



Visiting Naramata during the off seasons and taking a KVR bike tour in is one way to escape the crowds. CURT WOODHALL

FAMILY TRAVEL

OKANAGAN WINING AND DINING

Travelling in wine country with a six-year-old is fun, but it requires some adjustments

MHAIRRI WOODHALL

Okanagan wine touring is a summer staple, which until now, has been an adult-only indulgence I've enjoyed with my husband. This past sipping-season, however, we decided to extend an invitation to our child, who was thrilled with the prospect of endless charcuterie plates and lakefront fun. Of course, travelling with a six-year-old required a few minor adjustments to our itinerary.

First, we booked slightly off-season to avoid the crowds that flock to B.C.'s interior every July and August. This in itself was a brilliant move. We practically had the wineries to ourselves, and waterfront hotels are far more affordable just before — or after — the school break. Another strategy was to hit up wineries that are appropriate — and dare I say fun — for children. Surprisingly, we found enough to satisfy our palates. Finally, we added a few adventure activities to round out the trip.

KID-APPROVED WINERIES

Most Okanagan wineries welcome kids — especially in shoulder-season — however, there are only a few that your little ones will actually have fun at. Our daughter's top choice in Naramata is Elephant Island for its whimsical outdoor patio stocked with stuffed animals, toy cars, games and tea sets. While my husband and I savoured a tasting of cherry, black currant and pear wine, she played tea party with new-found friends. In Oliver, just outside of Osoyoos, there are three exceptional wineries to visit with the family.

At Hidden Chapel, parents can sample the tongue-in-cheek Blushing Bride, Nuns on the Run and Shotgun Wedding while children explore the property's lush gardens in search of the tiny white chapel.

Try the award-winning French-style wine at vinAmite and your kids will be happily occupied at the colouring table or secure a seat on the vineyard-view patio for a lunchtime tasting and appetizer platter of local cheese, pate and charcuterie. At Covert Farms — an organic farm and winery — we booked a guided tour to learn about the 650-acre property, visit with alpacas and Scottish Highland cows and collect juicy strawberries from the U-pick field. Post-tour we relaxed with a wine tasting on the patio and watched our daughter play on the farm's giant bounce pad.



Lakeside vineyards in Naramata feature scenery that will take your breath away.



Enjoy a charcuterie platter while sipping the award-winning French-style wine at vinAmite in Oliver.

KID-FRIENDLY PATIOS

Noshing al fresco is a wine country hallmark that's always a winner with kids. A Kelowna favourite, with epic lake views and happy-hour specials, like baked mac and cheese, lamb meatballs and \$6 glasses of wine, is OAK + CRU at the Delta Grand Okanagan Resort. Oliver's Miradoro at Tinhorn Creek — one of our dining traditions — is also popular with families due to the delicious Neapolitan style pizzas and casual patio vibe. If you're looking for a more sophisticated entree, executive chef Jeff Van Geest's pan-roasted halibut is excellent. Another winery patio to visit in Oliver is Terranina at Hester Creek. The grilled Humboldt squid and build your own charcuterie board

was an instant hit with our daughter. Or, visit late-afternoon for the happy-hour pizza specials and \$3 off sangria, wine and beer.

ON THE WATER PLAY

For a ridiculously good time out on the water, book the Red Dragon from Sun n' Sup in Naramata Village, about 30 minutes outside of Penticton. Although the four-person, stand-up-paddle board is a rather temperamental beast, we managed to avoid a tumble. Expect a full-body workout, as the Red Dragon is harder to paddle, steer and balance. If you prefer a more stable option, the shop rents standard SUPs by the hour, day or week, with life-jackets included. Afterwards, take a short drive to Manitou Beach for its soft sand,

playground and shade trees. We brought a boxed picnic lunch from Naramata Bench Market, and spent the afternoon playing on the grass lawn, building sandcastles and splashing down the lake slide.

CLIMB, BIKE, TASTE

Cycling Naramata's portion of the historic Kettle Valley Rail trail was a trip highlight for me. Hoodoo Adventure Co. in Penticton offers guided cycle-wine tours that include your bike and helmet, transportation to the trailhead, winery tastings, a light snack and return shuttle to Penticton. During the gentle downhill 12-kilometre ride we learned about the railway's history and enjoyed sweeping views of Naramata Bench and Okanagan Lake. At the end of the journey we

toured three wineries and finished with a Poplar Grove Cheese tasting and picnic overlooking the lake at Lock & Worth. As the trail is quite rocky, with a few steep drop-offs, it wasn't suitable for our inexperienced biker, so we enrolled her in Hoodoo's outdoor rock-climbing camp. Although slightly hesitant at first, she absolutely loved the challenge and was so proud to have scaled an eight-metre rock face.

OFF-SEASON FESTIVAL FUN

If possible, plan your visit around an annual festival or event, like Oliver Osoyoos Wine Country's yearly Pig Out party in early May. It's an outdoor family-friendly event complete with cooking demonstrations, local celebrity chefs and wine tastings paired with tasty bite-sized creations. You'll find all of the top wineries, as well as artisanal cellars with a cult-like following. If you want to try Checkmate's coveted \$85 Merlot, with your kids in tow, this is the place to do it. Travelling in October? Check out the Festival of the Grape at the Oliver Recreation Centre. Expect a highly competitive grape-stomping competition, tastings from 50-plus wineries, as well as booths showcasing local makers, artisans and chefs. There's also live music and entertainment and a kids' zone with games, a petting zoo and bouncy castles.

LAKEFRONT ACCOMMODATION

Time it right and you can stay waterfront for a fraction of peak-season prices. Our road-trip began with an overnight in Kelowna at the Manteo Resort, where the one-bedroom suites have full kitchens for quick, easy breakfasts and a sofa-bed for the kids. Smack Dab, the on-property lakefront restaurant, is also our preferred place for mussels and crazy fries. In Penticton, the new West Wing tower at the Penticton Lakeside Resort, offers oversized-rooms with unobstructed lake views. From the hotel's downtown location, it's an easy stroll to restaurants, beach parks and the Saturday Farmers' Market. We completed our southern Okanagan tour at the all-suite Watermark Beach Resort in Osoyoos, which, with its lakefront town houses, is perfect for larger families and groups. We booked a bed and breakfast package, barbecued poolside at lunch and dined in the award-winning, on-property restaurant for supper.

To follow Mhairri's family travels visit: www.arrivalstravel.com