

VOL 09 / ISSUE 03

LIVE WELL - TRAVEL OFTEN

DRIIFT

Travel Magazine

STEP INTO A DREAM
EUROPE BY TRAIN
1920s STYLE



PORTUGAL
FRANCE
SPAIN
ITALY
AFRICA
CANADA

Namibia is calling
FROM DUNES TO DESERT RHINOS
THIS IS AFRICA UNFILTERED



GOLF GETAWAY TO OSOYOOS, BRITISH COLUMBIA

BY STEVE DRAKE

WHERE TO STAY

I began the trip by staying at the Watermark Beach Resort, which set the stage for the entire week away. Situated on the shore of Osoyoos Lake, the resort has stunning scenery and an unbeatable location—basically right on the beach, and a short stroll to shops, cafes, and tasting rooms.

The amenities exceeded even my high expectations going in. I slept in a two-bedroom suite that was like having a private condo, not a hotel room. There was a full kitchen, a comfy living space, and a private balcony where I took my morning coffee gazing over the water. If you're coming with a group, they have two- and three-bedroom suites, roomy townhomes, plus a beautiful penthouse, ideal for a special stay. It's the sort of property where you can spread out, relax, and feel at home.

And then there is the 15 Park Bistro, the signature restaurant at the resort. I wound up going there twice because the cuisine was that exceptional. Chicken Tikka Masala was sumptuous, flavorful, and just the thing to soothe me on a long day on the course. Beef Striploin—cooked to perfection but served with local vegetables—was one of the meals I enjoyed most the entire trip.

What truly made the dining experience stand out was the respect for the local produce and the high level of attention to detail. The menu was carefully selected to promote the produce of the region, and each dish tasted like a celebration of the South Okanagan gastronomic identity.

Their list of wines was a journey within itself, featuring a truly impressive array of local bottles,

ranging from intense reds to crisp whites, many of which cannot otherwise be found outside of the region. I requested the server to recommend something, and I found a new favorite Syrah from a local vineyard.

The drinks were equally unforgettable. Made with fresh herbs, house-made syrups, some of them infused with local spirits, they were works of art. I had the Maple Old-Fashioned and a Klippers Mojito—both of them expertly blended and just perfect for relaxing after a day of sunshine. The bartenders knew their trade well and enjoyed talking about ingredients or crafting special recommendations. It wasn't just dinner; it was an experience that pulled the region's cuisine and attitude together in a unique way.

POST-GOLF WINE TASTING

Following golf, the next logical step was wine. The area surrounding Osoyoos and Oliver is punctuated with breathtaking vineyards, so I made a point of visiting a few standouts.

NK'MIP CELLARS

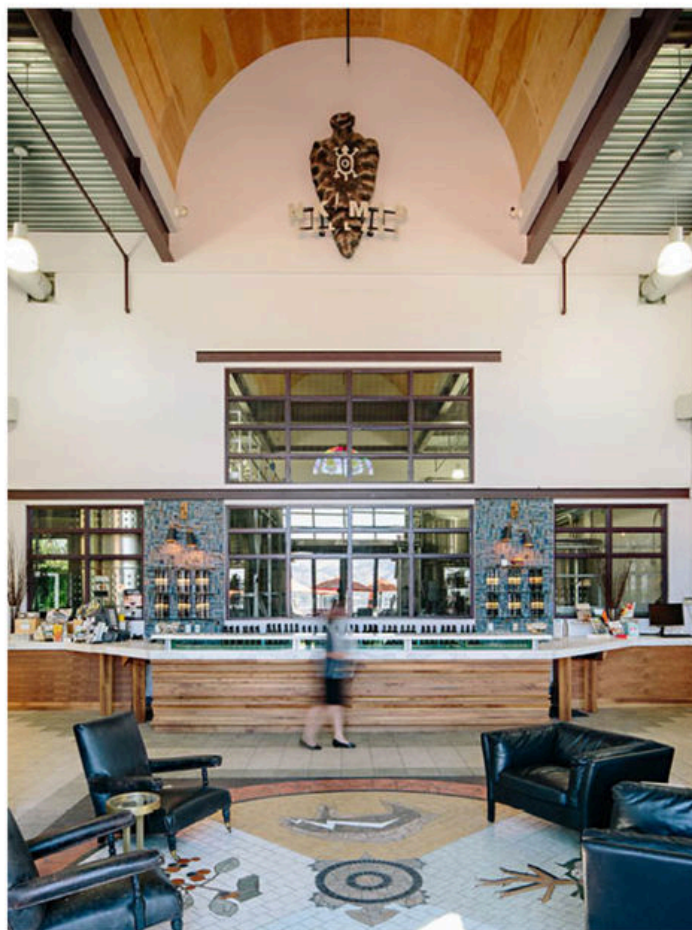
This winery is a must-visit, especially if you're playing at Sonora Dunes. After finishing my round, I walked over and was immediately impressed by the architecture of the tasting room—modern, sleek, and surrounded by desert landscapes. Inside, the staff was warm and welcoming, guiding me through a curated tasting that included several standouts, particularly their Pinot Noir and the Reserve Merlot, which was velvety and full-bodied.

