, and the restoration of critical habitats. Although the desert of Canada is not large, it is home to an incredible variety of desert animals and plants—some found nowhere else in Canada, and many facing extinction. This ecosystem is home to more than 300 rare invertebrates and 100 rare plants.

The area surrounding the Osoyoos Desert Centre is served by the Osoyoos Desert Society, founded in 1991. The society is dedicated to conserving the Canadian desert environment for posterity through public awareness, research, and education. Visitors can take in the area along a raised wooden boardwalk 1.5-kilometres long on self-guided and guided tours.



Nature And Adventure Continued...

Okanagan Mountain Park

Another standout destination for wilderness recreation is the Okanagan Mountain Park. The 11,000 hectare park is located to the south of Kelowna, east of Okanagan Lake, and north of the town of Naramata. Okanagan Mountain peaks inside the park, offering smashing views of the valley and lake, and allow visitors to see as far east as the Monashee Mountains. The park is home to alpine lakes, forests, grasslands, meadows, and wildlife.

Visitors explore the park by backpacking, boating, canoeing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and wilderness camping. The best areas for wilderness backpacking in the park are around Baker, Divide, and Victor lakes. You cannot access the park with a motor vehicle, so if you want to enter you must use trails.

Fishing in the park is permitted with a license in Baker, Divide, and Norman lakes. The lakes, accessible via the trails, are stocked with rainbow trout. Visitors can either use inflatable fishing gear or fish from the shoreline.

Many take day trips into the park but you can also camp overnight in the wilderness campsites. These are rustic and include pit toilets as they only amenities. Marine campsites, accessed by boat and by foot using the popular 22 kilometre Wildhorse Canyon overnight trail, are also available on the shores of Okanagan Lake. There are six marine campsites: Buchan Bay, Commando Bay, Goodes Creek, Halfway Bay, and Van Hyce Beach.

There are many trails in the park, and you'll need a map at minimum before exploring them. Among the most popular is the 20 kilometre Divide Lake North Trail—the park's only horseback riding trail. Another popular route is the 10 kilometre Mountain Goat Trail to Divide Lake. A great day hike can be had via the 5 kilometre Border Trail along Dead Horse Creek.

Reach Okanagan Mountain Park via Naramata in the south over the gravel Chute Lake Road or via Kelowna in the north over the paved Lakeshore Road.

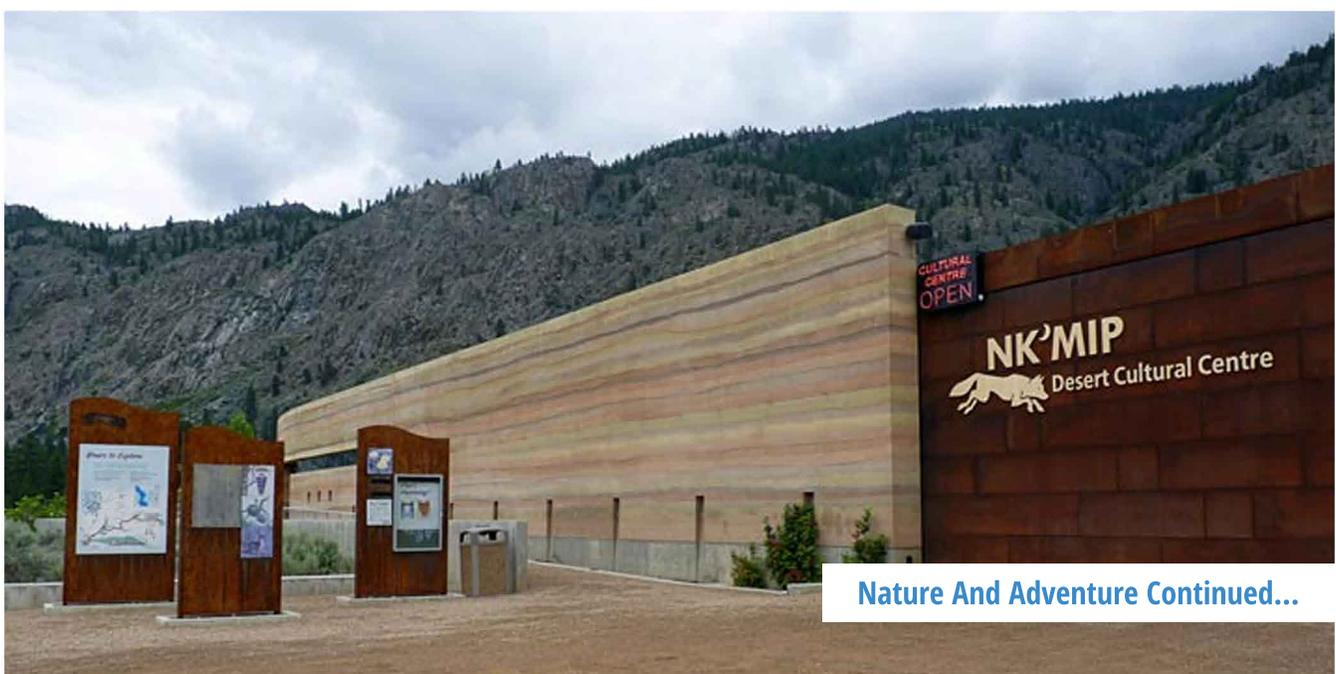
[Nature And Adventure Continued...](#)

The NK'Mip Desert Cultural Centre And Park

Just north of Oliver and above the western portion of Osoyoos Lake you can visit the NK'Mip (pronounced in-ka-meep) Desert Cultural Centre And NK'Mip Provincial Park. From April to June the park offers great California Quail viewing. The interpretive centre, operated by the Osoyoos Indian Band, is truly a state-of-the-art facility; it offers cultural exhibits, outdoor sculptures, a reconstructed Aboriginal village, and walking trails.

Trails in the NK'Mip area allow visitors to enjoy discovery walks, either guided or self-guided. You can explore the harsh environment and learn about how life there affects the amazing indigenous plants and animals. Packed with interactive learning opportunities, the centre boasts numerous outdoor and indoor exhibits with education stations, hands-on displays, and two multimedia theatres.

