

What's not to like about Osoyoos?

With its balmy climate, amenities and natural beauty, this tranquil town is drawing buyers from across Canada

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Calgary Herald
OSOYOOS, B.C.

As a recreational property stop in Canada's only desert, Osoyoos makes a lot of sense — especially in the throes of a Calgary winter when it drops past -20 C.

Osoyoos is in the northern tip of the Sonora Desert, that travels down to Mexico. As such, its average winter temperature is 0.1 C, meaning its golf courses close as late as mid-December and open again Feb. 1. It has the warmest freshwater lake in Canada, and is minutes from the U. S. border and Washington state.

It has as a neighbour the first Aboriginal winery in North America, Nk'Nip Cellar, one of four award-winning wineries in the area. In winter, the Mount Baldy ski resort is just a 45 minute drive. What's not to like?

"This is not Sleepy Hollow anymore," says Lee Krepps, who works out of the Osoyoos Re/Max office. "There is a huge Calgary impact here and there is also big money coming from Red Deer and Edmonton."

It's no surprise that the tiny town of about 4,600 people has attracted recreational buyers from all over Canada and beyond.

"I bought it sight unseen, although I did know what was being built there," says Edward Marcinew, who purchased a unit in the Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa. The 47-year-old lives with his family in Calgary, where he is an oil and gas company vice-president.

"I put in an offer in December, paid for it in April, showed up in July to see it and I was ecstatic with it," says Marcinew. He was so positive about the project that he ended up buying the other half of the fractional ownership unit

he originally purchased. "I eventually plan to retire there."

While the weather is an obvious draw, the as-yet-undiscovered beauty and quiet solitude is another.

"It's not quite as busy and it's a good investment," says Marcinew.

Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa is one of the major developments in the area. Managed and developed by Bellstar Hotels and Resorts on land from the Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corp., the comprehensive site will have at least 226 units by completion.

The first phase of 94 units is sold. The second phase — a combination of villas and suite-style apartment condos — will be released to those on the priority reservation list this week, then opened to the general public.

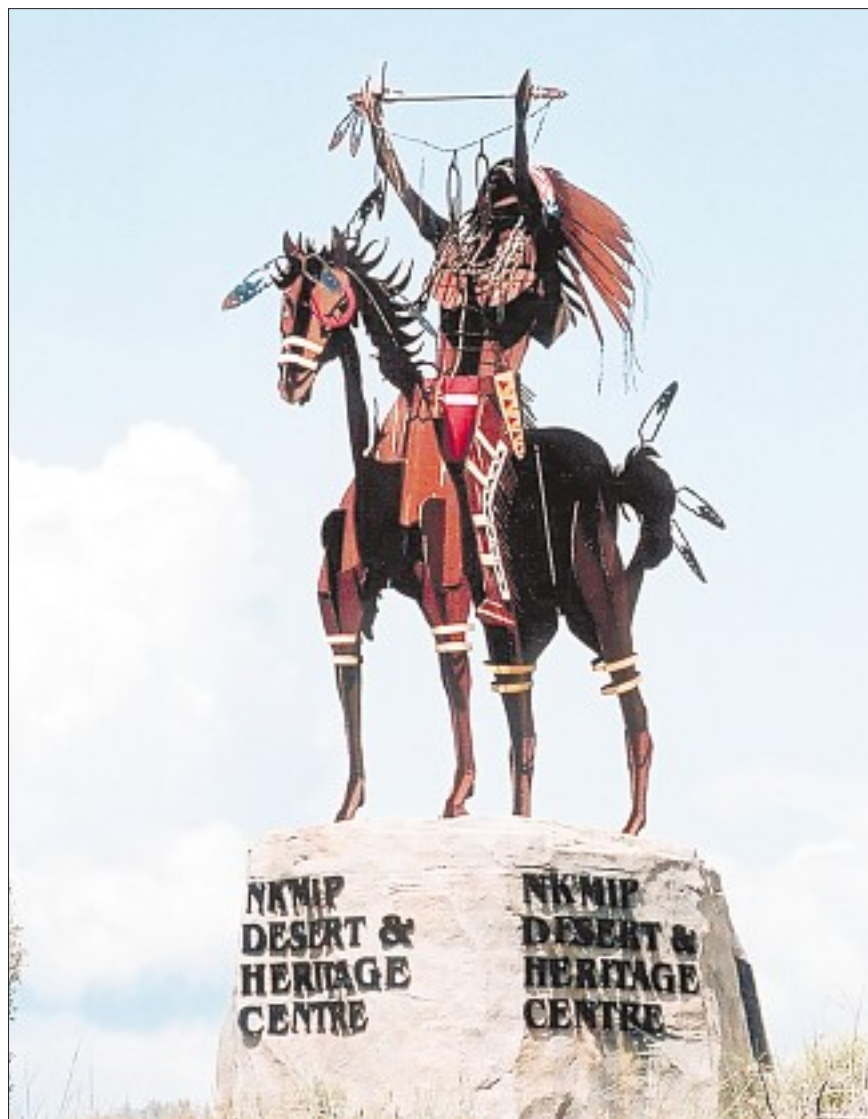
"The prices are from \$229,000 (plus GST) for one-bedroom units of approximately 600 square feet," says Curt Jansen, manager of the real estate division for Bellstar in Spirit Ridge. "Some are offered as fractional ownership as well, with quarter shares from \$63,000."

