

PROJECT PROFILE

At this desert address, thirst is never a worry

Spirit Ridge fractional residences in Osoyoos lie next door to Nk'Mip Cellars winery

Spirit Ridge Residence Club

Project location: Osoyoos
Project size: 40 units
Residence size: 1 — 3 bed, 1,045 sq. ft. — 1,670 sq. ft.
Prices: fractional ownerships from approximately \$80,000 (1/8 share) — \$489,000 (whole share) and up
Sales centre: At Spirit Ridge Resort and Spa, 1200 Rancher Road
Hours: 10 a.m. — 4 p.m. daily
Telephone: 250-495-5445 or 1-877-313-9463 (toll-free)
E-mail: curtj@spiritoridge.ca
Web: ownspiritoridge.ca
Developer/design: Bellstar Hotels & Resorts
Occupancy: Projected spring 2012

BY CHRISTINA SYMONS

Waking up in the desert next to an Okanagan winery has obvious allure, especially if you own the lodgings you're sleeping in. After all, what could be sexier than securing an address in B.C.'s hip desert wine country?

The 4.5-star Spirit Ridge Residence Club in Osoyoos is adjacent to Nk'Mip Cellars, one of Canada's most successful and progressive wineries. And that proximity to the vineyard is a signature selling proposition.

Imagine shaking off an afternoon nap and strolling to Nk'Mip for a tasting, then retiring to the adjoining terrace to enjoy a glass before catching dinner at Spirit Ridge Resort & Spa's superb Passa Tempo restaurant later in the eve.

» CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



You could then simply hit the hot tub, or meander through the vineyard to the beach for a nightcap at the Thirsty Turtle bar. And all this without technically leaving your address!

As an owner at Spirit Ridge Residence Club, there's further proof that lifestyle, like real estate, is fundamentally a matter of location. In this case, your southwest-styled abode is tucked neatly on a rolling hill in Canada's only pocket desert, pleasantly tempered by the breeze and the lush surroundings.

With average temperatures nearing 34 C the week I visit, Curt Jansen, director of real estate, Spirit Ridge Residence Club is unflinching in his pitch.

"I would make the claim that this is the hottest property in Canada," Jansen asserts with a smile. He means it — both literally and figuratively. By 10 a.m., things are indeed heating up. The pool is already hopping as cheerful guests and residents pass by to pick up their mid-morning cappuccinos at the on-site market café.

Others get in a workout at the fitness studio, book a massage at the Sonora Desert Spa or consider a late afternoon tee-off on the adjoining golf course. That jovial resort atmosphere, exotic locale and temperature first attracted Vancouverites Terri Moore and Ricardo Urtusastegui to buy a half-share unit in Phase II at Spirit Ridge. Phase III will offer opportunities as accessible as one-eighth share and up, with a limited number of full-ownership villa-style units, too.

"Funally enough, we're not serious wine drinkers," says Moore, who says that instead, they were smitten by the resort for its phenomenal amenities, food, vantage and the feeling that they were in another world, only four hours from Vancouver.

Both are professionals, and Urtusastegui says the presale transaction, surprisingly, exceeded his expectations. "I was a bit nervous about buying our unit before it was built, but in the end, absolutely nothing was misrepresented," he says, noting that the quality of the resort, care of management, weather, setting and community keep him delighted. "Everything turned out to be amazing."

In terms of investment, the couple likes having the ability to participate in the optional rental pool when they are not using their vacation home. With the potential for return based on guest usage combined with potential appreciation of the property, they feel fractional ownership is an attractive option. Phase III owners will have an undivided fractional interest in both their unit(s), and the club and the resort as a whole.

Set on the hill overlooking the public Sonora Dunes Golf course, resort and vineyards, the new Spirit Ridge Residence Club will have exclusive amenities, as well as perks from Phase I and Phase II, offering full access to the existing resort, grounds and facilities including the lakefront beach and marina. Ownership in the club also provides access to the elite Preferred Residences of the World, a consortium of luxury holiday properties via a property exchange program.

"Our buyers include a spectrum of people who want a concierge-quality vacation, from families, to couples and baby boomers," says Jansen, noting that most purchasers come from Vancouver, Calgary or Edmonton. Because of the rising awareness of the Okanagan's wine industry, international interest is also increasing, he adds.

At the club, one-, two- and three-bedroom open-plan bungalows run from 1,045, 1,380 and 1,670 square feet,

and offer wide-open lake views flanking the golf course, mountain and desert.

"Our views encompass everything in the valley, from one end of Osoyoos Lake to the other," says Jansen.

Large, entertainment-styled kitchens feature granite surfaces and hardwood cabinetry, plus stainless steel appliances.

Unique folding glass walls to the outdoor living space provide a seamless integration between indoors and out, where there's a convenient grilling station and relaxing fireplace.

All units come fully kitted out, including posh patio furnishings, large flat-screen TV and theatre system. Bedrooms are generous, each with romantic outdoor decks or patios accessed via french doors, with comfy beds replete with linens and pillows. Masters have a jetted tub, stand-alone shower and separate European-style toilet.

They're designed to be luxurious and exotic, without being fussy or overstated, says Jansen, a vibe that is also reflected in the burgeoning local community.

The town of Osoyoos, once a harbinger of 50's-style motel vacations, is stepping things up; there are plans to enhance its lakeside character by adding more quaint shops and bistros alongside the new world-class resorts and convention facilities.

Jansen, who came to Osoyoos from Edmonton with his family six years ago, says life in wine country couldn't get any better in terms of the climate, lifestyle and cuisine.

Iris Hart, the new club's sales associate, who also happens to be an owner at Spirit Ridge, describes the benefits of desert living even more succinctly.

"It's sanctuary!"

Special to The Sun



The living room with breathtaking vista will be located above the bedroom, which will show a patio beyond french doors.

PROJECT PROFILE: FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