Western Rattlesnakes in the NK'Mip area are endangered, but visitors can learn about them in safety—not to mention up close—at the Critter Corner. The Canadian Wildlife Service and the Osoyoos Indian Band have partnered to help protect the rattlesnakes through the Rattlesnake Research Program. In this program the researchers capture specimens so they can measure them, tag them with tiny microchips, and weigh them before returning them to the wild. The award-winning centre is architecturally unique, sustainably built into the hillside. Ideal times to visit are between April and October since many of the local desert animals go into hibernation in cooler months.



Nature And Adventure Continued...

Skaha Bluffs

Near Penticton and to the east of Skaha Lake are the Skaha Bluffs, a popular mountaineering destination whose towering cliffs draw hikers and rock climbers. Because it is a hot spot for local climbers, the bluffs have established climbing routes with anchors and bolts creating good holds for climbing. The routes are challenging, but the payoff, spectacular views of Penticton, is definitely worthwhile. The bluffs are the Okanagan Valley's best-known climbing face.

Climbing routes on the Skaha Bluffs include "Beefmaster," "The Belfry," "Blackwater Fever," "The Doctor's Wall," "Going Shrimping," "The Elusive Edge," "Salvation," "The Fortress," "Squeeze Me In," and "I'm Utterly Useless." The bluffs also feature a hiking trail that leads to the peak; the moderate hike through desert landscape, trees, and sage brush lasts about an hour.

To reach Skaha Bluffs take the Valleyview Road south from Penticton.

Bluenose Mountain Trail

This backcountry 5 kilometre hiking trail is closest to the towns of Lumby and Vernon. The uphill recreational loop trail traverses many switchbacks and after two to three hours lands hikers to two of the mountain's three peaks. From there spectacular views of the valley await the hiker, not to mention great picnicking if you bring your own supplies.

The easy 200 metre grade earth and gravel trail requires a good supply of water and sturdy foot wear. Hikers should use caution as rocks and exposed tree roots along the switchbacks leading to the peaks can create slippery conditions. The hike's highest point is 1,240 metres.

Reach Bluenose Mountain Trail taking Highway 6 east from Vernon toward Lumby. Close to Lavington, turn right on School Road. Take School Road to turn left on Learmouth Road and then right onto Aberdeen Lake Road until you reach a small sign on the left pointing to the trail and a gravel parking lot.

Okanagan Lake Provincial Park

One of the most popular destinations in the valley, the easily accessed Okanagan Lake Provincial Park is located north of the town of Summerland and west of Okanagan Lake. Visitors can enjoy bat and quail watching in warm months along with boating, camping, fishing, hiking, kayaking, swimming, water skiing, and windsurfing. The park's large campground is perfect for all kinds of camping including tent, car, and RV camping.

Park amenities include an amphitheatre, a boat launch, changing rooms, a day use area, flush and pit toilets, hot showers, and running water. The sandy beach surrounding Okanagan Lake is a major attraction for visitors. Although there are many trails in the park, one in particular is a short one kilometre trip between the two campgrounds. This trail features signs describing the more than 10,000 exotic trees of the park including the Russian Olive, Norway Maple, and Lombardy Poplar.

The easy access to the park means that it is often crowded, so make sure you get reservations, especially during the summer. Reach Okanagan Lake Provincial Park on Highway 97, north of Summerland and south of Peachland.



[Places To Visit...](#)



The Okanagan Valley is populated with mostly small communities, each very focused on its recreational activities and local industries such as wine-making. Travel in these towns can be very rewarding, providing a homey route into the local culture.

Kaleden

Kaleden is a small town on the shores of Skaha Lake, south of Penticton, in the Central Okanagan Valley. This lake community is home to fruit stands, wineries, and orchards. Easily accessible from Highway 97, Kaleden is close to Penticton and convenient to both Naramata and Okanagan Falls.

The biggest attractions in Kaleden are Skaha Lake and Apex Mountain. Skaha Lake is great for water sports including canoeing, swimming, and water skiing. Both the Christie Memorial Provincial Park and Pioneer Park are excellent lakeside recreation destinations in Kaleden offering picnicking and walking trails. Apex Mountain is a popular winter destination for cross country skiing, downhill skiing, and snowboarding.

Amenities and services available in Kaleden include accommodations, an ATM, a corner store, a gas station, and a restaurant.

[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

Kelowna

Kelowna the valley's largest community. A year round recreational travel destination, Kelowna's back-country forests, fresh water lakes, hillside wineries, orchards, parks, powder snow mountains, sandy beaches, and trails offer wonderful and varied activities for locals and visitors alike. Kelowna is on the Okanagan Lake's shores, colorfully-appointed with docks, houseboats, marinas, piers, pleasure boats, and sailboats.

Many people visit Kelowna in the summer, when people take to the beaches and water in droves. Boating, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, kite surfing, sailing, scuba diving, swimming, water skiing, and windsurfing are all very popular here.

The downtown district in Kelowna has a lot to offer. Businesses and cultural venues populating the downtown area include accommodations, art galleries, banks, boutiques, coffee houses, gas stations, government buildings, grocery stores, museums, pubs, restaurants, retail shops, theatres, tour companies, and others.

One thing that really sets Kelowna apart is its amazing community parks. City Park and Waterfront Park are downtown Kelowna's most popular parks, situated on Okanagan Lake, but there are many. The various downtown parks feature artisan booths, outdoor food stands, picnic tables, viewing benches, and volleyball courts.

City Park, both a beach and sightseeing destination, is a green space and sandy beach park on the shores of Okanagan Lake. The park features a walkway throughout the park used by dog walkers, joggers, and rollerbladers. It also furnishes a paved path that is wheelchair accessible that winds along the shore. Both the paved path and the walkway connect to grass lawns, a playground, playing fields, picnic tables, a sandy beach, a skate board park, and viewing benches.

Winter recreation opportunities are convenient to Kelowna, via the Big White and Silver Star Mountain ski resorts; visitors enjoy snowboarding, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and both cross country and downhill skiing at both of them. Kelowna is convenient to two of the region's more popular parks: the Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park and the Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park. Neighbouring towns include Big White, Fintry, Lake Country, Oyama, Westbank, Rutland, and Winfield. Reach Kelowna from Highway 97.

