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A SLICE OF PARADISE RIGHT HERE IN CANADA - OSOYOOS, BC

June 6, 2017



View from Painted Rock Winery Tasting Room

It's kind of crazy for my millennial mind to get around the notion that travelling to faraway places has never been as easy as it is today. As a Canadian my ability to get up and go to another country without restriction is a luxury I fully take for granted. To give you some perspective 36% of American's hold a valid passport whereas 60% of Canadians have valid passports, making us one of the most well-travelled nations in the world! That said, it has become common place for Canadians to choose to travel abroad instead of visiting beautiful places right on home soil! Crazy right!?



Thankfully I'm here to tell you about a slice of paradise right here at home called **Osoyoos, British Columbia**. This magical place in my opinion is one of the most underrated destinations for everyone outside of BC. Osoyoos is located 5km from the US border in the interior of beautiful British Columbia and is not only one of the warmest places in Canada, but smack in the middle of BC's wine country. I was lucky enough to visit this beautiful Okanagan gem last Easter and had the time of my life attending the **Osoyoos Oyster Festival**, a yearly event to kick off their summer season.



Adding this destination to your bucket list is a must and I'm going to tell you why! Osoyoos has something for everyone. Do you like the outdoors? Cycling, biking, hiking, golfing, horseback riding, wake boarding, water skiing, fishing, boating, skiing, snowboarding, outdoor fitness classes - they have it all. People from British Columbia are some of the most outdoorsy Canadians I have ever met and they have tons of activities to get you out of your resort and into the sunshine where you can enjoy some of the most majestic views of the Okanagan Valley.

On the flip side to its many outdoorsy activities Osoyoos offers so many ways to relax. Their sandy beach, restaurants and wineries are perfect for those who want to spend the day taking it slow and sipping some great BC wines. It's actually pretty common for people living in the area to spend their days off in the summer slowly drifting down the Okanagan River Channel (located in nearby Penticton) in a tube with a bunch of friends and a cooler full of cold drinks. Now doesn't that sound like a great way to spend a weekend?!



One of the biggest draws to visiting Osoyoos is their sprawling fruit orchards and of course their wineries. The **Oliver-Osoyoos Winery Association** has 39 member wineries and in addition to the wineries there are also cideries and distilleries in the area. Exploring some wineries while in Osoyoos is a **MUST** and can easily be done thanks to organized wine tours like **Heatstroke Cycles'** electric bike "Golden Mile Wine Country Tour". This 4-5 hour leisurely tour takes you to some of the best wineries in the area where you can try some award winning wines. If you are like me and love wine make sure to grab an **Oliver Osoyoos Winery Passport** before starting your tour so you can collect stamps from each winery to possibly win a case of wine!

With great wine comes great food and Osoyoos knows how to serve up some great fare. One of my favourite restaurants in Oliver is **Miradoro** restaurant at **Tinhorn Creek Vineyards**. This restaurant not only offers great views of the South Okanagan Valley, but also mouthwatering dishes. Last time I was there during the **Osoyoos Oyster Festival** I had the best gnocchi ever! It had Oyster foam with an herb and seaweed sauce - so creative and delicious I would honestly go back just for that. If you are a foodie I definitely recommend making a reservation at **Miradoro** and trying out some of the great restaurants in the region.



With over 28 festivals happening throughout the year in Osoyoos there is always something to do. The last two years in a row I have travelled to Osoyoos to attend the **Osoyoos Oyster Festival**. In terms of variety and bang-for-your-buck two of my favourite events from the Oyster Festival include Walnut Beach Resorts 'Deep Sea Garden Party' and the 'Art of The Pearl Gala' at Spirit Ridge Resort! Both events offer a huge selection of food vendors, wineries and of course oysters! Shout out to **Codfathers Seafood Market** for supplying the festival with amazing East and West coast oysters from some of the best farms in Canada. The Walnut Beach Garden party is a fun daytime event that other than the 'Art of the Pearl Gala' seems to have the most food and wine vendors along with a good flow of oysters. I'm not someone who likes to wait in long lines so this was a huge plus for me. The 'Art of the Pearl Gala' at Spirit Ridge Resort is the big finale event for the Oyster Festival and many restaurants in the region participate and go all out creating some pretty crazy and unique dishes for this special event. If you were to go to one event during the Oyster festival the gala at Spirit Ridge would be it! I was so impressed with how many restaurants and wineries participated in the gala, you could spend hours going from station to station tasting and sipping all the delectable offerings. It also had a very good flow so you never had to wait long for food and the supply of oysters seemed endless - which as a foodie is exactly what I wanted!



Travelling to Osoyoos has never been easier thanks to Air Canada and West Jet flying into both Kelowna and Penticton airports. I flew direct out of Toronto and landed in Kelowna BC 4.5 hours later. I like to be mobile so renting a car was the easiest solution for me, but a shuttle service is available from the Kelowna airport thanks to **Let's Go Transportation**. The drive from Kelowna to Osoyoos is about 2 hours and it is one of the most beautiful drives I have ever done. The drive from Penticton to Osoyoos is approximately 1 hour. Osoyoos also offers a variety of accommodation choices to fit anyone's budget. From the beautiful and luxurious **Watermark Beach Resort** to the **Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites** to local camping sites it's easy to find a place to rest your head that also fits your budget. Whatever your lifestyle it's about time you start thinking about heading out west and exploring this beautiful country we live in.