The highlight, though, was the patio restaurant. Set high above the lake, it offered stunning panoramic views of the water and the valley beyond. I had lunch there under a shaded pergola, enjoying a locally-sourced charcuterie board and a lamb burger that was tender and packed with flavor. The Reserve Merlot elevated the meal, rounding out the experience in the most satisfying way. It's a spot that captures the essence of Osoyoos—natural beauty, rich culture, and world-class wine.

HESTER CREEK ESTATE WINERY

I drove a little north to Oliver to visit Hester Creek, and I'm so glad I did. Nestled in the Golden Mile Bench, the winery is surrounded by sun-soaked vineyards and framed by dramatic mountain backdrops. The tasting room is elegant yet unpretentious, and the staff was knowledgeable and engaging, sharing insights into their sustainable farming practices and the character of each vintage. The Viognier was floral and crisp, and their late-harvest wines were particularly memorable.

But what made the visit truly exceptional was Terrafina Restaurant, tucked into the heart of the estate. The space was charming and rustic, with a patio draped in grapevines and soft ambient lighting. I ordered the house-made pappardelle, tossed in a vibrant tomato and basil sauce and topped with aged Parmesan. It was cooked to perfection—al dente with just the right bite—and paired beautifully with their Cabernet Franc, which added depth and complexity to every mouthful. I lingered long after the meal, savoring a second glass and taking in the views. It's the kind of place where time slows down, and every sense is fully engaged.





A DAY OFF FROM GOLF

One day, I decided to swap clubs for a road trip to the Similkameen Valley, a lesser-known, more rugged wine region that has a really cool atmosphere.

CORCELETTES ESTATE WINERY

Tucked against rocky cliffs, Corcelettes is a hidden gem that immediately drew me in with its dramatic setting and warm, laid-back vibe. The winery itself is small, which made for a more intimate and unhurried tasting. The staff was incredibly knowledgeable, taking the time to walk me through their winemaking philosophy and how the unique Similkameen terroir influences their grapes.

I tried several of their small-lot offerings, but the Syrah stood out with its smooth texture, deep fruit notes, and subtle smoky finish. It was the kind of wine you could picture enjoying by a fire pit on a cool evening. I didn't hesitate to buy a bottle to bring home—one of those wines you know you'll save for a special occasion.

VANESSA VINEYARD

This visit turned out to be one of the most memorable stops of my trip, not just because of the exceptional wines, but because of the unforgettable hospitality. The drive up to the vineyard was scenic and peaceful, and the winery's location on a high benchland provided stunning views over the valley.

Inside, I had the incredible fortune of meeting Howard Soon, a living legend in the Canadian wine scene. He greeted guests with humility and enthusiasm, sharing stories from his more than four decades in the industry. Listening to him was like taking a masterclass in winemaking history—he even brought out his Order of Canada medal, a tangible reminder of his contributions to the craft.

As for the wines, they were rich and expressive. The Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah were both impeccably structured, full of bold flavor, and clearly crafted with care and precision. Vanessa Vineyard is the kind of place where the people and the product are equally unforgettable.

ROW FOURTEEN RESTAURANT

Lunchtime found me at this farm-to-table eatery on the farm at Klippers Organics. Each dish was carefully crafted and full of fresh, seasonal taste. This is the sort of restaurant where you can feel good about the food you're eating and depart inspired.

So, why should you consider Osoyoos for your next golf escape? For me, it was the perfect blend of sunshine, scenery, and standout experiences. The town holds the title of being the sunshine capital of Canada, which means you're practically guaranteed beautiful weather for your time outdoors. It's also home to the country's only true desert—a striking and rare landscape that sets the tone for the entire trip.

Then there's Osoyoos Lake, the warmest freshwater lake in Canada. After a hot round of golf, there's nothing better than diving into its refreshing waters. And for wine lovers, the surrounding area is a paradise. Osoyoos and nearby Oliver boast more than 50 wineries, many of them family-run, offering some of the best tasting experiences I've had anywhere.

By the end of the trip, I felt like I'd uncovered one of Canada's best-kept secrets. Whether you're chasing birdies or sipping Bordeaux-style blends, Osoyoos delivers a golf getaway that's hard to beat. Just don't forget to bring an extra bag for all the wine you'll want to take home.