[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

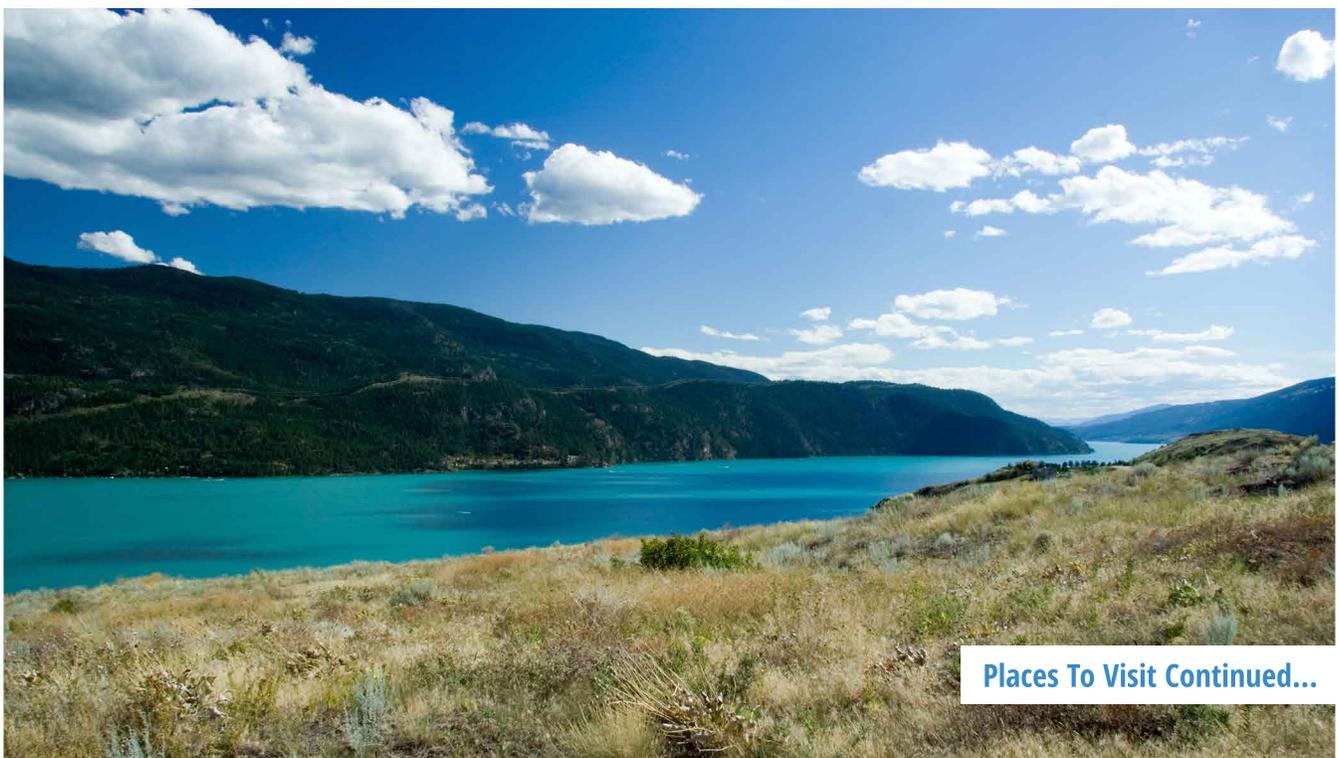
Lake Country

Okanagan Valley's Lake Country is an agricultural and recreation destination rich with wineries, orchards, lakes, and the small towns of Oyama and Winfield. There are three major lakes for recreational use in the area: Kalamalka Lake, Okanagan Lake, and Wood Lake. Smaller, more remote wilderness lakes are also popular, including Island Lake, Doreen Lake and Beaver Lake.

Fruit orchards are central to life in Okanagan Valley's Lake Country. Apple, peach, pear, and plum orchards and smaller organic farming concerns make the local farmers markets something to experience. The fertile earth in Lake Country is also excellent for growing grapes, so there are several wineries to visit.

Summer fun in Lake Country is varied and plentiful. Some options are ATV riding, birdwatching, boating, camping, canoeing, dirt biking, fishing, hiking, houseboating, kayaking, kite surfing, mountain biking, swimming, and water skiing. In the winter snowfall transforms the gravel roads and hiking trails of the rough backcountry into routes for cross country skiing and snowmobiling.

Access both Oyama and Winfield from Highway 97. They have few services but do offer accommodations, banks, gas stations, a grocery store, Internet access, a laundromat, and restaurants.



[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

Lumby

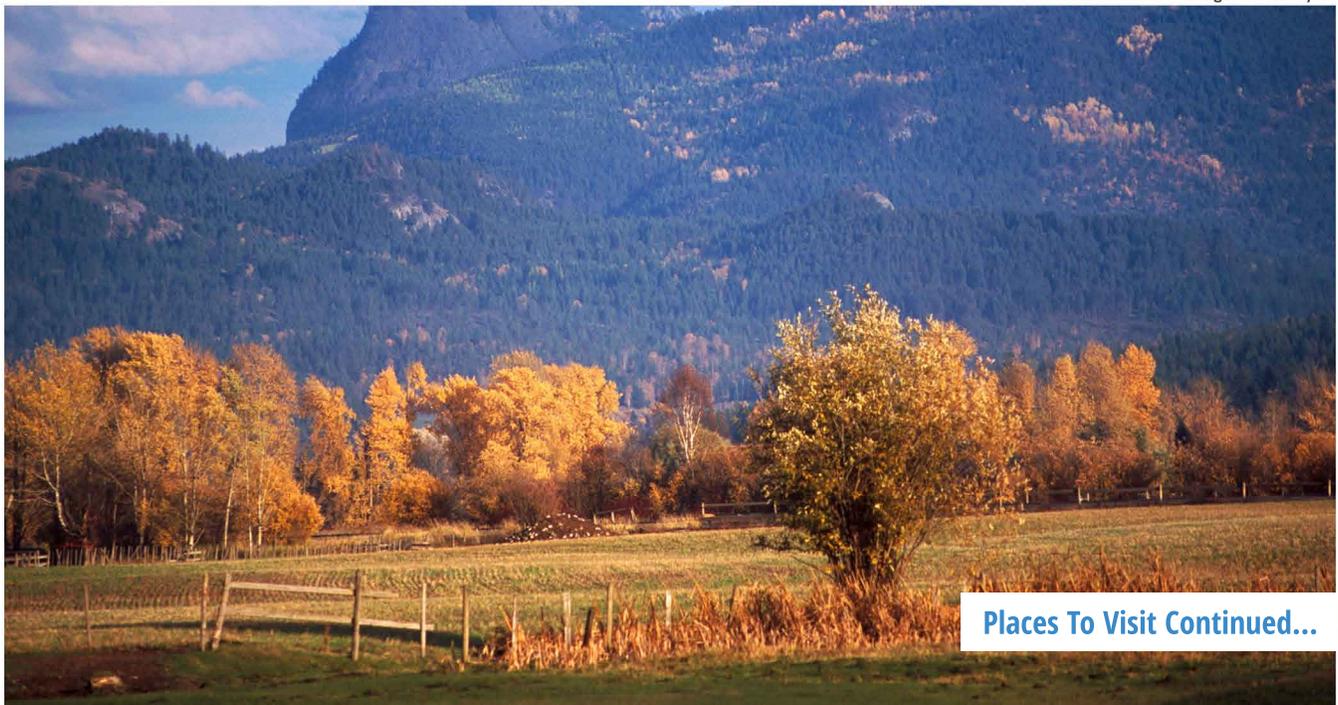
Lumby is an interesting hybrid, a small town that is agricultural and artistic as well. Folded into the feet of the Monashee Mountains the village is surrounded by fertile soils, forest, hills, and lakes.

