

“Come late September, the region’s pastoral countryside, orchards and vineyards transform from verdant to burnished, brimming with apples, pears, pumpkins and grapes ripe for harvest. **Mhairri Woodhall**”



Lake views and organic farm-to-fork fare are on the menu at Summer Hill Organic Winery. Autumn is the perfect time to enjoy all Kelowna offers at a more relaxed pace. **MHAIRRI WOODHALL**

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FAMILY TRAVEL

While Kelowna’s sizzling summer months are the most popular for visiting families, my favourite time in the Okanagan is fall. The weather is perfectly temperate, as crisp mornings gently turn into warm, sun-kissed afternoons. Come late September, the region’s pastoral countryside, orchards and vineyards transform from verdant to burnished, brimming with apples, pears, pumpkins and grapes ripe for harvest. With cooler temperatures, fewer crowds and lower accommodation costs, Kelowna’s summertime staples — bike rides, beach days, wineries and poolside play — become even more accessible for families. After spending a few days with my husband, daughter and dad exploring the vibrant city, we uncovered a handful of hidden gems that make for fantastic family adventures.

CULTURE AND CUISINE IN DOWNTOWN KELOWNA

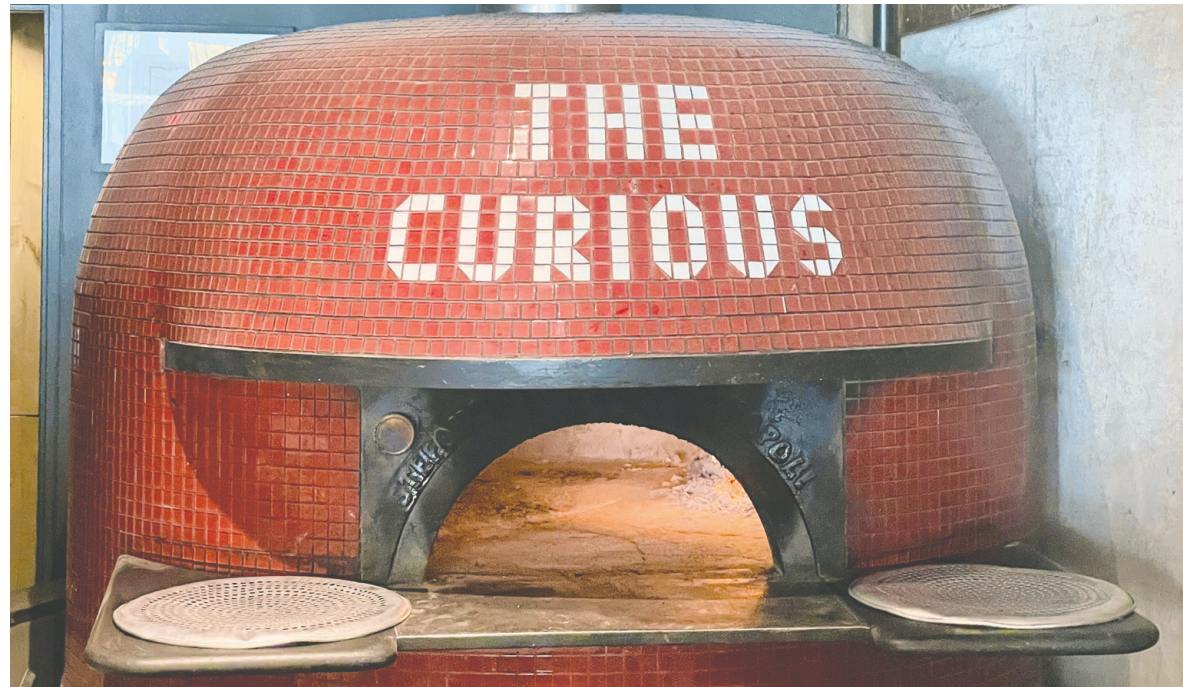
At age 10, my daughter Brooklyn is an adventurous eater and the ideal participant for A Taste of Kelowna Food Tours. Although Brooklyn was the only child in our group of seven, owner Andrew, our tour guide extraordinaire, was incredibly engaging and accommodating. Thus, we all found the tour fantastic and of exceptional value. It began in the Cultural District, where Andrew provided insight into Kelowna’s early days, prominently focused on apple growing, packing and distribution. We visited seven locally owned hot spots, devouring more calories than were possible to expend. Highlights for the youngest group member include the decadent dessert squares from Bliss Bakery, market spice rooibos tea from Chai Babba, El Taquero’s tacos and virgin blackberry margarita, salted caramel gelato at The Gallery Lakeside Cafe and the impressive collection of taxidermy and vintage decor at BNA Brewing. Brooklyn also loved arriving in time to watch the koi fish feeding at the Kasugai Japanese Gardens, a tranquil, almost hidden haven tucked behind Kelowna’s City Hall. Andrew operates tours twice a day, from March through December. At \$84.99 per person (children three and under are free), A Taste of Kelowna Food Tours was our most memorable meal(s) in the Okanagan. atasteofkelownafoodtours.com

PICK LOCAL IN LAKE COUNTRY

We drove half an hour north of downtown to explore laid-back Lake Country. The picturesque district is a scenic swath of locally

SEASON TO SAVOUR

It’s easy to fall for Kelowna’s autumn harvest season



The pizza oven is the heart of the Curious Cafe, which is part of A Taste of Kelowna Food Tours. **CURT WOODHALL**



Enjoy margaritas and tacos at El Taquero, a highlight on A Taste of Kelowna Food Tours. **CURT WOODHALL**

owned orchards, farms, boutique wineries, and three sparkling lakes, including the iconic emerald-hued Kalamalka. Rose Hill was a new and welcome discovery for our family. Adorable barnyard buddies enjoy free range of the charming property, including recently rescued mini horses Honey, Winter and Piper, and Rose Hill’s gardening crew, comprising a small flock of babydoll sheep. By autumn, the orchard’s sweet, juicy peaches are a delight, and the apples are crisp and ripe for picking or purchase in the market. Families

can also attend the free afternoon concert series every second Saturday, which runs until the end of October. Another flavourful find was third-generation, family-owned Gatzke Orchards in Oyama, whose sustainable practices have resulted in quality local produce since 1929. Their house-baked pies are phenomenal, and I can personally vouch for the cherry. Our final stop was Peak Cellars Winery for lunch in the Garden Bistro and to tour the organic plots and greenhouses that supply its farm-fresh produce. The casual outdoor restaurant fea-

tures a menu to please every palate. Our favourites are the Mumbai Street Food cauliflower dish, classic woodfire pizzas and the garden kale and romaine Caesar salad.

E-BIKES AND ALPACAS IN EAST KELOWNA

I’ve wanted to try e-biking for more than a year, and Kelowna-based Velo Volt, a mobile e-bike rental company, helped bring my goal to fruition. With its family-run orchards, farms and wineries, the east Kelowna area is idyllic for cycling. Given her age,

Brooklyn is too young to ride an e-bike, so I rode alongside my dad, with my husband and daughter following by car. Our first stop was Meadow Vista Honey Wines, an adorable meadery with outdoor tasting huts, bocce ball, organic veggie garden, farm-to-table bistro and — my daughter’s favourite — a charming gift shop selling honey, house-made pickles, soaps, lotions and clothing. While the adults sampled mead, Brooklyn enjoyed a self-guided scavenger hunt around the small property. Meadow Vista offers a campfire smokies and s’mores experience for purchase every weekend this fall, complete with marshmallow roasting, mulled mead and children’s activities. Another family-fun stop is Soma Cidery for delicious local apple cider and feeding the cute and quirky resident alpacas. The beautifully treed property also has picnic tables and a small playground, making it a lovely spot to visit with kids. My dad and I also made a quick adults-only detour to the boutique distillery Forbidden Spirits, where we shared a mini craft cocktail tasting. Kelowna has many incredible routes to explore by e-bike, and Velo Volt owners Sarah and Kendra have created interactive maps available on their website. velovolt.ca

LOUNGING LAKESIDE IN LOWER MISSION

Staying lakeside is always a treat, and we found the Eldorado Resort phenomenal for families. As part of the Manteo Resort property, guests have access to two indoor pools and hot tubs, an outdoor family pool with two hot tubs and a splash pad, and an adults-only pool. There’s also a private beach, tennis, pickleball and basket court, putting green and two restaurants. The lakefront property is also a short walk to the Mission Greenway, where we walked our dog every morning, and two of Kelowna’s most popular beach parks. Gyro Beach is always Brooklyn’s top choice for its two ziplines and sandy shore. A handful of restaurants offer takeout across the street, including the new Hugo’s Mexican Kitchen. We grabbed some tacos and churros (delicious) for a leisurely picnic lunch. Our other favourite restaurant in the area is Summerhill Organic Bistro, where Brooklyn consistently orders the children’s cheese pizza. We adults typically share the Day Boat halibut and 63 Acres dry-aged tenderloin, which comes with the world’s most incredible potato pave. *For more destination information, visit @arrivals_travel*



Meadow Vista Honey Wines in east Kelowna is a great place to relax and sample mead. **MHAIRRI WOODHALL**