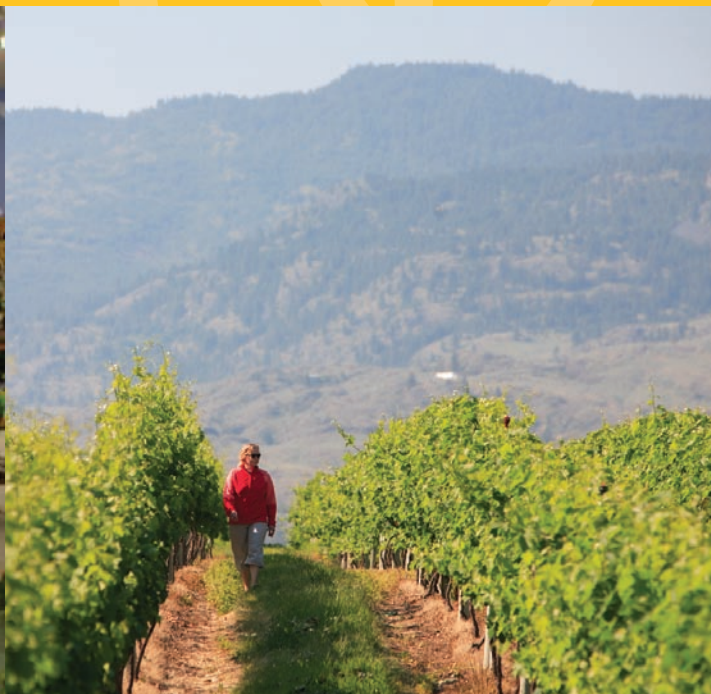


Story Time: Driving Day Trips



How About a Gorgeous Drive Today? Road tripping to the finest destinations.



Imagine the wind in your hair as you cruise along the South Okanagan's scenic winding roads. Weave your way through lush valleys of fruit-laden orchards and grape-filled vineyards, with lake and mountain views in every direction. Visitors are inspired by the beauty and gain memories second to none.

Osoyoos is located at the centre of a wide range of easy, fun day trips. From heritage gardens and historical gold mines, to ghost towns, steam trains and the wild West, hop in your favourite vehicle and uncover new adventures by exploring the area.



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Gold mines of yesteryear

Less than an hour west of Osoyoos the breathtaking Mascot Gold Mine, perched high on a mountainside, offers a rich cultural and historical experience to visitors. This includes the story of mining in the valley stretching back thousands of years, and pictographs from the area's 'Syilx' Okanagan First Nations people. The Mine and its buildings were constructed on the sheer rock face above the town, an engineering marvel in any era. The site is particularly spectacular in that the ore was mined 4,500 feet above the valley floor and was quarried from veins running horizontally across the cliff face. The Similkameen Valley miners literally had to hang over the cliff edge to mine the rock! The four-hour tour begins with a 3,000-ft climb by bus to the site, taking you to the entrance of the mineshaft. Visitors then explore the site by descending down 589 stairs. The rich history, the friendly people and the spectacular views make this a cultural and historical visit not to be missed. www.mascotmine.com

For the big & little train buff

Experience the biggest little European railroad in the country. The Osoyoos Desert Model Railroad is Canada's largest Marklin miniature railroad layout, with more than a dozen computer-controlled trains running through a finely detailed landscape of European-style towns – complete with houses, city halls, amusement parks ... and tiny people! www.osoyoosrailroad.com

And for the authentic experience, board the Kettle Valley Steam Railway in Summerland, a one-hour drive from Osoyoos, and take a two-hour journey on one of British Columbia's few remaining fully operational steam trains. Passengers will enjoy a tour along a preserved 10-km section of the original Kettle Valley Railway, constructed between 1910-15. www.kettlevalleyrail.org

Flowers, flowers everywhere

There are several South Okanagan gardens to enjoy within a 60-km radius of Osoyoos, offering the rich diversity so typical of this area. The Grist Mill & Heritage Gardens, in Keremeos, displays the diversity and novelty of late-1800s Victorian times. The garden includes many hundreds of flowers and plants. As well, plots of wheat are being grown there for Canada's gene bank. The Sunrise Cactus Gardens, also in Keremeos, has the largest cactus inventory in Canada! Explore the unique living museum of cacti and succulents – hundreds of varieties and colours await. The Summerland Ornamental Gardens were established in 1923, developed in traditional English style with sweeping lawns, broad borders, and many beautiful specialty treats. The Gardens include xeriscape, water-smart, dryland and meadow gardens displaying a large variety of drought-tolerant plants. This garden is a research test, trial and demonstration garden, showing viable alternatives with a view to reducing the water usage of man-made landscapes.

The wild west

A two-hour drive south of Osoyoos, across the US/Canadian border, lies a town filled with a rich Western history: Winthrop, Washington, U.S.A. The past is reflected in the restoration of several of the original buildings of this frontier town. The town burned down in 1893 and was finally restored into a western-themed destination 30 years ago. Stroll along the wooden boardwalks, visit the old saloons, enjoy a bite to eat at an authentic diner, or simply browse the boutiques and shops. www.winthropwashington.com

A ghostly past

Just a 45-minute drive south of Osoyoos across the US/Canadian border, you will find the historic town of Molson, Washington, U.S.A. It was once a boomtown that served as a trading centre and base for those seeking their elusive fortune in gold. In 1900, when the mining boom crashed and the population plunged, the area opened up to homesteaders. A new boom came in the 1900s when the Great Northern Railroad was built through the centre of town. The Old Molson Ghost Town is now home to the Molson Schoolhouse and Museum. There is a tea room providing beverages and snacks in a delightful old-fashioned setting.