The agriculture centre of the Village of Lumby sports farm fields and orchards. Scenic and quietly beautiful, the countryside is speckled with cattle, farming equipment, hay fields, horses, irrigation sprinklers, red barns, and disused farm buildings. On the other hand, the artistic community has transformed Lumby with painted murals, shops, and galleries.

The village offers many recreational activities including backpacking, birdwatching, camping, canoeing, fishing, and hiking. Straddling the foothills of the Monashee Mountains, many backcountry gravel roads, and wilderness forests, visitors can take their pick of the scenic beauty. Wintertime finds snow turning the gravel roads into cross-country skiing and snowmobiling tracks. Nearby Silver Star Mountain is also a popular winter destination, featuring a ski resort with cross country skiing, downhill skiing, and snowboarding.

Services useful to travelers include accommodations, a community park, a gas station, a grocery store and several restaurants. Reach the village of Lumby 35 kilometres east of Vernon via Highway 6.

image via lumby.ca



Places To Visit Continued...

Naramata

Known for its fertile soil and wineries, the small agricultural town of Naramata is in the heart of wine country on the southeast shore of Okanagan Lake. The area is known for the Naramata Bench, populated by numerous valley wineries and vineyards, and for its proximity to the popular Kettle Valley Rail Trail and its many recreational options.

The hillsides around Naramata are blanketed with wineries alternating with the pink and white blossoms of countless rows of fruit trees. Fruit grown in this part of the valley includes apples, apricots, cherries, pears, plums, and peaches. Centered on a peninsula, the Village of Naramata is nearly surrounded by Okanagan Lake shores.

Recreation and the wine industry are the two primary features of Naramata. Land activities during the summer months include hiking and mountain biking. Water activities are central to Naramata culture and include boating, fishing, kayaking, kite boarding, scuba diving, swimming, and windsurfing. Nearby parks are the Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park and the Rock Ovens Regional Park, both discussed in other chapters.

In the winter months ice-fishing on Chute Lake and other local alpine lakes is a popular pastime. Other in-town winter options include cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing. Apex Mountain is close by and offers downhill skiing and snowboarding.

Although the main focus of enterprise in Naramata is in wineries, there are some services available here. Some downtown offerings are accommodations, art galleries, gas station, gift boutiques, and restaurants.



[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

Okanagan Falls

The cozy little lakefront village of Okanagan Falls is known to locals as “OK Falls.” The surrounding scenery is made up of alternating fruit stands, orchards, and wineries. Other than wineries the main draw here is the many recreational activities.

In summertime people in Okanagan Falls enjoy camping, canoeing, hiking, kiteboarding, mountain biking, picnicking, rock climbing, swimming, water skiing, and windsurfing. In the wintertime nearby Apex Mountain offers downhill skiing and snowboarding.

Thanks to the town's proximity to the Vaseux Lake area there are wonderful opportunities here for nature and wilderness activities. This desert climate transition of the Vaseux Lake area features striking geological landscapes. Birdwatching is also fantastic in this area, a wonderful aspect of the biodiversity of the surrounding region.

Just outside Okanagan Falls are both the Kettle Valley Rail Trail and the Christie Memorial Provincial Park near Skaha Lake. Thanks to these areas there are extensive opportunities for beach combing, canoeing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, kiteboarding, mountain biking, picnicking, swimming, water skiing, and windsurfing. There are also ample naturalist options including walking near the old pile trestle and exploring Canada's pocket desert.

In downtown “OK Falls,” there are travelers' services including accommodations, ATMs, gas stations, and small grocery markets. The town is local to the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, Penticton, and Willowbrook.



[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

Oliver

Oliver is a small town in the southern Okanagan Valley which neighbours the Sonora Desert. Surrounded by surrounded by farmlands, fruit stands, rolling desert hills, local wineries, and fruit orchards growing apples, cherries, grapes, peaches, pears, and plums.

Oliver is known by many as the “Wine Capital of Canada.” Part of the British Columbian “Golden Mile” and on the “Black Sage Bench,” grapes grown in Oliver are of the highest quality. It is hardly surprising that farmers markets, fruit picking, and winery tours are popular here.

Recreational activities in Oliver center on its place on the Tuc-el-Nuit Lake and its proximity to the Gallagher, Vaseux, and Mahoney Lakes. Attractions in Oliver include boating, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, swimming, and water skiing. During the summer months there are also ample dirt biking, golfing, hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking opportunities.

Naturalist and wilderness activities are also plentiful around Oliver. Birdwatchers travel to Vaseux Lake or visit Forbes Marsh. The Vaseux area Golden Mile Trail also attracts hikers and walkers. Fishing is excellent at the nearby Bear, Madden, and Sawmill Lakes. Mountain biking paths draw visitors to the Oliver Hike and Bike Path. And the scenic beauty of McIntyre’s Bluff draws visitors who want to take in the views.

