

Best Northwest Lake Getaways: Watermark Beach Resort

Soak up wine, sun and the stars at Watermark Beach Resort.

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 TRAVEL PACIFIC NORTHWEST



Beachtime are favorite pastimes

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Drive north of Washington's arid eastern deserts to the gorgeous transition between the state's northernmost fruit country and the Canadian Rockies and you'll find the bucolic lakeside town of Osoyoos (oh-SUE-use), British Columbia, where we made the Watermark Beach Resort our home base for a few days of wine-tasting bliss.

There's nothing glittery about the Watermark; because most of the rooms have kitchens and instant beach access, it tends to attract the family set over the jet set. But after the sun went down, and we'd returned from enjoying plates of succulent Okanagan sockeye salmon in the hotel's restaurant, we realized that it's one of the best star-watching spots on the planet. (The hotel offers stargazing lessons and excursions to nearby Mount Kobau, a favorite among astronomers.)

The 12-mile-long lake lies on the border between Washington and British Columbia, and on our first day, our goal was to ride our road bikes along its Canadian edges, while stopping to taste for ourselves why British Columbia's Okanagan Valley has a burgeoning reputation as one of the world's best wine regions. The reality is that after our first stop, at Moon Curser Vineyards (named for the men who smuggled gold across the border but were caught in the moonlight), we returned to the resort and settled into the sand at the waterfront, gazing across the glassy lake and watching people glide (or flail) on stand-up paddleboards. For dinner, we headed 11 miles north to take in the entire valley over arctic char and Tinhorn Creek Vineyards tasting flights at Miradoro, the glass-walled restaurant cantilevered high above the valley floor.

We did eventually make it back onto the bikes, and to the nearby Golden Mile region, so named because some claim its grape-growing conditions are ideal. It boasts stellar wineries such as Road 13 Vineyards, Fairview Cellars, Maverick Estate Winery and the new, uber-exclusive Checkmate Artisanal Winery. But it was that spot on the lake (OK, and the massage table at the resort's spa and the hotel's locals-only wine list) that welcomed us back each afternoon.

Insider Tip

Arrange your stay during the full moon, and sign up for a moonlight stand-up paddleboard excursion on Osoyoos Lake, during which the hotel's on-site Breathe fitness studio staff guides participants in harnessing the power of the heavens, followed by yoga on the beach, (naturally).

GETTING THERE: Watermark Beach Resort is in southern British Columbia, about a five-hour drive from Seattle via the Osoyoos border crossing.

The Coordinates

Watermark Beach Resort, Osoyoos, 15 Park Place; 888.755.3480; One-bedroom suites from CA \$329.

Moon Curser Vineyards, Osoyoos, 3628 Highway 3 E; 250.495.5161

Miradoro Restaurant, Oliver, 537 Tinhorn Creek Road; 250.498.3742

Road 13 Vineyards, Oliver, 799 Ponderosa Road; 250.498.8330

Fairview Cellars, Oliver, 989 Cellar Road; 250.498.2211

Maverick Estate Winery, Oliver, 3974 Highway 97; 778.437.3133

Checkmate Artisanal Winery, by appointment only; 250.707.2299

Heatstroke Cycle (for bike rentals), Osoyoos, 15 Park Place, Unit 225; 778.437.2453

Breathe Studio at Watermark Beach Resort, Osoyoos, 15 Park Place; 888.755.3480; Classes from \$10.