



Take a tour of Covert Farms, at the foot of McIntyre Bluff just north of Oliver, in the back of this 1952 red Mercury. PHOTO JANE MUNDY

48 Hours in Osoyoos

A culinary weekend in this hot spot includes wine, fine dining and spectacular views

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Great food and wine, scenery and sunshine without flying anywhere is my idea of a weekend getaway.

And even better, somewhere without crowds — at

my age I can barely tolerate lining up for a plane let alone wait for a flight of wine tastings while trudging from one busy winery to another. An invitation to Osoyoos was just the ticket. I was happy to discover that despite the recent fires in the region, it

was business as usual for this tourist destination.

An eye-opener

On Highway 3 just northeast of Osoyoos is Spotted Lake, known as Medicine Lake by the First Nations of the Okanagan

who own the property. It looks like another planet. Concentrated minerals make large, colourful spots on the lake. For now, park on the side of the road for photo ops — a viewing area is in the works.

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1. Spotted Lake, located on Highway 3 just northeast of Osoyoos, is known as Medicine Lake by the First Nations of the Okanagan. **2.** Many Osoyoos winery restaurants offer spectacular views, including Miradoro Restaurant at Tinhorn Creek and Terrafina at Hester Creek. **PHOTOS JANE MUNDY**

Osoyoos a true desert

Hot, hot, hot

The town of Osoyoos is one of Canada's hot spots. Yes, we really have a desert in Canada, it's the northern tip of the Sonora Desert that ends in Mexico. Speaking of which, we first stopped for sangria and excellent pulled pork tacos at Spirit Beach Cantina, located in Nk'Mip Resort, close to Spirit Ridge Resort and smack on the beach — a fun hangout to rub shoulders with the locals.

Farm to vine

This was my third stay at the Watermark Beach Resort and by far the best, thanks to chef Adair Scott's "Farm to Vine" menu where just about everything is sourced locally, from pork to peas. It also includes salmon and arctic char from the Okanagan.

Fish to farm

Yes, Okanagan sockeye salmon are back in Osoyoos Lake — and arctic

char is sustainably fished in closed containment fish farms on land. We started our seven-course menu at Watermark with "potted" salmon, which is the best canned salmon ever, but served from mason jars, followed by grilled filets of the char and sockeye. The land course included Two Rivers Organics bavette (flap) steak and in-house made pork sausages following which we blissfully waddled to bed.

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The “potted” salmon at Watermark Beach Resort is served in mason jars. PHOTO JANE MUNDY

Nk’Mip Desert Cultural Centre is a must see

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Unfortunately we didn’t have time for Watermark’s fishing experience. Throughout August you can snag a sockeye with indigenous guides and either barbecue them yourself or a chef will on the Watermark’s patio.

And new this year, book an evening tour with First Nations people on a pontoon boat — you can hop on from the Watermark’s beach.

U-pick, U-grill

Staying in? Watermark’s kitchens are fully equipped and barbecues are included with the villas and penthouses. There’s also a communal barbecue area on the pool deck with picnic tables. You can buy local fish from Codfathers in Kelowna and at Spirit

“one of the world’s best winery restaurants.” The view is as stupendous as its neighbour Terrafina at Hester Creek, which also has a decent Italian menu.

First Nations

Do take the time to visit the Nk’Mip Desert Cultural Centre, which celebrates thousands of years of Okanagan First Nations life, including a reconstructed traditional village, artifacts — and a few live rattlesnakes. Bring binoculars and stroll the observation boardwalks as birders flock here.

Wine tasting

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Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa in Osoyoos. And how about grilling U-pick organic veggies from Covert Farms, at the foot of McIntyre Bluff just north of Oliver.

Before picking, take a 60-minute farm tour of the biodynamic vineyards and vegetable fields in the back of a 1952 red Mercury (book 24 hours in advance). Kids love the wildlife and salmon viewing — and the big bouncy pillow. Back at the farm’s lounge and market, we sipped organically grown wines with a charcuterie platter, of course locally sourced and perfectly paired.

Dining

Great dining also happens at Miradoro Restaurant at Tinhorn Creek. With Chef Jeff Van Geest at the helm, Miradoro is justifiably recognized as

known for its use of interesting and rare grapes that are only grown in a small area of Osoyoos.

Backyard Farm

We had one more stop before heading home. Backyard Farm Chef’s Table was expecting us for a cooking demo and lunch. The building isn’t easy to find and there’s little signage on the funky exterior. But inside is very upscale. “We like to keep it exclusive so no one comes in expecting a sandwich or wine tasting,” quipped Van Hooydonk as he butchered arctic char like a ninja. We spent the next three hours sipping wine, eating perfect pan-seared fillets and heavenly pillows of hand-made gnocchi while learning about chef’s farm-to-table philosophy, which pervades Osoyoos. We’ll be back.