

# All About Osoyoos



## Destination Overview.

Osoyoos (pop. 5,115) is located at the southern tip of the Okanagan Valley, in the heart of British Columbia's fertile orchard and vineyard country at approximately 910 ft above sea level. Pronounced "oh-sue-use", the name Osoyoos comes from the Okanagan First Nation word for "place where two lakes meet or come together". Set in Canada's only true desert, Osoyoos boasts over 2,000 hours of sunlight annually and is home to the warmest lake in the country. Osoyoos Lake is 18 km long and straddles the Canada/U.S.A. border, with its waters extending into Washington State.

Osoyoos is located at the junction of two major highways, Hwy 3 and Hwy 97. Hwy 3, called the Crowsnest Highway, connects Osoyoos to Vancouver (4.5 hours to the west) and to southern Alberta (7.5 hours to the east). Hwy 97 is a major north/south gateway to and from the Okanagan Valley. It runs from California to Alaska.

Osoyoos is positioned at the northernmost tip of the of the Great Basin Desert, which is part of the larger Sonoran Life Zone system which extends from Mexico through the United States to the South Okanagan Valley. This unique ecological make-up means that the area is known as an antelope-brush ecosystem and is home to a wide variety of specially adapted flora and fauna that aren't found anywhere else in the world.

Agricultural land makes up a large percentage of the community. The favourable weather and soil are conducive to growing many tree-fruits, grapes, and ground-crop vegetables, with many farmers adopting organic practices. Okanagan produce is known throughout Canada – particularly cherries, apricots, peaches, apples, tomatoes, peppers and cantaloupes. The South Okanagan area between Oliver & Osoyoos grows more than 56% of the British Columbia's wine grapes. With over 40 estate wineries in a 30-km radius, the extensive selection and high quality of grapes produces some of the finest wines in North America. *Wine Spectator Magazine* recently referred to this area as the Napa of the North!

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Many people refer to Osoyoos as “Canada’s hot spot”. Summer temperatures reach 38 or 39 degrees Celsius, and occasionally 40, although there is low humidity. Winter temperatures rarely dip below zero for an extended period of time. Like most deserts, Osoyoos has a dry climate, with an average total rainfall of just 12 inches per year.

In light of the high desert environment, nearby Mt. Baldy Ski Area receives extremely high annual snowfall, allowing for four months of all-terrain winter sports. The expansion of Mt. Baldy Ski Area, 45 minutes northeast of Osoyoos, signifies a shift in focus for the region from a “fun in the sun” destination, to a multi-faceted four-season resort area. Currently offering a brand new high-speed quad chair and private on-hill accommodation, the resort area’s Master Plan calls for expanded alpine recreational offerings. These services – including additional ski lifts, increased terrain access, more resort amenities, and major new resort residential accommodations, are expected to attract year-round activity at Mt. Baldy from a wide variety of user groups.

Osoyoos is home to more than 500 businesses. The Osoyoos economy is largely driven by a combination of agriculture, tourism and secondary manufacturing. The town has traditionally been known as a summer tourism hot spot for generations of families who each year escape the cities for an affordable beach holiday featuring water sports such as swimming, motor-boating, sailing, kite-surfing, wakeboarding and parasailing. Osoyoos was recently designated a BC Resort Community, generating additional funds annually for new local projects and services which will help to expand fall, winter and spring tourism. Much progress has been made on this front in recent years, and the Osoyoos area is now coming into its own with new four-season developments and economic growth.

In recent years the community has seen exponential growth in local resort development. It has experienced an influx of new residents and has attracted doctors, nurses, teachers and entrepreneurs who now call Osoyoos home. With the addition of 525 units in 4- and 5-star resort hotel rooms, Osoyoos is now attracting a higher-yield tourists looking for a range of experiential tourism products and services. In addition to lake- and beach-related activities, visitors to Osoyoos now find luxury accommodation, a wide range of dining opportunities – including fine dining – and unique tourism products including wine-touring, golfing, agri-tourism, eco-tourism, winter recreational and sports activities, First Nations cultural exhibits, and other educational experiences.