

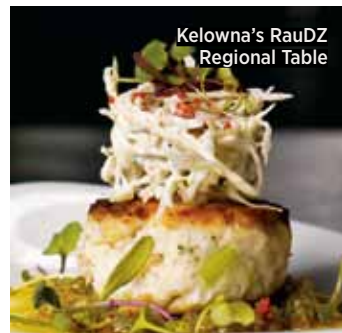


Robust vineyards are just part of the charm surrounding Okanagan Lake.

Okanagan Valley

HALEY SHAPLEY FALLS FOR FALL IN BC'S BOUNTIFUL WINE REGION

Perched on a stool in Summerland's Silkscarf Winery, I point to the riesling muscat on the tasting list. "I get honey on the front and then the acidity and minerality of a riesling," I say, after I sample my pour. "It's sweeter on the nose than the sip." ¶ "You really have a good palate," the woman behind the bar replies. "I can tell." ¶ The truth is, I have no idea what I'm talking about—or at least I didn't last week. But it's day three of my trip to the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia's premier wine region, and I'm already turning into an expert—or at least someone who can say the right thing every once in a while. Here's something I know for sure: With roadside stands brimming with fresh produce and autumn sun creating the perfect climate for golf and other outdoor recreation, fall is the loveliest of times in the Okanagan, a narrow region stretching about 120 miles north from the border crossing at Oroville past Okanagan Lake. After an extended weekend soaking in a variety of local flavors, my newly honed palate and I are convinced that this trip should be an annual tradition.



Kelowna's RauDZ Regional Table

Tastes of the terroir

Sunday evenings bring alfresco vineyard dinners (through mid-October) to GOD'S MOUNTAIN ESTATE in Penticton, at the southern end of Okanagan Lake. JOY ROAD CATERING provides the food for the multicourse feasts, set at a long communal table overlooking nearby Skaha Lake. Nowhere else will you taste the bounty of the season so clearly; chefs Cameron Smith and Dana Ewart bring out local flavors in a way that's truly memorable (think zucchini blossom fritters stuffed with fresh cheese and peach tarts complemented by fall raspberries). You can even overnight at GOD'S MOUNTAIN, a quirky B&B that's part Greek villa/part eclectic antiques museum. (continued on page 25)

TOP: JASON VERSCHOOR



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FIND 'EM

Silkscarf Winery
4917 Gartrell Road,
Summerland,
250.494.7455.
silkw.net

God's Mountain Estate
4898 Lakeside/
Eastside Road,
Penticton,
250.490.4800.
godsmountain.com

Hoodoo Adventures
250.490.6084.
hoodooadventures.ca

La Frenz Winery
1525 Randolph Road,
Penticton,
250.492.6690.
lafrenzwinery.com

Covert Farms Organics
300 Covert Place,
Oliver,
250.498.2731.
covertfarms.ca

Monashee Adventure Tours
1591 Highland Dr. N.,
Kelowna,
250.762.9253.
monasheeadventuretours.com

Camelot Vineyards
3489 East Kelowna
Road, Kelowna,
250.862.8873.
camelotvineyards.ca

The Vibrant Vine
3240 Pooley Road,
Kelowna,
778.478.4153.
thevibrantvine.com

EATS:
RauDZ Regional Table
1560 Water St.,
Kelowna,
250.868.8805.
raudz.com

True Grain Bread
10108 Main St.,
Summerland,
250.494.4244.
truegrain.ca

Old Vines Restaurant at Quails' Gate
3303 Boucherie Road,
West Kelowna,
250.769.2501.
quailsgate.com.

Visit your local AAA store or AAA.com for hotel information, maps and other travel-planning tools.

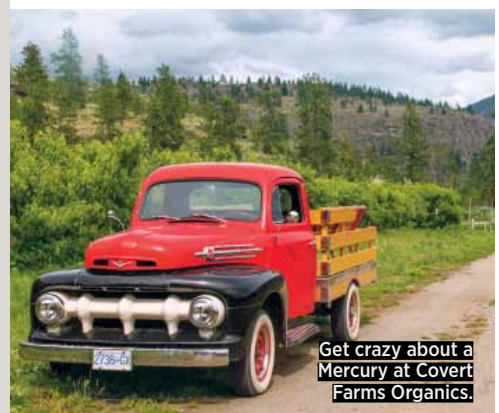


FROM WATER TO WINE

HOODOO ADVENTURES leads kayak trips on Okanagan Lake (which, according to local lore, is inhabited by **OGOGO**, BC's tongue-in-cheek answer to the Loch Ness Monster). After an hour of paddling, a shuttle takes you to wineries along Naramata Bench for spectacular sips and vistas. At **LA FRENZ WINERY**, for example, you can admire the same view that graced the back of the Canadian \$100 bill from 1954 to 1975.



Repurposed rail lines add to cycling bliss.



Get crazy about a Mercury at Covert Farms Organics.

Farm-fresh fun

Nothing says autumn like harvest. At **COVERT FARMS ORGANICS** in Oliver, just 25 minutes north of the Washington border, the owners offer a farm tour—with stops to harvest crops and sample local wines paired with artisan cheeses and charcuterie—in their shiny red 1952 Mercury M3 truck.

A MEMORABLE HIKE >

Covert Farms is also the jumping-off point for a moderate hike up **MCINTYRE BLUFF**, which some say resembles the profile of a First Nations chief. It's worth the three-hour (or so) round trip for views of the Okanagan River and entire valley below.

Guilt-free tasting

Wine just tastes a little better when you've earned it—and admired a few sights in the process. Join **MONASHEE ADVENTURE TOURS** for guided bike rides all over the valley. From Kelowna, the valley's largest city (about halfway up the lake's eastern shore), the company's East Kelowna Wine Trail Cycle Tour offers stops at such fun wineries as the medieval-themed **CAMELOT VINEYARDS** and **THE VIBRANT VINE**, where 3-D glasses bring the psychedelia-inspired wine labels to life. On the tour, I learn that guide Ed Kruger, better known as Trailhead Ed, left the corporate world to start the company. Within minutes of hearing him share his encyclopedic knowledge of the outdoors, you'll sense his passion for the area—and agree that his career change was the right choice. **1**



McIntyre Bluff



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