

The best places in Kelowna

A local shares her family's favourite spots

LISA KADANE ([HTTPS://VANCOUVERSUN.COM/AUTHOR/LISA-KADANE](https://vancouver.sun.com/author/lisa-kadane)) Updated: June 29, 2019



Fruit picking in Kelowna is a favourite summer activity. *DESTINATION BC/KARI MEDIG, COURTESY TOURISM KELOWNA*

The summer sun is already high in the sky above the Okanagan Valley and waves of heat radiate from the pathway that zigzags to the top of Mount Boucherie, an extinct volcano that dominates West Kelowna's skyline.

A family of quails, including 15 fluffy chicks, move stealthily through the underbrush.

This happy distraction eases the intensity of the upward toil, and soon after we're at the summit, greeted by a glorious view of Okanagan Lake. The glassy mirror stretches

south and, across its expanse, the rounded hills of the Okanagan Highlands meet puffy white clouds and a sky just a shade lighter than the steel blue water.



The zipline at Gyro Beach. *PHOTOGRAPHY BY KERRI-JO*

For the kids, though, the vista isn't the reward. After merrily descending the three kilometres back to the car, their compensation is a visit to nearby Off The Grid Organic Winery, where we refuel on fries and pulled pork sandwiches from the food truck parked on site.

Sated, daughter Avery 14, and her little brother Bennett 11, pet the winery's resident goats and watch turkeys spread out their tail feathers in a captivating display.

My husband and I, meanwhile, sneak inside the cool tasting room. For a \$5 fee each we sample five organic wines, the chilled, un-oaked Chardonnay is our favourite.



With its resident goats and turkeys, Off The Grid Organic Winery in West Kelowna makes a great post-hike stop for families. *LISA KADANE*

Days like this one are the reason we moved to Kelowna, and it's the mix of outdoor adventure and culture that makes the valley a magnet for vacationers.

Come visit and nature is never far from your door, which makes it easy to tackle a new hike or cycle along the Mission Creek Greenway.

Summers can be blisteringly hot, but the nearby lake and the city's 30 beaches beckon for swimming and paddling. And, if you like grapes or hops, each day can happily end with a glass of wine or beer from a local maker.

It's worth noting, though, that Kelowna is spread out, so you'll need a car (and navigation or Google maps) to get to trailheads, beaches, wineries and other attractions located outside the city centre or the Pandosy neighbourhood just south of downtown. But the driving around is worth it to explore Kelowna.

Be active early

Start the day with a walk or hike. Our family has grown fond of the trails in our "backyard" in south Kelowna, a 20-minute drive from downtown. We rarely run in to other hikers on the shared-use Crawford Trails that lead from the Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park day use area off Stewart Road.

Much of the park burned during the 2003 fire, but the charred trees give the landscape a haunting beauty and make it easier to spot pileated woodpeckers hammering away at the blackened trunks, or coyotes trotting through the new growth.

Climb (or mountain bike) past ancient rock outcrops for views of Okanagan Lake and the William R. Bennett floating bridge that connects the compact downtown to West Kelowna.

Or, spend an additional 10 minutes in the car to get to the Johns Family Nature Conservancy, which is accessed off of Chute Lake Road in Kettle Valley. The trails here are marked with posts and interpretive signs, and highlights include lake views, wildlife such as deer and turkey vultures, and a picturesque escarpment that runs the length of The Craggs Trail making it popular among local rock climbers.

Post hike, pull in to Twin Oaks Organic Orchard on Barnaby Road. They kick off fruit season in late June or early July and it doesn't take long to fill a pail with juicy cherries for just \$2.50/pound.

Beat the heat

Sink your toes into the hot sand at Gyro Beach in the Pandosy/Lower Mission neighbourhood while you work up the courage to zipline into the water from a wooden platform, or try stand-up paddle boarding. With its iconic, apple-shaped concession, playground, and shallow, sloping beach, this park is made for families.



The zipline at Gyro Beach. *PHOTOGRAPHY BY KERRI-JO*

Okanagan Beach Rentals has a location here and lends out a range of watercraft starting at \$15/hour for a kids' SUP.

If you have your own lake toys and want to keep a closer eye on the kids, another favourite stretch of sand can be found at Bertram Creek Regional Park, just past Cedar Creek Estate Winery on Lakeshore Road. There's a small, less crowded swimming area here, plus ample park space and a few short walking trails.

After a dip, continue a couple kilometres to Cornucopia Dairy (formerly Carmelis Goat Cheese), to sample a range of cheeses made on site, or to buy a scoop of goat's milk gelato (\$4.50 for a small cup) in flavours ranging from apricot to sour cherry.



Carmelis Goat Cheese Artisan in Kelowna. *TOURISM KELOWNA*

Stop at St. Hubertus & Oak Bay Estate Winery on the way back to town to pick up a bottle of the Frizzante Rosé (\$18.50); it's lovely served chilled after a hot summer day. Children are welcome to pet September, the friendly winery cat, and pluck grapes from the vines located just outside the wine shop.

Evening rewards

Don't miss a chance to stroll downtown Kelowna's waterfront and revel in its buzzy, summer evening vibe.

Start off in Kasugai Gardens, a beautiful Japanese garden with free entry located behind City Hall, where koi swim serenely in a pond, the delicate leaves of Japanese maples flutter in the breeze, and a bench beside the Zen Garden invites contemplation.

From here, it's a two-block walk to the Kelowna Art Gallery (\$10 family admission), which hosts changing exhibits of Canadian art including an impressive display of works by some of the city's high school students through Sept. 15.

Also located in the Cultural District is BNA Brewing, a craft brewery that's inside the historic brick warehouse that once housed the British North America Tobacco Company.



BNA Brewing Co. is an independent craft brewery with an onsite Tasting Room and eatery. *BC ALE TRAIL, COURTESY TOURISM KELOWNA*

BNA's share plates and craft beers are fantastic, but what delivers for children is the atmosphere—a giant taxidermy moose head greets them from behind the bar, and antique furnishings throughout contribute to the homey feel. Upstairs, you can try 10-pin bowling for \$45/hour for one lane on weekend nights (save \$10 by bowling Sunday-Thursday).

Refreshed and refueled, wander down the Waterfront Boardwalk and listen to the sound of buskers, take in the view of sailboats gliding on the lake, and reflect on a day of fun in the sun.

If you go

Manteo Resort in Pandosy/Lower Mission has a family resort vibe with a seasonal Kidz Klub and outdoor pool with a water slide. It offers family suites with kitchens as well as larger beachfront villas, plus it's within walking distance of Rotary Beach and Gyro Beach, and to restaurants and shops in the Pandosy neighbourhood.

Rainy day: The H2O Adventure + Fitness Centre in Lower Mission features a wave pool, lazy river, spray park and three water slides for a family drop-in rate of \$28.50. It's surrounded by park space with access to the Mission Creek Greenway.

For adults: Kelowna's iconic wineries are worth a visit, but they can be extremely busy during the summer, with wait times for tastings. Check out some of the smaller wineries in southeast Kelowna such as Kitsch, SpearHead and Tantalus. Most Kelowna wineries charge \$5 per person to try four or five wines, and the tasting fee is waived with the purchase of a bottle.

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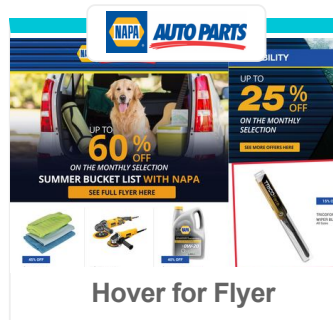


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