

for Recreation
Property Owners

October 24th 7-8pm
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By Jamie Powell, CFP Investors Group

SURF'S UP

Snowbirds seek out piece of California dream.

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ENGLAND IN B.C.

Cotswold style brought to Saltspring Island.

K8

TIPS FOR BUYERS

Some advice on how to get that slice of heaven.

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RECREATION & INVESTMENT PROPERTIES

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 20

That's the Spirit

KATHY McCORMICK
CALGARY HERALD
OSOYOOS, B.C.

Osoyoos Golden Mile lush with vineyards and resort developments

The area has responded with several upscale and interesting properties now under development — and more on the way.

One of the first of the most recent offerings is an all-around resort experience, set on the hillside overlooking Lake Osoyoos.

But Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa, surrounded by a lush vineyard, has more.

Its adjacent to the renowned Nk'Mip Cellars Winery and plentiful vineyards — the first aboriginal-owned-and-operated winery in North America.

SEE SPIRIT, PAGE K2

It has one of the mildest temperatures in Canada in winter, with an average of 250 frost-free days and more than 2,000 hours of sunshine per year, the warmest freshwater lake in Canada, and Canada's only desert.

It's hard to top such weather, but Osoyoos has done even that, adding small-town charm and abundant vineyards to a unique desert experience — and then some.

Part of the area around Osoyoos is actually known as The Golden Mile that contains lush vineyards that are award-winning and growing, not only in popularity, but in numbers.

The area has long been a beacon for vacationers, but it's now on the radar for those looking for investment and recreation properties, including boomers set to retire.

It's a mecca for people seeking warm weather without having to leave Canada.

OKANAGAN DREAMING

Let's take a five-part series on the Okanagan area that exemplify the three Ws of recreation properties — wine, weather and water.

■ This week: Osoyoos

The Okanagan Valley: A mecca for Calgarians with its many lakes, mild temperatures, marvelous sports and recreational opportunities, and hectare after hectare of vineyards and orchards.

It's all about weather, water, wine — plus lots of fun, golf and its close vicinity to home.

No wonder the Okanagan has become a beacon for recreation and investment purchases.

Part of the Thompson/Okanagan area of B.C., the Okanagan valley has been and continues to be a destination for those interested in the finer things in life.

The average amount of sunshine per year in the area is more than 2,000 hours.

Frost-free days number anywhere from 120 to 175, depending on the location, and the average maximum temperature in summer is 28.4 C. and -8.8 C. in winter.

The Herald's Recreation and Investment Properties section editor and writers travelled to the Okanagan to check out what's new in vacation properties and pre-retirement investments in the area. This is the second in a series of reports on what's hot in Calgary's favourite playground.

Today, Osoyoos — weather, weather, weather (and wine and water).



Courtesy, Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa

Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa in the Okanagan Valley is adjacent to the renowned Nk'Mip Cellars and Winery.

SPIRIT: Resort rated four stars

It's owned and operated by the Osoyoos First Nation.

It's also adjacent to the newly-opened Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, which enriches the cultural experience of the visitors and owners of property in Spirit Ridge, and it, too, is owned and operated by the Osoyoos First Nation.

Spirit Ridge is also adjacent to the nine-hole Sonora Dunes Golf Course, which provides a challenging desert location for testing golf skills almost year-round.

It doesn't get much better than that.

But Spirit Ridge has its own treasures that make it a unique experience.

It's not only operated by the well-known and respected Bellstar Hotels and Resorts based in Calgary, it is being developed by Bellstar as well.

Bellstar, too, is in partnership with the Osoyoos First Nation.

Spirit Ridge is a condo resort that has a four-star rating, one of only nine in B.C.

Opened in 2005, the first phase contained 94 units which are now built. All were sold as either full or fractional ownership.

Among the amenities available to owners are a restaurant, the Sonora Desert Spa, an outdoor pool and hot tub, fitness facilities, concierge services and a rental program.

Each condo offers a fully-equipped kitchen, separate bedroom (or bedrooms), a dining room, living room, washer and dryer, and a spacious balcony with a barbecue and views of the vineyards, golf course and/or lake.

An additional 132 units were sold as of August and the first building of that phase is now under construction.

These units were also sold again as full or fractional ownership, with those at full own-

ership priced from \$239,000 to \$675,000, and fractional from \$69,900 for quarter ownership.

"Buyers so far have primarily been boomers who have five to 15 years to retirement," says Curt Jansen, real estate sales manager for the resort. "They want to get into the real estate market to secure a lifestyle asset for retirement."

He estimates that more than one-third of the buyers are from Calgary, with 40 to 45 per cent from Vancouver and the remainder from Edmonton.

"Some have even come from the Napa Valley, San Francisco, Washington and Houston," says Jansen.

Pre-sales for the third phase will start next spring, and while details aren't yet firm, that phase may include some type of private residents' club.

The town, says Jansen, "is progressive. They won't stop development."

Even so, with the many vineyards, the lake, the U.S. border directly south, and the mountainous terrain, the geography will limit the population, ensuring the area retains its small-town flavour, he says.

The next phase will be a mix of one- to three-bedroom plans with units of a larger size than those currently in the development.

They will have larger balconies and be fully furnished.

Five buildings will be built, each aligned to maximize views — and there will be high-end villas with lake views.

"The overall resort has a combination of facilities that are appealing, from an RV park at lake level, to the golf and winery," says Mohamed Awad, general manager of Spirit

OKANAGAN DREAMING

Last of a five-part series

■ 'Napa North' enjoyed in all four seasons

■ Town in Canada's only desert

■ Village project honours grape

■ Golfers ply links in Golden Mile

K4

K4

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Calgary Herald Archive, Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort

Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa overlooks rows of grapes in the Okanagan.

Ridge. "Now we have the cultural influence with the opening of the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre. People want to learn about the culture of the Native band."

The \$9.4-million project includes an amphitheatre and mock village representing the culture of the Osoyoos First Nation.

It was opened earlier this year as an interpretive centre.

"Spirit Ridge has it all covered — what people want when they travel and retire: Wines, culture, golf and a spa."

The Sonora Desert Spa offers outdoor courtyards, nine treatment rooms, and all the facilities and services of a spa, inspired by the natural desert surroundings, says Jansen.

"The focus always has been on Mediterranean or adobe style all the way through" says Awad. "Being on the tip of the Sonoran Desert, it's a fitting theme."

A marina with 250 feet of pier and boat moorage will also be part of the resort, with



Kathy McCormick, Calgary Herald

Mohamed Awad, general manager of Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa

a licensed bistro and bar soon to come. A shuttle will transport Spirit Ridge guests and guests through the vineyards lake.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.OWNERSPIRITRIDGE.CA OR WWW.BELLSTAR.CA.