

Wine-country hotspots: where to go this fall

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# South Okanagan

The only Canadian spot to crack Frommer's Top Ten Destinations for 2007, the Okanagan Valley just gets hotter the further south you go—both temperature- and buzz-wise. Here's a rundown on what's new and notable.



Sip: Laughing Stock Winery in Naramata has a fun stock exchange backstory.

THE SOUTH OKANAGAN'S BIG REDS (and rieslings to melt a red wine drinker's cholesterol-free heart) are some of the most exciting wines in Canada right now. Its smoky rosés and uncaked chardonnays are spot-on with international wine trends too—as are the “by appointment only” tastings we've noticed at many boutique wineries. At last, dining options are catching up with the high-quality wines as chefs migrate from cities to vineyards. And new winery guesthouses and resorts mean that vino-tourists can finally visit in style.

## Naramata Bench

**Sip** Naramata is the once-sleepy summer village that has exploded with 20-some wineries. New-school winery names with amusing backstories (check out Laughing



Stay: The Naramata Heritage Inn and Spa.

Stock, Therapy and Black Widow) are taking centrestage in this micro-region. But it's Joie winery—French for “joy”—that is putting Naramata on the global wine map. Get on next year's order list, as the 2006 vintage is already sold out.

**Eat** The patio at Lake Breeze is the place to refuel. Chef Cecilia Di Minchella's Mediterranean-inspired menus pair beautifully with Lake Breeze's elegant wines. Just down the road, Poplar Grove's incredible handmade cheeses, made on-site at the winery, have built a cult following.

**Stay** At the end of the day, crack a bottle of Pink Freud (a rosé, of course) or Super Ego (a big, bordeaux-style meritage blend) on a private patio overlooking vineyards and the lake at the two-room Therapy Vineyards & Guesthouse. For a slice of village life (with an Aveda spa!), stay at the Naramata Heritage Inn & Spa. The inn's excellent Cobblestone Wine Bar and Restaurant is your best bet to sample some of the valley's hardest-to-find wines, many of which are served by the glass.

## Penticton to Okanagan Falls

**Eat** Filling a sizable gastronomic gap in the Penticton area, Joy Road Catering

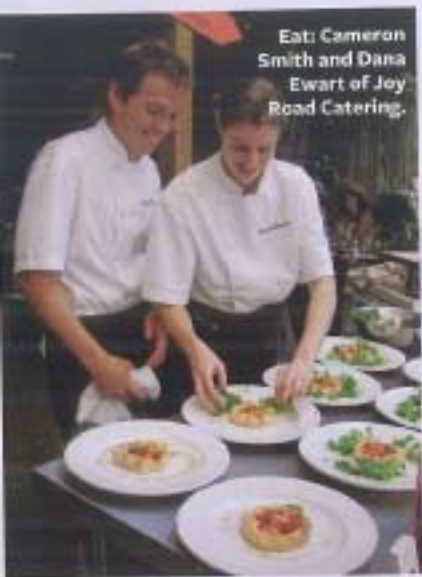
hit the ground running this summer with customized wine dinners for you and your 28 best friends, served right at your B & B. The Montreal- and Toronto-trained Joy Road duo of Cameron Smith and Dana Ewart offered a prix fixe, alfresco Sunday Night Dinner in a Vineyard this summer at God's Mountain Estate B & B, on the bluffs overlooking Skaha Lake. Nature throws in salmon-coloured sunsets as a bonus; reservations have been a must since the dinners started.

**Sip** Like Blue Mountain winery before them, Pentâge and Wild Goose are making the east side of Skaha Lake a discerning wine-drinker's destination. Pentâge doesn't even offer tastings by appointment, just sales. Wild Goose, however, is very wine-tourist friendly with a tasting room and licensed patio picnic area.

**Stay** Lake views, as amazing as they are, are a dime a dozen in the Okanagan. Those who want luxury, serenity and privacy head to Deer Path Lookout. High up in the hills south of Penticton and Kaleden, pine and sage-scented air, incredible desert mountain views, spacious desert-chic interiors and gourmet breakfasts make this the valley's only 4 1/2-star bed & breakfast inn.

## RADAR TRAVEL

Eat: Cameron Smith and Dana Ewart of Joy Road Catering.



### Oliver and Osoyoos

Stay and Sip Oliver is the self-proclaimed Wine Capital of Canada, and with the multi-million-dollar, Bellstar-backed Oliver Wine Village coming in the next few years, it may just live up to its hype.