During the winter, tourists in Oliver enjoy alpine skiing, cross country skiing on trails, downhill skiing on nearby Mount Baldy, snow boarding, and snowmobiling.

Services for tourists in Oliver center in the small downtown area and include accommodations, banks, coffee houses, gas stations, gift stores, grocery stores, Internet access, a laundromat, and restaurants.



[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

Osoyoos

Osoyoos is an agricultural and recreation town on the shores of Lake Osoyoos. The area is surrounded by desert hills, lakes, and fruit-filled valleys. It is the southern-most point of the Okanagan Valley and neighbours the border with the US.

Osoyoos is a major draw for wine aficionados, foodies, and those interested in the fascinating history and culture of the First Nations of Canada. The plentiful Osoyoos fruit stands, orchards, vineyards, and wineries. The local wineries offer excellent information and tours. One of them is the first winery to be operated by a member of one of Canada's First Nations.

Recreation activities are also plentiful here. During the summer local opportunities include birdwatching, camping, canoeing, fishing, fruit picking, golfing, hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, kiteboarding, mountain biking, road cycling, wine tours, swimming, windsurfing, and water skiing. Close by is Baldy Mountain, where visitors can enjoy downhill skiing and snowboarding.

Osoyoos is home to sandy beach parks including Cottonwood Park and the Haynes Point Park. The local backcountry is where, by getting just a little way out of town, tourists can enjoy Conkle Lake and the Kettle River Provincial Park, home to the Kettle Valley Rail Trail.

The Northern Sonora Desert is Canada's only desert, and it is unique to Osoyoos. This means the town enjoys more than 2,000 hours of sunshine and fewer than 12 inches of rain annually. Although it is an arid desert region the warmest fresh water lake in Canada also contributes to the variety of the local ecosystem. The very dry air, warm temperatures, and desert landscape characterize the Osoyoos region, an "Arid Biotic Zone." This area is home for Tiger Salamanders and Sage Thrashers, two of the most endangered species in North America.

Travelers amenities in Osoyoos include accommodations, banks, gas stations, gift stores, grocery stores, Internet access, a laundromat, repair shops, and restaurants.

[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

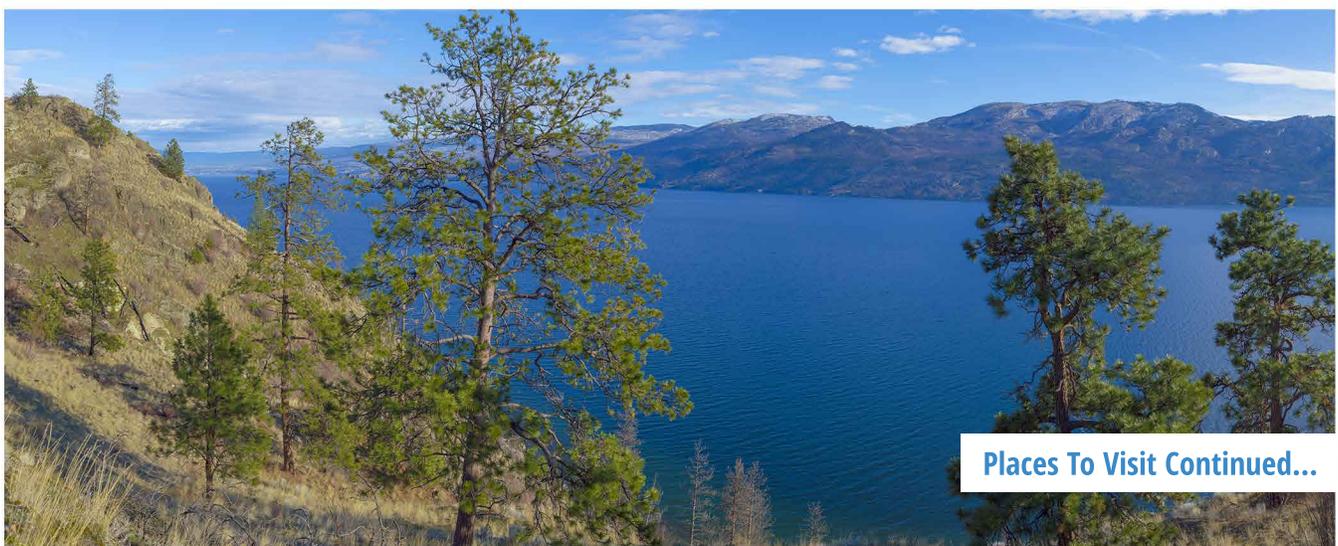
Peachland

A small town on the shores of Okanagan Lake, Peachland is a vibrant waterfront community. Thanks to its place on the lakeside the community offers many sandy beaches and lake recreation. One of the most popular features of the town is the scenic lake front pathway which winds along the Okanagan Lake's shores.

Peachland spans more than eight kilometres along the sandy beaches of Okanagan Lake. It is a popular place for canoeing, fishing, houseboating, jet skiing, kayaking, sailing, swimming, and water skiing. Golf is also very popular on Okanagan Lake; the area has many challenging and well-maintained courses. Desert horseback riding is another popular option, as is birdwatching at Trepanier Creek Linear Park. The snowy winter months offer alpine skiing, cross country skiing, snow boarding, and snowmobiling.

Like other towns in the region, Peachland orchard visits and wine tours are an important local attraction. For those who are interested in nature and wilderness, there are many nearby options. The Kettle Valley Trail offers extensive recreation opportunities. Camping out on Rattlesnake Island allows the peace and quiet many travelers seek out, and from there you can enjoy the relaxing views of Hardy Falls by taking the shady footpath on the island. Or hike Pincushion Mountain to the top for some amazing views.

Peachland is centrally located in the Okanagan Valley; it is convenient to the larger towns of Kelowna and Westbank. Peachland offers certain traveler amenities including higher end retail shops on the lake. Back downtown enjoy the ATMs, banks, coffee shops with outdoor patios, a grocery store, pubs, and restaurants.



