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# SENIOR

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# NK'MIP: go for the culture, stay for the wine

By Malcolm McColl

The British Columbia coastal climate this season has been undeniably difficult, rearranging the landscape of iconic tourist sites, stalling traffic on land and sea, supplying winds of 90 and 100 kilometres per hour for days, and more in a catalogue of disasters.

When one door closes another opens, however, in this case to the NK'MIP resort in Osoyoos, at the southernmost tip of the Okanagan region.

This destination resort includes a hotel and spa, golf course and RV Park developed beside the NK'MIP Cellars vineyard and winery at Osoyoos Lake,

as well as the Desert Cultural Centre unveiled in 2006.

Developed over the last few years, the cultural centre is an anchor for the facility, which is owned and operated by the Osoyoos Indian Band.

Osoyoos traditional territory includes a northern extension of the Sonora Desert, which ecologists

identify as one which is semi arid grasslands or shrub steppe habitat; locally the area is known as pocket desert.

The NK'MIP Desert Cultural Centre features rammed-earth wall construction, with layered sediment and concrete similar to the Great Wall of China. The structure presents visitors with an impressive yet unobtrusive sight in the midst of the desert surrounding Osoyoos.

The \$9 million facility has 20,000 square feet of interior space featuring a host of interactive exhibits and experiences that reveal the culture of the Osoyoos Indian Band and Okanagan people.

"The Desert Cultural Centre has an 80-seat theatre, interactive displays of Okanagan culture, an indoor pithouse, and a collection of artefacts and other antiquities, along with a slide show presentation, and an amazing green theme that runs through the entire project," says general manager Charlotte Sanders.

In winter the centre is open to visitors from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The desert trail system is open to self-guided tours in the winter, guided tours throughout



Bellstar Hotels & Resorts Archive Photo  
The NK'MIP Cellars vineyard with the town of Oliver and Lake Osoyoos in the background, viewed from the Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa.

spring, summer, and fall.

NK'MIP Cellars, the only First Nation winery in North America, has a restaurant with stunning views and a gift shop.

The four-star Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa and the Sonora Dunes Golf Course (which is closed during winter) are close by. So is the NK'MIP RV Park and Campground, which during the summer offers an unusual form of accommodation – yurts, round portable dwellings native to the steppes of Mongolia.

For further information visit [www.nkmip.com](http://www.nkmip.com) or call 1-888-966-5647.

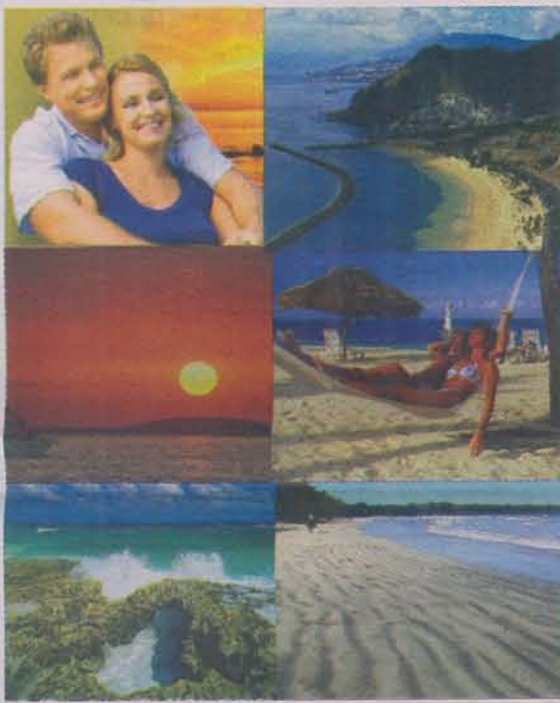


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### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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the owners. We drove past rice fields, up into the mountains to visit a ranch, where we sampled sugar cane, cacao, roasted coffee, mango, and mamajuana. Mamajuana, an herb, is bottled with honey, wine and rum, and is reputed to be good for all ailments but especially useful as an aphrodisiac.

Before returning to our resort we visited a local beach to surf, swim, and relax. Vendors set up small markets displaying crafts, art, cigars and jewellery with amber and larimar. The amber, found only in the northwest area of the country, is available in yellow, honey, orange, red, blue and green colours. Larimar, a blue gem of volcanic origin, is found only in the Dominican Republic. Also available are excursions to La Romana, where you can visit Los Altos de Chavon, a replica of a Tuscan hillside village. It was opened by Frank Sinatra in 1982, and well known musicians and stars vacation here and perform in the 5,000 seat open-air amphitheatre. Excellent golf courses are nearby.

You can board a speedboat and continue on to Isla Saona, an uninhabited island that is a national park. Enjoy a typical Dominican lunch buffet and an afternoon at the beach. Return to shore by catamaran, with music and dancing.

If you are in the Dominican Republic for three weeks, you may want to spend your third week at Puerto Plata on the Atlantic coast. The beach has

golden sand, coral reefs and views of high rising mountains.

From our resort there we drove to Sousa, a popular beachfront village, and toured condo developments located right on the beach. For around \$155,000 you can buy a new, beautiful, 1,026-square-foot condo facing the ocean. The countryside here is different from that around Punta Cana, with hills and lush valleys. Red poinsettias bloom along the road.

We also toured the Ocean World Adventure Park, a first class operation, where you can swim with the dolphins. Later you could have fun and make some money at the Casino.

We found the Dominicans to be a nice, happy people, hard-working, hospitable and anxious to please. They love their family, music, dancing and partying.

There is much to see and do in the Dominican Republic. After three weeks there we want to go back, next time during the whale watching season. During January to March approximately 12,000 humpback whales arrive in the Samana Peninsula to mate and give birth. Nearby on the north coast is Las Terrenas, a fishing village with a relaxed atmosphere and beautiful beaches, guesthouses and restaurants for independent travelers. Paradise means different things to different people. For some people it is a vacation spot in the winter; for others, finding a great investment, retirement or vacation home in the sun. We found our vacation paradise. We agree with Columbus – it is one of the most beautiful places we have seen.