

GETAWAYS

Five cool things to do in Osoyoos, one hot place to be this summer

Ask around: Osoyoos is hot among those seeking a great getaway this summer, within a few hours of home.

Tom ZILLICH
Staff Reporter

It seems like half of the Lower Mainland is driving (or has driven) there for some fun in the sun of Canada's only desert region.

A recent trip there inspired me to compile a list of Five Cool Things to do in Osoyoos:

Take a dip at Spirit Ridge

The palatial resort is a treat at any time of the year, but summers are now much more fun with the opening of a large new pool at Spirit Ridge. For kids, the cool new water slide is a blast; for adults, poolside beverage service makes for a Vegas-like experience. Cabanas give shade, but for the ultimate cool-down time, head indoors and book a massage at the resort's spa. Info: www.spiritridge.ca.

Have lunch at Nk'Mip Cellars

A delightful misting system keeps diners comfortable at this hillside retreat, located on the east side of the lake. The state-of-the-art winery is open for tastings, tours and special events; its outdoor patio is open from May through October for Aboriginal-inspired cuisine. For lunch, order an entrée of grilled bison flat-iron steak with five-herb corn bread and grilled vegetables – best nibbled with a chilled glass of the winery's own Qwam Qwmt pinot noir. Info: www.nkmipcellars.com.

Hit the golf course at Sonora Dunes

A great nine-hole, par-35 course, Sonora Dunes is challenging enough for experienced golfers and not too demanding for the holidaying hitter. No matter the skill level, views are breathtaking for all players as they climb toward the eighth and ninth tee boxes. And yeah, it's best to rent a power cart for this hilly (and often very hot) course. Post-round drinks are best served frosty at the licensed clubhouse, with outdoor patio; tell GM Tammy Thompson I told ya so. Info: www.sonoradunes.com.

Slither over to Rattlesnake Canyon

The mining town-themed amusement park on Main Street has been a source of fun since it opened in 1998. There's a mini-golf course, a go-kart track, and plenty of rides, but the best way to keep cool here is by choosing one of the 48 ice cream flavours at the parlour located in the windmill. Info: www.rattlesnakecanyon.ca.

Beach it at Desert Shores

Boat rentals are big at Desert Shores, at Nk'Mip RV Park at the bottom of Rancher Creek Road, leading to the winery. Kayaks and canoes are available, as are motorized watercraft, wakeboards, bikes and scooters (what a hoot). Also near the dock here is a welcome new casual bistro that looks like something lifted from a beach in the Caribbean. Info: 250-495-1208.

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Make a splash with a party at Tsawwassen's water park

There's plenty of time to cool down this summer at Splashdown Park, the water slides in Tsawwassen.

It's a great place to stage a birthday party (or any party, for that matter), until the second week of September.

The "birthday party package" rate is \$109, plus GST, for a group of four kids and one adult. The fee includes lunch and cake in a reserved area of the giant park, plus goodie bags, balloons and use of all slides, including the wild "Black Hole." Another option (perhaps for next summer) is to buy a season pass. It's \$329.99 for a family of four – not unreasonable given the cost of day camps and childcare elsewhere. Details at www.splashdownpark.ca, or dial 604-943-2251.

– Tom Zillich



In Osoyoos, the cool new pool at Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa is on a hill overlooking the lake. Other attractions in the immediate area include Nk'Mip Cellars winery and the nine-hole Sonora Dunes golf course.

PHOTO/courtesy Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa

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