[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

Penticton

The lake community of Penticton is among the most popular destinations in the Okanagan Valley, nestled between the shores of Skaha Lake and Okanagan Lake. It is the major cultural center in the valley, offering plentiful recreation, entertainment, and other diversions.

Sandy beach areas surround most of the community, along with lakefront patios and outdoor eateries. Penticton offers fine accommodations, numerous attractions and events, and retail shops. Beyond the sandy beaches Penticton's landscapes include desert hills with their cacti and sage brush, and lush orchards, vineyards, and wineries. Extensive offerings surrounding the wine industry such as tours and tastings are central to tourism.

Penticton is one of the few Okanagan Valley communities that offers very high-end accommodations from luxury resorts. The Penticton Lakeside Casino and Resort offers everything the name implies, along with a cushy day spa, golf, and numerous social and cultural events. Other destinations include the yurts of the Barefoot Beach Resort.

Penticton offers ample opportunities for recreation and entertainment year round. In summer you can choose from backpacking, birdwatching, canoeing, channel tubing, cycling, dirt biking, fishing, golfing, hiking, houseboating, kayaking, kite surfing, mountain biking, rock climbing, suntanning, swimming, water skiing, and windsurfing. In the wintertime there is snow, and visitors enjoy cross country skiing, ice fishing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing. Apex Mountain nearby is a fantastic destination for downhill skiing and snowboarding.

There are many chances to take in wilderness and naturalist activities close to Penticton. The region's most popular trail for hiking and mountain biking is the Kettle Valley Rail Trail. The Shaka Bluffs and the Okanagan Mountain Park provide many opportunities for exploration and adventure.

Lakawana Park is a 4 acre Penticton community park and family destination. It offers a concession area, benches with lakeside views, large grass lawns, picnic tables, tennis courts on the lake, a playground with a steam train, a skateboard park, and a splash park.

Penticton is off Highway 97. It provides all major travelers' services including auto repair shops, banks, gas stations, grocery stores, Internet access, a laundromat, medical services, a post office, and restaurants.

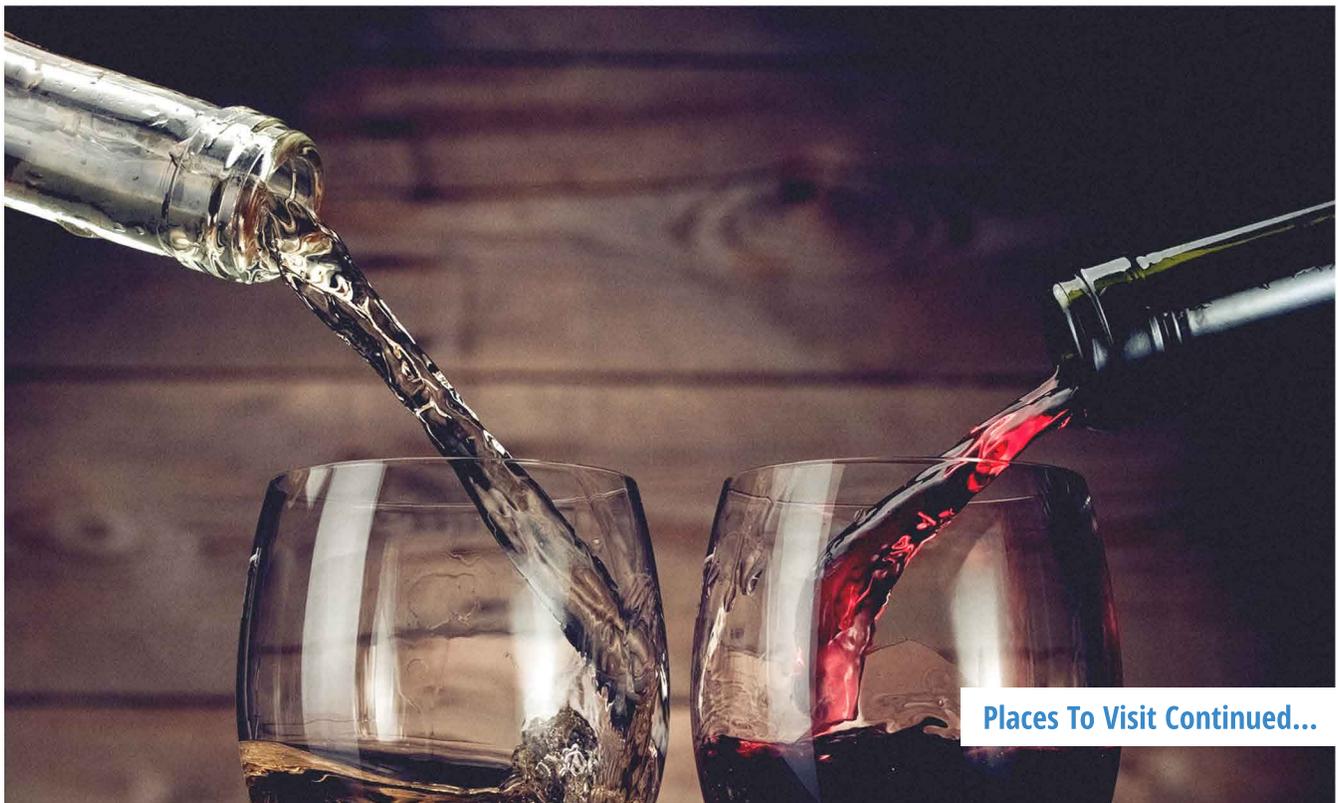
[Places To Visit Continued...](#)

Summerland

The small community of Summerland is rich with history and wine culture. Set on a high hill and surrounded by fields and orchards, the region's fertile earth is famous for producing apples, pears, and plums along with high-end wines. The scenic downtown area has a European, brightly appointed look and feel. The pastel buildings are built to style specifications reflecting the English heritage of residents. The colourful streets are teeming with art shops, coffee houses, and retail shops.

The summer months mean recreation in Summerland, including boating, canoeing, golfing, hiking, kayaking, picnicking, railway tours, sailing, swimming, water skiing, and wine tours. There are also parks with sandy beaches locally including Okanagan Lake Park and Sun Oka Park. Hiking trails and climbs in the area of Summerland include the Kettle Valley Steam Railway, the Peach Orchard Loop Trail, and the peak of Giants Head Mountain.

