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destination + honeymoon

Craving open skies and sunshine for your big day? Osoyoos offers plenty of both –plus fabulous wine too By Kim Mah

The guarantee of Sunshine draws many a B.C. couple to Hawaii, the Caribbean and beyond for their big day. But aside from the expense and logistical headaches for the bride and groom, travelling to a far-off destination wedding can put a financial burden on guests, too. Here's an idea: why not head somewhere affordable and close to home, where sunny skies are a given? The charming lakeside Okanagan town of Osoyoos fits that bill perfectly. And bonus: You can toast your nuptials with some of B.C.'s finest wines from award-winning local vineyards.

BEACH TIME

The site of Canada's only true desert, Osoyoos's climate is dry and warm from spring through fall. But if it's a beach wedding you're after, you can feel the sand between your toes when you say "I do" at Osoyoos Lake, which happens to be the country's warmest lake.

Desert

Best option? The luxurious **Watermark Beach Resort** (*watermarkbeachresort.com*) is built right on the lakefront and offers a variety of indoor and outdoor ceremony locations (including its sandy beachfront) and venues for your reception that can accommodate up to 150 guests.

Opened in 2009, the Watermark still feels brand-new, thanks to its 153 exquisitely appointed and spotless guest suites that ensure you and your guests can while away the hours or days before and after your wedding in deluxe comfort. Lakeview suites range from studios to three-bedrooms, most with roomy patios and fully equipped gourmet kitchens for true homeaway-from-home convenience.

A meal that wows your guests is a promise at

Watermark, thanks to its emphasis on farm-fresh ingredients from local producers and its carefully chosen list of Okanagan wines. In addition, the resort's full-service **Illumination Spa** is on hand to help you and your bridal party look flawless on your big day. Plus, you can get married your way at Watermark — choose from wedding packages ranging from intimate to grand, or handpick numerous à la carte options. Whether you'd like a martini bar at your reception or a winery tour to entertain guests, the resort's numerous options allow you to create a fully customized occasion.

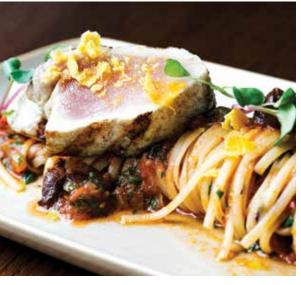
Ride through rolling vineyards and fields at Covert Farms

WINERY WEDDINGS

If you've always dreamed of a vineyard wedding, but Tuscany is out of reach, the Okanagan Valley has got you covered. The Osoyoos and neighbouring Oliver area is home to more than







(Clockwise from top) Sparkling Osoyoos Lake provides the perfect backdrop; marry in Tuscan splendour at the Italian-inspired LaStella Winery; the luxurious Watermark Beach Resort offers an inviting mix of indoor and outdoor wedding spaces; impress your foodie guests at Tinhorn Creek Winery's elegant Miradoro Restaurant.

30 wineries, many of which offer romantic wedding spaces.

For "la dolce vita" ambience, it's hard to beat the lovely **LaStella Winery** (*lastella.ca*) with its Italian-style villa, rolling vineyards and wideopen lake views. Options for a ceremony or reception include its pretty lakeside patio, expansive lawn, or the winery itself, which features Murano glass lighting and a Juliet balcony perfect for photos.

Tinhorn Creek Vineyards (*tinhorn.com*), which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, offers another popular spot to tie the knot. Offering panoramic views of the valley below, Tinhorn's outdoor amphitheatre serves as a





dramatic ceremony space, while the winery's glass-walled **Miradoro Restaurant** provides an airy and inviting reception space. On its menu, Miradoro focuses on fresh regional ingredients served with Mediterranean flair — plus, of course, selections from Tinhorn Creek's famed wines. Whichever local venue you choose for your big day, just be sure to toast your smart decision to marry in sunny, nearby Osoyoos.

»»»»»»TO DO LIST

Want to keep your guests entertained while in Osoyoos? Consider these unique options:

 ARTISAN CULINARY CONCEPTS: Former Burrowing Owl Estate Winery chef Chris Van Hooydonk has opened up his Osoyoos home for hands-on gourmet cooking (and eating!) classes focusing on farm-to-table fare — a fun option for a stagette or any lively group. artisanculinaryconcepts.com
OSOYOOS DESERT CENTRE: Slick on the sunscreen for a leisurely boardwalk stroll through this interpretive centre, with a guide sharing all you ever wanted to know about the plant and animal life of Canada's only desert.

desert.org ► COVERT FARMS: Get back to the land in a guided tour of this organic farm and vineyard, where you can ride in a vintage 1952 red Mercury truck, stopping to pick and sample everything from sun-warmed peaches to tomatoes and strawberries. covertfarms.ca

▶ JOY ROAD VINEYARD KITCHEN:

Head to Black Hills Estate Winery for a tasting and stop for a gourmet lunch. At the winery, the renowned Joy Road Catering team has installed a shipping container converted into a custom kitchen, from which it churns out impeccable lunches using the freshest local ingredients. *blackhillswinery.com*

► LANDSEA OKANAGAN TOURS &

CHARTERS: Planning a day of wine touring? Why drive, when you can relax in air-conditioned comfort in a luxury SUV, sprinter van or mini coach. Create a private custom tour, or choose from pre-set excursions ranging from tasting visits to full-day wine-and-dine packages. *landseaokanagan.com*