



## OSOYOOS, B.C.

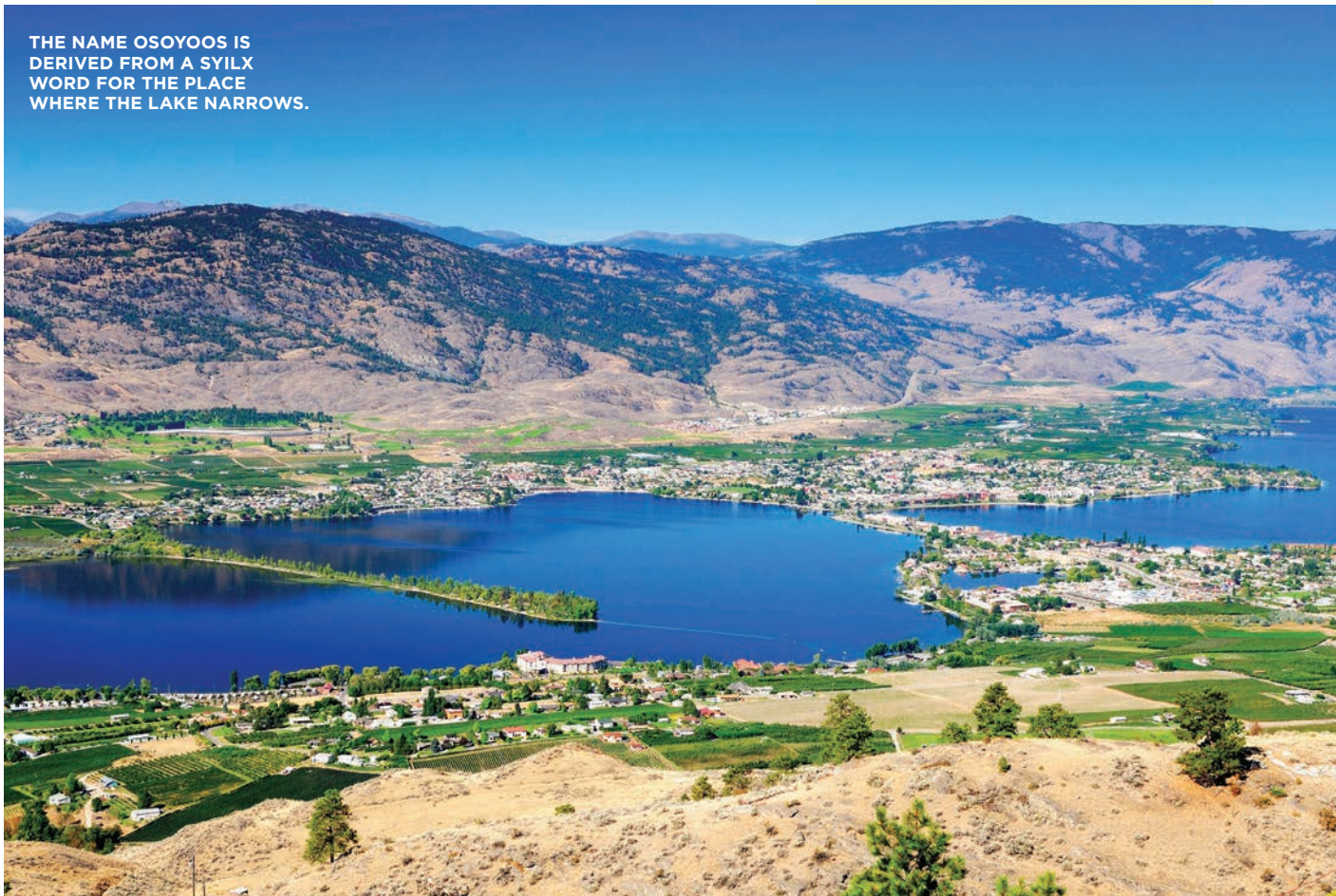
WATERSPORTS, WINERIES AND GOLF REIGN  
IN CANADA'S ONLY DESERT **BY ROB BHATT**

**F**rom a patio next to a hillside vineyard, my wife and I watch two Sea-Doos skim across the long, skinny lake below as the sun climbs high into a cloudless blue sky. A soothing New Age melody from a flute, pumped in over the sound system, lulls us into a sense of calm as we nibble on locally cured meats and cheeses. The buttery texture of brie unveils crisp apple notes in the pinot blanc that was made a few hundred yards away. These pleasing sensations, which feel like a spa treatment for our taste buds, are coming together a stone's throw north of the Washington border, on a summer road trip to Osoyoos, British Columbia.

### LAKE LIFE

At the southernmost point in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, Osoyoos sits in Canada's only desert, on the shores of its warmest lake. At 11 miles long and about a mile across at its widest point, Osoyoos Lake, which crosses into Oroville, Washington, offers a reasonable size for boating, Jet Skiing, kayaking and paddleboarding (rentals are widely available). It is just a fraction of the size of Okanagan Lake, about 35 miles to the north, and draws a fraction of the crowds that flock to Penticton, Kelowna and other towns on the larger lake's shores. Yet in its own, subdued way, Osoyoos attracts families in summer with kid-friendly lakeside resorts, and, after the youngsters go back to school, grownups savor the lingering desert warmth through fall. >>>

THE NAME OSOYOOS IS  
DERIVED FROM A SYILX  
WORD FOR THE PLACE  
WHERE THE LAKE NARROWS.