Summerland offers travelers accommodations, ATMs, banks, gas stations, grocery stores, Internet access, a laundromat, medical services, repair services, and restaurants. Penticton is also only ten minutes away, so full services are close by.



Places To Visit Continued...

Vernon

Vernon lies among agricultural farmland, alpine plateaus, backcountry mountains, forests and lakes in the northern portion of the Okanagan Valley. The shores of Kalamalka Lake and Okanagan Lake frame Vernon, which is the entry point into the valley from the north. The community has a strong artistic bent, and you'll enjoy the vast collection of murals gracing the downtown buildings as well as the art galleries, theatre, and museums. Vernon is also home to Polson Park and its Interior Space and Science Centre.

Vernon offers year round recreation thanks to its numerous trail systems and parks. Summer means agricultural tours, ATV riding, backpacking, birdwatching, boating, canoeing, dirt biking, fishing, golfing, hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, mountain biking, water skiing, and windsurfing. Wintery months offer cross country skiing, downhill skiing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing.

Among the more popular destinations for recreational activities are the Ellison Bay Provincial Park, the Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park, and Kal Beach near Coldstream.

Vernon provides travelers with many services including accommodations, banks, boutiques, galleries, gas stations, grocery stores, Internet access, laundromats, restaurants, and retail shops.

Westbank

This agricultural and commercial hub on the shores of Okanagan Lake is just a bridge away from Kelowna. Westbank has a commercial district, orchards, residential neighbourhoods, regional parks, and wineries. Westbank is proximal to many trails, parks, and lakes, including Mt. Boucherie Park and the Fintry Provincial Park. History buffs will enjoy visiting the Gellatly Nut Farm.

Summer recreation in Westbank includes birdwatching, boating, camping, canoeing, fishing, golfing, hiking, horseback riding, houseboating, jet skiing, kayaking, mountain biking, parasailing, sailing, swimming, water skiing, wine tours, and wind surfing. Winter is almost as pleasant as summer in Westbank and offers cross country skiing, downhill skiing, ice fishing, snowmobiling, and snowboarding. Local ski hills include Apex Mountain, Big White, Crystal Mountain, and Silver Star.

Westbank feels like it was planned with travelers in mind; there are large parking lining the highway and ample commercial services including accommodations, banks, coffee shops, gas stations, grocery stores, Internet access, laundromats, restaurants, and even RV repairs.

[Places To Visit Continued...](#)



The Okanagan Valley is famous for some of the most beautiful beaches in the country. There are literally hundreds of kilometres of soft sandy beaches and warm, clear water. There are more than 30 beaches in the valley, and some great deals on beach vacations. Most Okanagan Valley beaches are not protected by life guards, but they do feature very visible buoys and other safety measures. Almost all of the valley's best beaches features amenities such as barbecue spots, beach volleyball, fire pits, floating docks, grassy areas, scenic picnic areas, and slides for children.

Sudbury Park

Sudbury Park in Penticton is a local community park on Skaha Lake. This day use park boasts a beautiful sandy beach right in between Airport Beach and Skaha Beach. The beach offers a concession stand, people watching, picnicking, relaxing, sitting benches, suntanning, swimming, and water sports. There is also a paved walking path here used by cyclists, joggers, roller skaters, sightseers, and walkers. Nearby on Skaha Lake there is also kite boarding and windsurfing.

Reach Sudbury Park on Skaha Lake Road at the south end of Penticton.

[Beaches And Water Sports Continued...](#)