The units are fully furnished, including custom-built furniture. The architecture is "adobe," says Jansen.

The beach resort offers a private clubhouse with boat rentals from kayaks to canoes and a party entertainment boat. Mountain bikes and motor scooters will also be available for homeowners' use. An outdoor pool and hot tub will be included in the design, as will banquet space and fitness facilities. Guest services will include a dining room/restaurant/lounge and a full-service spa.

The resort has the Sonora Dunes Golf Course on site and a number of wineries, including Nk'Nip Cellars, Tinhorn Creek, Sumac Ridge and Burrowing Owl.

"The development is in a beautiful setting," says Jansen. "It's on a ridge overlooking the lake in the middle of the vine-



A larger-than-life statue of a native on horseback marks the entrance to the Nk'Nip Desert and Heritage Centre, a native tourist development and one of many attractions to be found in Osoyoos, B.C.

VANCOUVER SUN, FILE

yard. It's on the east bench of Osoyoos surrounded by desert."

Mount Baldy is less than an hour away and the ski resort recently announced a \$100-million expansion. A \$9-million Desert Cultural Centre also opened in Osoyoos this summer.

The buyer support has been "overwhelming," says Jansen, adding that as many as one-quarter of the buyers are from Calgary. "It's exceeded our expectations."

Buyers have also been coming from Vancouver and Edmonton, as well as

some from Ontario and the U.S.

Other projects are also being developed in Osoyoos.

Las Ventanas Al Parisio, an 11-unit beachfront condo development, is in the early stages of construction.

The condo units will range from 1,515 to 1,920 square feet, says Donna Mortimer who, along with her husband, heads up the small local development company building Las Ventanas.

The first level of the building will hold the parkade, storage and mechanical. The next two levels will hold four units each, while the fourth level will have three. No final pricing has been given.

"Our intention is to provide a development that will offer a somewhat higher end of finishing than what has been consistent in the south Okanagan in the past," says Mortimer.

A show suite is currently under construction and she says build-out for the development will be in June.

Village on the Lake is a mixed-use project being put together by VOTL Development Ltd. The two-hectare development will include 32 townhouses and apartment condos, 12 villas and a 55-room hotel. The resort will also offer commercial/retail bays, two pools, games room, fitness centre and private pier with boat moorage for residents.

In the heart of Osoyoos is Casa del Lago, which is in the home stretch of construction. Phase 1 has been completed and the second phase is nearly finished, say officials with development partners Co-operators Development Corp. and VanTel/Safeway Credit Union.

At build-out, Casa del Lago will consist of 109 apartment condos and another 67 townhouses.

Atletic Hotels and Resorts will manage the Walnut Beach Resort when it opens in the summer of 2008. The 112-unit condo hotel is being developed by Palcor on 1.2 hectares of beachfront on Osoyoos Lake. One- and two-bedroom suites come with kitchens and range in size from 625 to 1,351 square feet.

CanWest News Service

Albertans flocking to Baja resort

\$3-billion project focuses on sustainable development

CALGARY HERALD

Sustainability has always been a focal point of a multi-billion-dollar resort development in Mexico popular with Albertans, says the project's developer.

"In fact, Loreto Bay is specifically designed to address sustainability objectives in three key areas — economic, social and environmental," says developer David Butterfield.

The \$3-billion US project is located in the Baja peninsula along the Sea of Cortez. In three years of construction, more than 640 homes of the 6,000-home project have been sold. Of the sales, more than 20 per cent involved Albertans.

Designed as a series of pedestrian-oriented seaside villages that will be spread over 1,200 of the development's 3,200 hectares, Loreto Bay will also include boutique hotels and a golf club as well as a beach club and spas.

It will also have service and retail businesses, along with cultural and recreational facilities. Located at the base of the Sierra de la Gigantes Moun-

tains, the villages will face about five kilometres of coastline along the Sea of Cortez.

"As well, though, the massive project was also created as a showcase for sustainable development," says Jim Grogan, CEO of Loreto Bay Co. "So, the remaining 2,000 hectares will be maintained and redeveloped as a natural preserve."

The 15-year development is being put together by Grogan's company in partnership with FONATUR, Mexico's tourism development agency.

Butterfield outlined three areas of sustainability:

► **Environmental** — Performance targets are determined for energy conservation, water consumption, habitat protection and enhancement, reduction of solid wastes and air pollution.

► **Economic** — Opportunities for Mexicans are provided through housing, planning and training, job creation and new local businesses.

► **Social** — The project is helping fund a local medical facility, as well as supporting educational and recreational opportunities in the town of Loreto.

The developer has agreed to dedicate one per cent of gross proceeds of sales to fund the programs.

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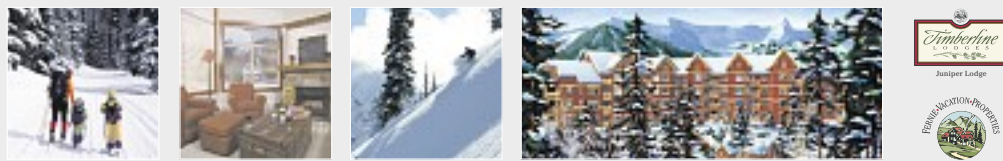
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