# a thriving wine scene

Over the past two decades, the Okanagan Valley has emerged as British Columbia's premier wine region, and 44 of the valley's 120 wineries are between Osoyoos and Oliver, about 12 miles north. A guided, half-day electric bicycle tour with **HEATSTROKE CYCLE & SPORT** allows us to discover the diversity of the southern valley's most-appealing varietals. In the rustic tasting room at **BARTIER BROS.** winery, for example, we detect hints of honey and peach in a gewürztraminer-chardonnay blend. At **BLACK HILLS ESTATE WINERY'S WINE EXPERIENCE CENTRE**, the luscious intensity of the signature Nota Bene blend of red Bordeaux varietals is as dazzling as the swanky setting, which includes a poolside deck that overlooks the valley. (The pool is not available for swimming.) Memorable selections at the stately **BURROWING OWL ESTATE WINERY** include a pinot gris offering hints of stone fruit, which prove refreshing on this 85-degree day, and a rich cabernet sauvignon-syrah blend. >> You should always designate a driver when wine tasting or find alternative transportation. For \$85 Canadian (\$68 U.S.), the hop-on/hop-off **OK WINE SHUTTLE** provides service from Osoyoos' major resorts to 15 wineries. (Some wineries charge an additional tasting fee.)



E-BIKES AND TRANSPORTATION WITH HEATSTROKE CYCLE.



## THE CALL OF FAIRWAYS

The Okanagan Valley is also one of British Columbia's most popular golf destinations, and a favorable exchange rate makes greens fees more affordable. In the foothills on the west side of town, **OSOYOOS GOLF CLUB** offers two distinct 18-hole layouts: the tree-lined **PARK MEADOWS** and the target-style **Desert Gold**. In Oliver, **FAIRVIEW MOUNTAIN** golf course tantalizes with its pristine, mountainside location, along with its posh clubhouse, while **NK'MIP CANYON DESERT GOLF COURSE**, also in Oliver, tests your shot-making skills on fairways and greens surrounded by shrub-steppe. Several other quality courses are located farther north.



## THE OKANAGAN LEGACY

The setting for our relaxing lunch is the bistro at **NK'MIP** (in-ka-meep) **CELLARS** winery, on the **OSOYOOS INDIAN RESERVE**, which stretches up a hillside from the lake's eastern shore. Afterward, we walk past the adobe-style suites and villas of Spirit Ridge resort to the **NK'MIP DESERT CULTURAL CENTRE**, which tells the story of the Okanagan people. The building (above), which houses galleries and performance space, is a marvel in its own right, with thick, multihued concrete walls built using a modern form of rammed-earth construction. On the adjacent, mile-long interpretive loop trail, placards explain how the area's earliest inhabitants relied on shrubs and other vegetation that still grow in the area, including yarrow, antelope brush and mariposa lily, for purposes such as food or medicine. ①

### FIND 'EM

#### STAY

**Watermark Beach Resort**  
15 Park Place  
(250) 495-5500  
watermarkbeachresort.com

**Spirit Ridge**  
1200 Rancher Creek Road  
(250) 495-5445  
spiritridge.hyatt.com

**Walnut Beach Resort**  
4200 Lakeshore Drive  
(250) 495-5400  
walnutbeachresort.com

#### SAVOR

**The Lake Village Bakery**  
6511 Main St.  
(250) 495-3366  
thelakevillagebakery.ca

**The Restaurant at Watermark**  
15 Park Place  
(250) 495-5508  
watermarkbeachresort.com

**Spirit Beach Cantina**  
8000 45th St.  
(250) 689-5770  
spiritridgeresidences.com/beam-cantina

#### SIP

**Bartier Bros.**  
4821 Ryegrass Road, Oliver  
(250) 487-9667  
bartierbros.com

**Black Hills Estate Winery**  
Wine Experience Center: 4190 Black Sage Road, Oliver  
(250) 498-0666  
blackhillswinery.com

**Burrowing Owl Estate Winery**  
500 Burrowing Owl Place, Oliver  
(877) 498-0620  
burrowingowlwine.ca

**Nk'Mip Cellars**  
1400 Rancher Creek Road  
(250) 495-2985  
nkmpicellars.com

#### GOLF

**Fairview Mountain**  
933 Old Golf Course Road, Oliver  
(250) 498-6050  
fairviewmountain.com

**Nk'Mip Canyon Desert Golf Course**  
6891 Tucelnuit Drive, Oliver  
(250) 498-2880  
www.nkmipcanyon.ca

**Osoyoos Golf Club**  
12300 Golf Course Drive  
(250) 495-7003  
golfosoyoos.com

#### SEE/TOUR

**Heatstroke Cycle & Sport**  
15 Park Place  
(250) 689-5977  
heatstrokecycle.com

**Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre**  
1000 Rancher Creek Road  
(250) 495-7901  
nkmpidesert.com

**OK Wine Shuttle**  
(250) 495-3278  
okwineshuttle.ca

TOP LEFT: TWYLA CAMPBELL; LOWER LEFT: GUNTER MARX / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO