

Lake Osoyoos.

## Osoyoos

This South Okanagan hot spot offers sunny skies, a lovely lake and wineries for miles.



Many a Calgarian has set their sights on vacationing in Palm Springs or Phoenix — the arid air and sunny skies seem to suit those of us used to Calgary's dry (albeit much cooler) climate. But American desert destinations aren't so friendly during the summer months when temperatures soar way above what's comfortable, and when the low Canadian dollar keeps many of us firmly on this side of the border.

Luckily, there's an alternative for Calgarians looking for a taste of the desert — and it's only a day's drive away. Osoyoos, located at the southern end of B.C.'s Okanagan Valley is a small town, but, if you factor in the surrounding area (including Okanagan wine country's renowned "Golden Mile," which sits between Osoyoos and nearby Oliver) there's enough to see, eat and do to keep anyone busy for days (if not weeks) on end. With attractions like beautiful Lake Osoyoos and its waterfront and some of Canada's most upscale winery restaurants, Osoyoos' natural assets and man-made wonders make it a perfect alternative to the popular American desert cities.



### Where to Stay

Before the wine industry started to explode in the South Okanagan, Osoyoos was pretty much just a quiet lake town with a few motels scattered near the waterfront. Over the last decade, the tourism scene has grown profoundly, largely due to the addition of three full-scale resort properties: **Spirit Ridge at Nk'Mip Resort**, **Walnut Beach Resort** and **Watermark Beach Resort** — the latter two located right on the lake, with some of Watermark's townhouse units providing direct walkout access to the beach.

All three of these properties feature a variety of suites with more of a homey apartment feel than a standard hotel room. Watermark also has a concierge service that can hook visitors up with wine tours and recreational activities, some of which have been created specifically for the resort's guests.

[spiritridge.ca](http://spiritridge.ca), [walnutbeachresort.com](http://walnutbeachresort.com), [watermarkbeachresort.com](http://watermarkbeachresort.com)

For something different, consider the **Observatory B&B**, a charming bed and breakfast owned by Jack Newton, one of the world's most prolific amateur astronomers, and his wife, Alice. Located high above Lake Osoyoos on Anarchist Mountain, the B&B offers a session with Newton and his 16-inch, computer-controlled, professional-grade telescope, both in the evening and in the morning, when you can view the sun through protective H-alpha filters.

[jacknewton.com](http://jacknewton.com)

### What to Eat

The wineries in the South Okanagan are plentiful, and some have exceptional restaurants on site. Most focus on local ingredients — a given considering the same land that provides all those grapes also offers a bounty of other produce.

Tinhorn Creek's **Miradoro** restaurant is about a 15-minute drive from Osoyoos and offers one of the most extraordinary views in the region. The food lives up to the setting: executive chef Jeff Van Geest's Mediterranean-influenced seasonal menu pays homage to the Okanagan bounty and features expertly prepared meats. Naturally, the menu pairs perfectly with Tinhorn's wines.

[miradoro.ca](http://miradoro.ca)

There are also great restaurants at Burrowing Owl and Hester Creek wineries, as well as at the resorts, but one of the biggest joys of the South Okanagan's food scene is the opportunity to take in some culinary agri-tourism. **Covert**

**Farms** is a working farm that supplies many of the South Okanagan's restaurants with produce and is also home to a small winery. The farm offers tours, during which guests get to ride in the back of matriarch Diana Covert's restored 1952 Mercury truck. The Watermark Resort has also partnered with the farm to create a "signature experience" that includes a foraging session followed by wine and bites served back at the farm's rustic wine lounge.

[covertfarms.ca](http://covertfarms.ca)

For another unique culinary experience, **Backyard Farm Chef's Table**, owned and operated by chef Chris Van Hooydonk, sits on a small orchard on the Golden Mile. Van Hooydonk offers public events, as well as private dining experiences and hands-on cooking classes utilizing locally sourced meat and ingredients and seasonal produce straight from his farm.

[backyard-farm.ca](http://backyard-farm.ca)



Covert Farms.



Miradoro at Tinhorn Creek.



Observatory B&B.



LEFT: Image of the Messier 31 (a.k.a. the Andromeda Galaxy) taken by astronomer Jack B. Newton, owner of the Observatory B&B.