

by Shelley Wood

Years before I moved to the Okanagan, I came here camping as a child with my brother, my mom and another family—kids crammed in pup tents while the mothers slept in the relative luxury of a VW van. For the first few years we headed to Summerland, but by the time I was 10 we'd discovered Osoyoos and every year thereafter the road trip always ended at a campsite on the banks of Osoyoos Lake in the height of cherry season.

Now that I live in the Okanagan, I tend to travel further afield for vacations and work, usually by plane, not car. And I have a different kind of family than the one I grew up in: my husband and I are DIODs—dual income, one dog. And while my human partner can join me on my international jaunts, my other family member cannot.

Over the years, we've gone on road trips with the dog but these have inevitably involved camping—and tenting with a pampered pooch accustomed to indoor living has its drawbacks. For one, from a dog's perspective, the floor of a tent seems little different from a >>>



PET-FRIENDLY OSOYOOS RATES TWO PAWS UP

Road tripping with Rover doesn't have to mean sleepless nights in a dog-breath tent. Osoyoos offers canines posh accommodation, doggie trails and beaches, plus pet-friendly wineries to sniff out en route



MORE THAN 15 HOTELS AND MOTELS IN OSOYOOS WELCOME DOGS, BUT IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO SPLASH OUT, SPIRIT RIDGE RESORT AND SPA OFFERS FIRST-CLASS ACCOMMODATION FOR BOTH PEOPLE AND PUPS, PLUS PLENTY OF NEARBY TRAILS

DON'T MISS

A highlight of our visit to Osoyoos, both for humans and dog, was the International Hiking and Biking trail, more than 18 kilometres of mixed paved and gravel trail running along the Okanagan River between Osoyoos and Oliver. We left our car in the parking area on road 22 just north of Osoyoos and headed upstream along the river for several kilometres before switching to the opposite bank and making our way back to the car. The grade is imperceptible, making for a leisurely pedal and plenty of photo opportunities while the dog tripped along beside us. For the dedicated wine aficionado, the hiking/biking trail intersects with roads that run onto the Black Sage bench. If you don't mind tackling some short hills, you can interrupt your walk or ride with visits to the handful of wineries on the bench.

massive, canopied dog basket with built-in, human-shaped, hot-water bottles. For another, no matter how carefully we position the zippers and fly, dog breath seems to produce condensation in a form and quantity that the venting simply can't keep up with. My dog sleeps like royalty when we camp; my husband and I scarcely sleep at all.

This year we set out to discover whether it's possible to road trip with Rover, or in our case, Sage, without roughing it in a tent. Our criteria were as follows: classy, canine-friendly accommodation, good food, trails to hike or bike where we could tire out the dog, and ideally a winery or two along the way. With fond memories of my childhood road trips to Osoyoos, I called the tourist office and asked: how does Osoyoos feel about dogs? The

PHOTO BY TYLER DYCK



HAYNES POINT PROVINCIAL PARK PROVIDES CAMPING, SWIMMING AND STROLLING FOR HUMANS PLUS AN OFF-LEASH BEACH FOR POOCHES. BLISS

answer: four-legged visitors welcome.

We set off on a blustery spring day, sunshine wrestling the rain clouds for real estate in the sky. Sage, after dolefully watching us pack up our suitcase, perked up when he saw his bed, food, bowl and leash also being loaded into the car.

We headed south on Hwy 97 making the obligatory stops at vineyards along the way, we met many a winery dog, dozing on doorsteps or overseeing the tasting rooms. Several wineries even had the “Winery Dogs of BC” poster, published in 2007 and featuring purebred pooches and amiable mutts from more than 20 Okanagan wineries.

In keeping with the doggy theme of our getaway, we made a pit stop at See-Ya-Later Ranch, a winery which apart from making excellent wines has earned a reputation for being not just dog-friendly, but a celebration of everything canine. The wine labels feature a dog with angel’s wings and part of the winery grounds are still devoted to the tiny canine cemetery, complete with headstones, where the former owner buried his favourite pets. During the fall wine festival, See-Ya-Later hosts its annual “Dog Days of Summer” when dogs are specifically invited to accompany their humans to an afternoon of dog snacks, photo shoots and agility tricks, with proceeds donated to the SPCA.

Several other wineries in the Osoyoos vicinity also made it clear that they were dog-friendly establishments, with several offering shaded outdoor “barking lots” and water bowls—a gentle reminder to visitors not to leave

OSOYOOS LAKE EXTENDS ACROSS THE CANADA-US BORDER; HAYNES POINT PROVIDES A VIEW TOWARDS OUR SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURS ON ONE SIDE, AND THE TOWN OF OSOYOOS FROM THE OTHER





THE INTERNATIONAL HIKING AND BIKING TRAIL PROVIDES A SCENIC EXERCISE OPPORTUNITY, PLUS THE OPTION OF LINKING TOGETHER SOME NEARBY WINERIES



IF YOU GO...

For humans, the best time to visit Osoyoos is summer when the fruit is in full season and the days are long and dry. For dogs, the shoulder seasons are even better. During June, July and August, dogs are prohibited from entering some of the parks and walkways, but the rest of the year, dogs are permitted “under owner’s control” in public spaces and parks. Of the 15 hotels and motels that permit pets — the Osoyoos Visitor’s Bureau can provide a list — several only welcome dogs during the off-season.

their furry friends in their cars in the sizzling heat of Canada’s only desert. Indeed, at Burrowing Owl, just outside Osoyoos, the woman filling our tasting glasses insisted we bring Sage in from the car so he could lounge on the cool stone floor while we debated the merits of the 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon versus the Meritage.

By the time we actually made it to downtown Osoyoos, Sage, with a lot of loud sighing and har-rumphing in the back seat was making it clear he’d had enough car time. Our first stop was Haynes Point, two kilometres south of downtown Osoyoos, to let him out for a walk and a swim. One of my favourite places as a child, Haynes Point is a provincial park situated on a slim arrow of land jutting almost the width of Osoyoos Lake. We’ve camped with Sage here before, but he strained gleefully on his lead as if he was discovering the New World until we got him

PHOTO BY TYLER DYCK

to the dog-beach — Osoyoos's only off-leash beach — where he happily chased sticks and stones until we coaxed him back onto land.

The next few hours were spent poking around the short but charming main street of downtown Osoyoos where Sage snuffled the scents of previous dog visits. Dog-friendly stores are identified by stickers in the window: the Home Hardware, located on Main Street has been operating in the same Osoyoos building since 1942, and invites dogs to come in for a drink and complimentary biscuit.

Just around the corner, Darlene's Pooch Parlour offers baths, cuts, grooming and primping — not a bad idea if your dog, like ours, might get muddy on the trails before you reach your hotel (booking in advance is advisable). Signposts up and down the main street are also equipped with poop-bag dispensers in case your dog decides to do his business in the business district.

By mid-afternoon we were making our way to Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa, developed in partnership with the Osoyoos Indian Band. First opened in 2006, the condo-style accommodation also boasts a golf course, spa, Nk'Mip Desert and Cultural Centre, the Passatempo restaurant where we had a delicious dinner that night, Nk'Mip winery and tasting room and, best of all, permits pets.

Upon check-in, the humans are provided with information about the resort and amenities, while dogs are given a loot bag complete with locally produced dog treats, "pick-up" bags, and a map of local area dog-friendly beaches and trails.

It was, in a way, a coming-full-circle for me. The Nk'Mip property also includes a campground and RV park and while it has changed beyond recognition over the years, it is the same campground I used to visit as a girl, stuffing myself with cherries and lounging on the banks of the lake. **OL**

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