But in the here and now, Le Vieux Pin winery and resort is making waves. Tastings are by appointment only and small batches keep quality sky-high. From the full-disclosure labelling on each bottle, organic and sustainable management of the vines and exclusive accommodations planned for this and the two other upcoming boutique wineries (Lastella and Selóna), winemaker Daniel Bontorin and his business partners display a contagiously idealistic commitment to becoming world class.

Stay and Eat Passatempo at Spirit Ridge in Osoyoos has become the place to dine for Brad Lazarenko's contemporary bistro fare and the wine bar's hip, modern vibe. The new Sonora Desert Spa is one more reason to make this your base.

Just up the road, chef Bernard Casavant relocated from Whistler to run the Sonora Room at Burrowing Owl, also home to a new guesthouse that cozes wine-country luxe. The 10 rooms have decks overlooking vineyards and a 25-metre outdoor pool; the Meritage Suite has a gourmet kitchen and its own private elevator and sundecks. Nearby Hester Creek winery will also open guest suites at the Villa at Hester Creek this fall. **wl**

## Go Now

**Okanagan Fall Wine Festival** September 28 to October 7, [owfs.com](http://owfs.com).

**Wine Information Centre** 553 Railway St., Penticton, 250-490-2006, [bcwineinfocentre.com](http://bcwineinfocentre.com).

**Penticton & Wine Country Tourism** 250-493-4055 or 1-800-663-5052, [penticton.ca/tourism](http://penticton.ca/tourism).

**Naramata Bench Wineries Association** [naramatabench.com](http://naramatabench.com).

**Sip • Black Widow Winery** 1630 Naramata Rd., Naramata, 250-487-2347, [blackwidowwinery.com](http://blackwidowwinery.com).

• **Jole** 2825 Naramata Rd., Naramata, 1-866-422-5643, [jole.ca](http://jole.ca).

• **Blue Mountain** Okanagan Falls, 250-497-8244, [bluemountainwinery.com](http://bluemountainwinery.com).

• **Lastella and Selóna wineries** opening 2009 and 2010. [enotecca.ca/wineries](http://enotecca.ca/wineries).

• **Laughing Stock** 1548 Naramata Rd., Naramata, 250-493-8466, [laughingstock.ca](http://laughingstock.ca).

• **Pentâge Winery** 4400 Lakeside Rd., Penticton, 250-493-4008, [pentage.com](http://pentage.com).

• **Le Vieux Pin** 34070 73rd St. and Black Sage Rd., Oliver, 250-498-8388, [levieuxpin.ca](http://levieuxpin.ca).

• **Wild Goose Vineyards** 2145 Sun Valley Way, Okanagan Falls, 250-497-8919, [wildgoosewinery.com](http://wildgoosewinery.com).

**Eat • Joy Road Catering** 250-493-8657, [joyroadcatering.com](http://joyroadcatering.com).

• **Lake Breeze Vineyards and The Patio** 930 Sammet Rd., Naramata, 250-496-9619, [lakebreeze.ca](http://lakebreeze.ca).

• **Passatempo at Spirit Ridge (Nk'Mip Resort)** 1200 Rancher Creek Rd., Osoyoos, 250-495-8007, 877-313-9463, [nkwinip.com](http://nkwinip.com).

• **Poplar Grove Cheese and Winery** 1060 Poplar Grove Rd., 250-493-9463, 250-492-4575.

**Stay • Burrowing Owl Estate Winery, Guest House and Sonora Room** 100 Burrowing Owl Pl. off Black Sage Bench Rd., Oliver, 250-498-0620, [bcwine.ca](http://bcwine.ca).

• **Deer Path Lookout** 150 Saddlehorn Dr., Kaleden, 1-877-497-8599, [deerpathlookout.bc.ca](http://deerpathlookout.bc.ca).

• **Hester Creek Estate Winery and the Villa at Hester Creek** 13163 326th Ave., Oliver, 250-498-4435, [hestercreek.com](http://hestercreek.com).

• **Naramata Heritage Inn & Spa** 3625 First St., Naramata, 1-866-617-1188, [naramatainn.com](http://naramatainn.com).

• **Oliver Wine Village**, [oliverwinevillage.com](http://oliverwinevillage.com).

• **Therapy Vineyards and Guesthouse** 940 Debeck Rd., Naramata, 250-498-5217, [therapyvineyards.com](http://therapyvineyards.com).

*Always call before visiting as winery and tasting room hours vary by season.*