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Palm Springs North

Sleepy Osoyoos (pop. 4,800) has long been a summer destination for families wanting reasonably priced accommodation and a beach to plunk the kids down on.

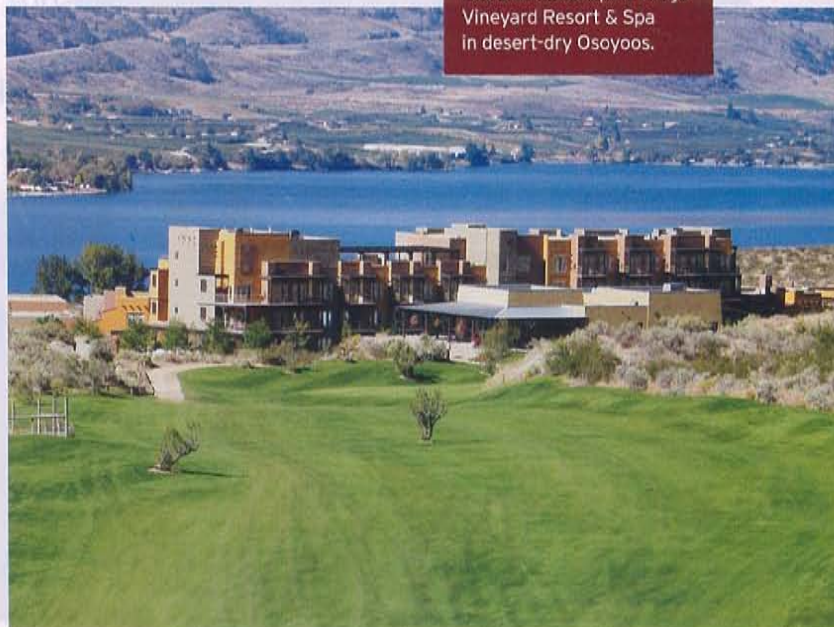
Main Street is still lined by vintage 1960s motels with names like Sun Beach and Spanish Fiesta. But the town is waking up as the south Okanagan morphs into B.C.'s hottest grape-growing region. Wineries such as Tinhorn Creek and Burrowing Owl are major visitor draws, and smaller producers such as Black Hills sell out their stock as soon as it's released.

The Osoyoos Indian Band's Nk'Mip Cellars (pronounced "Ink-a-meep"), overlooking Osoyoos Lake, was North America's first native-owned winery when it opened in 2002. Today it makes some of B.C.'s best Merlot, Chardonnay and lewine. And in June this year, the band opened its Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, a short walk from the winery. Here, visitors can learn about the area's aboriginal people and 100-hectare "Pocket Desert," the northernmost extension of Arizona's Sonoran Desert.

Best Biouvac: On the hillside between the winery and cultural centre is the just-completed Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa: 30 villas and 64 suites with gas fireplaces, full kitchens, hot tubs and fine views of the vineyards and lake that seriously up the ante for Osoyoos accommodation. A chip shot away is the nine-hole Sonora Dunes Golf Course. —*John Masters*

The Deal: AMA's October 5-8 Desert Retreat celebrates B.C.'s fall wine festival with special Okanagan getaway packages, including three nights at four-star Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa (featuring four-course dinner and wine tasting at Passatempo Restaurant; traditional salmon feast at Nk'Mip Winery; winery tour). From \$555 per person (plus tax).

i Visit your nearest AMA Travel centre or call 1-866-667-4777



B.C.'s Arizona: Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa in desert-dry Osoyoos.

Nature's Express Checkout

Feeling the getaway itch? Whether you're a tenting, fish-frying camper or a luxury hotel lounge, chances are you don't want your summer vacation to begin with a wait at a national parks gate. Visit the AMA centre nearest you and pick up a Parks Canada pass in advance. Annual family and senior passes are both available at discounted prices for members – so you save money *and* maximize your campfire (or spa) time.

i amatravel.ca (click on "Attractions & Tickets")

AMA ROAD REPORTS

YEAR-ROUND INFO THROUGH LIVE CAMERAS, SITE-SPECIFIC WEATHER UPDATES & LINKS TO CITY & ROAD INFO WEBSITES

i ama.ab.ca/RoadReports

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