

## Excerpt from: On the road to spring

**Whether you want to loop some loops or drive straight there, you can't beat B.C. as a place to begin a road trip.**

By Paul and Lorie Bennett, Canwest News Service (Canada.com; and Vancouver Sun)  
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Whether winter has been mild or wild on the west coast, the first snowdrops are happy harbingers of spring. The sight of these tiny white buds popping out of wet or snowy ground primes wanderlust, an urge to seek places new or unfamiliar.

With this in mind, we let our memories do some roving through pleasant spring trips of the past, and our fingers do some walking through the aisles of Google to investigate possibilities for the future.

And so we present itineraries for several long-weekend trips from Vancouver, offering a choice of loops to loop on a couple of them. Readers outside Vancouver may join a route at any point or refashion it to their needs.

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### **4. Desert Wine Country**

Route: Hope, Princeton and Keremeos to Osoyoos.

Return on the same route or via Penticton and Merritt

Hope, 150 km east of Vancouver, is a former Hudson's Bay fort and gold rush town whose story can be found at the Hope Museum. Boasting to be Canada's chainsaw carving capital, it sports two dozen large wooden wildlife sculptures downtown. The Home Restaurant on the Old Hope-Princeton Way is our favourite for its, yup, down-home cooking and friendly atmosphere.

Heading east, Manning Provincial Park's diverse ecology offers year-round recreational opportunities and a full-service resort. [www.manningpark.com](http://www.manningpark.com)

Princeton and Keremeos are agricultural communities in the Similkameen Valley with quaint downtowns worth exploring. Keremeos has one of the few operating grist mills in North America, a water-driven flour mill built in 1877.

The historic Mascot Mine in Hedley opens for its spectacular tours in May, but meantime if you look up, way up, you might spot some of its buildings clinging to the mountainside.

[www.mascotmine.com](http://www.mascotmine.com)

Osoyoos, surrounded by golf courses, orchards and vineyards, is growing as a retirement community. It's billed as Desert Wine Country, with one of the only deserts in Canada, the lowest rainfall, the highest temperatures, and the warmest lakes.

We choose to stay at the Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort, operated by Bellstar Properties on reserve land leased from the enterprising Osoyoos First Nation.

Nk'Mip Cellars, in a spectacular building overlooking the lake and vineyards, offers tastings, food and wine sales. The regional menu inspires exploration of Nk'Mip's signature Chardonnay and Merlot wines. [www.spiritrIDGE.ca](http://www.spiritrIDGE.ca)

The adjoining nine-hole Sonora Dunes Golf Course boasts challenging terrain. Hazards include ball-gulping gopher holes and rattler-infested roughs. [www.sonoradunes.com](http://www.sonoradunes.com)

The Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre's concrete rammed-earth walls echo the layers of the land. Here history meets science. Discover fascinating facts about the desert and share in the rich living culture of the Okanagan people. [www.nkmipdesert.com](http://www.nkmipdesert.com)

The Toasted Oak Wine Bar, Grill and extensively-stocked VQA wine store in Oliver, 21 km north of Osoyoos, is worth a stop if you're heading home through Penticton, or a short side-trip if you're not. [www.winecountry-canada.com](http://www.winecountry-canada.com)

*Useful websites:*

B.C. Tourism: [www.hellobc.com](http://www.hellobc.com)

B.C. Highways: [www.drivebc.com](http://www.drivebc.com)