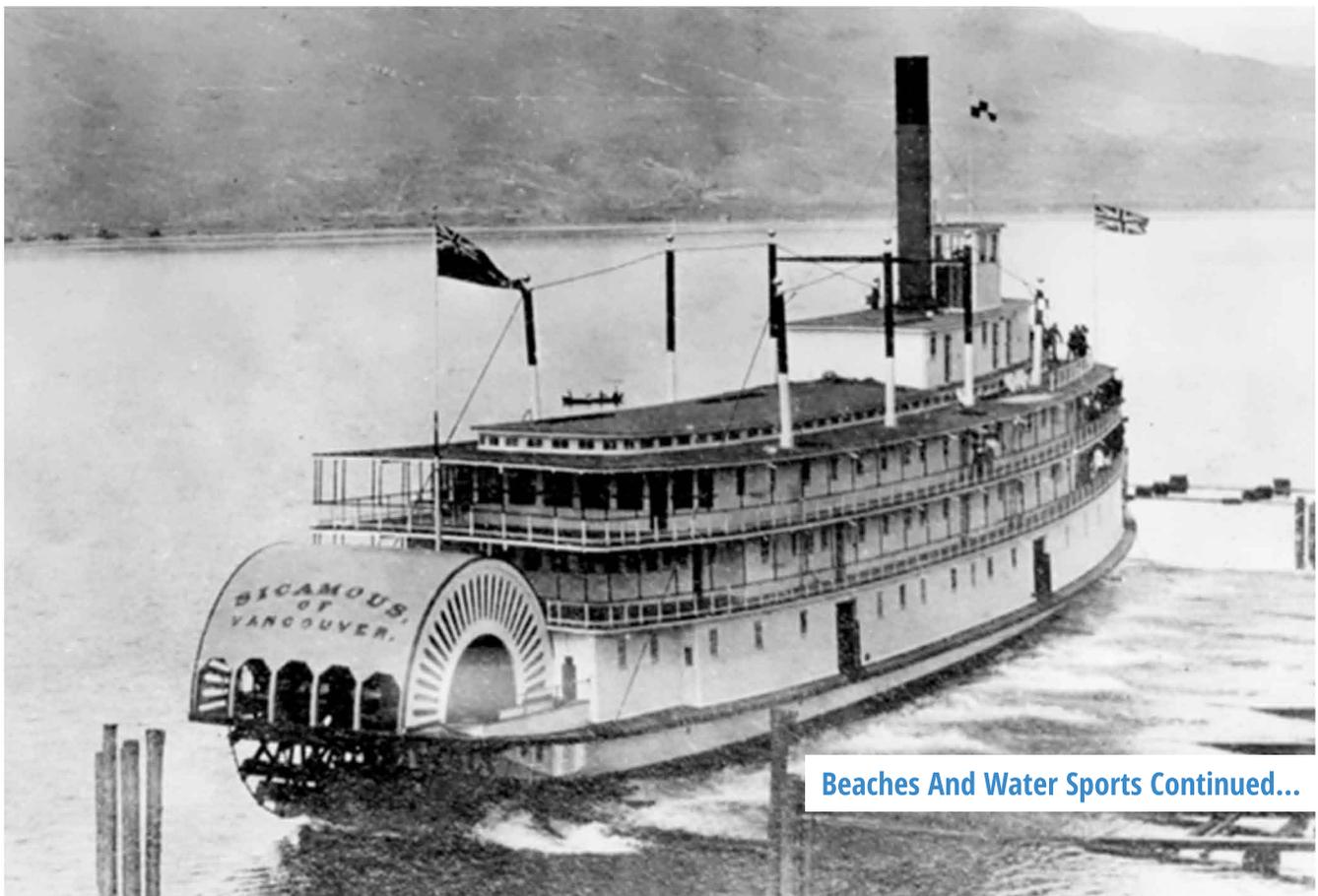
SS Sicamous

The SS Sicamous is a paddle boat left from the days when this kind of transportation was dominant. Before the Okanagan Valley was connected with roads, paddle wheel boats were the primary mode of transportation between communities. The 228 foot passenger boat was the biggest passenger boat ever constructed by the Canadian Pacific Railway as well as the last.

Put into service in 1914, the SS Sicamous transported forestry workers, miners, and trappers between the local lake communities. It also moved the upper class in its 40 staterooms. The paddle boat was so central to travel in the valley that it took the beaching of the SS Sicamous in 1951 to prompt paved roads and The Kettle Valley Railway.

Reach the SS Sicamous at the north end of Penticton and the south end of Okanagan Lake.

image via ssicamous.ca



[Beaches And Water Sports Continued...](#)

Kal Beach

One of the most popular and easily accessible sandy beaches on Kalamalka Lake, the 300 foot sandy Kal Beach is a popular boating, picnicking, swimming, and volleyball destination. Running along the Kalamalka Road, the beach has a restaurant, a concession stand, and a convenience store. Activities on the beach center around the roped swimming area and the large wooden pier. There are also picnic tables, and a changing area and washroom.

Reach Kal Beach on Kalamalka Road in Vernon off of Highway 6. There is parking on the opposite side of the street on Husband Road.

Ellison Provincial Park

This lovely and popular summer park near Vernon is on the eastern shores of Okanagan Lake. The 200 hectare recreational area features boating, camping, diving, fishing, picnicking, and swimming. The park itself has two tiers thanks to its location near Predator Ridge on a rocky slope. The park is forested with Douglas fir trees and lodgepole pines.

The lower tier meets the Okanagan Lake shores. This is where the park's tranquil and secluded coves, South Bay and Otter Bay, are situated. Both have long sandy beaches, picnic tables, swimming areas, and volleyball courts. Sandy Beach, a dog park, is also on the lower tier but has no boat launch.

On the top tier there are campsites, an outdoor amphitheatre, flush toilets, a large grass lawn area, a paved parking lot, a playground, running water, and showers. The campsites have fire pits and picnic tables and are all interconnected by 6 kilometres of hiking trails, some paved, some gravel. Certain trails are accessible.

Ellison Provincial Park also features the first under water diving park in Canada. This is an amazing place to explore the world of Okanagan Lake from the other side, and it is popular with divers and novices alike.

Reach Ellison Provincial Park via Highway 97 near Vernon.

[Beaches And Water Sports Continued...](#)

Cottonwood Park

Cottonwood Park is a community park that local residents of Osoyoos designed and created. This well-maintained park is populated with gardens, viewing benches, and a walkway that overlooks the sandy Osoyoos Lake beach, called Cottonwood Beach. During the warmer months the beach is popular for boating, swimming, and sunbathing.

The park is within the city limits of Osoyoos, so the park is very easily accessible by bike, by car, and on foot. The people designed the park so that it would be accessible for use by people with disabilities and of all ages. The frequent benches and wheelchair friendly pathway reflect this goal.

Near the park is the Pioneer Walkway, which runs along the Main Street waterfront following the lake-shore. The walkway allows access between the park and the accommodations and shops on Main Street.

Antlers Beach Regional Park

This sandy beach on Okanagan Lake is easily reached from Peachland off Highway 97. The public park is sheltered by Ponderosa Pines and enjoys outhouses, picnic tables, and a long pebbled beach. From the beach one can see all of the way to Squally Point across the lake. Visitors to the beach enjoy picnicking, swimming, and people watching on the lake.

Across the highway is the Hardy Falls waterfall park trailhead.

Reach Antlers Beach Park on Hardy Road off of Highway 97 just south of Peachland.

Sun-Oka Beach Provincial Park

Sun-Oka Beach Provincial Park, located in the Trout Creek area of Summerland, is among the Okanagan Valley's most visited public beaches because of the sandy beach and large day use area. The 11 hectare area offers a boat launch, change rooms, fishing, grass lawns, hiking, kayaking, over 90 picnic tables, a playground, scuba diving, sunbathing, washrooms, the occasional concession stand in fine weather, and swimming.

The wetlands and trees of the park create a secure wildlife area which is home to the Lewis's woodpecker, the common loon, the Northern oriole, and warbling vireos.

Reach Sun-Oka Beach Provincial Park six kilometres south of Summerland on Highway 97 near Trout Creek.



[Events...](#)

The Okanagan Valley has countless events that attract travelers; here are just a few:

Fest-of-Ale: April

Okanagan Spring Wine Fest: April - May

Bacchanalia Food and Wine Festival: May

Meadowlark Nature Festival: May

Elvis Festival: June

Peach City Beach Cruise: June

Canada Day Celebrations and Fireworks: July

Okanagan Trestles Tour: July

Granfondo Okanagan: July

Peach Classic Triathlon: July

Penticton Peach Festival: August

Challenge Penticton: August

A Taste of Valley View Farm: September

Penticton Hot Jazz Festival: September

Penticton Dragonboat Festival: September

The Great Grape Lake Stomp: September

Okanagan Fall Wine Fest: October

Cropped...By Valley First: October

Oktoberfest: October