



British Columbia

Famed for its wildlife, outdoor adventures, First Nations culture, and captivating cities, Canada's westernmost province has also become a must-visit destination for golfers. *Kingdom* traveled from Vancouver Island to the Okanagan Valley to find out why.

Allure of the Okanagan

The valley in south-central B.C. has evolved from a low-key farming region to a multilayered luxury destination.

by CASANDRA KARPIAK

From the sixth tee box of the Ridge Course at Predator Ridge, the Okanagan Valley makes its case in a single glance. Some 100 feet below, a narrow fairway stretches before you, buttressed by granite outcroppings that set both the strategy and the mood of the shot. The target area widens closer to the green, opening toward Okanagan Lake and a distant mountain that holds the horizon, all in one unmistakable sweep.

The inherent drama of Predator Ridge's surroundings has helped the resort community—and the greater Okanagan—emerge as one of the top golf destinations in Canada. A once-quiet agricultural corridor, the valley in south-central British Columbia is today a 125-mile stretch of vineyard-dotted hills, glacial lakes, and luxury resorts. Kelowna, the region's largest city, holds the distinction of being Canada's only UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

Before the area gained renown for its golf and cuisine, the Okanagan earned its



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—WADE REDDEN

and similar lives, and it becomes a great place to raise a family. And then the golfing, too, that was a big part of it. There are some really nice courses around, so that was definitely a draw for me as well.”

FAVORED FAIRWAYS

“I have been out to Predator Ridge a bunch of times. I probably gravitate toward the Ridge Course because of the elevation and the views. Playing through the trees with that backdrop makes it a pretty stunning place to golf. I am a member at the Kelowna Golf and Country Club, and I probably play there more than anywhere else. Harvest is probably the closest one to home for me. I also like to get out to Gallagher’s and Tower Ranch.”

NHL FOURSOMES

“There are quite a few guys: Shea Weber, Mike Smith, Josh Gorges, Carey Price, Rene Bourque, Todd Simpson, Cody Franson, Jordin Tootoo, and a lot of others. I’m probably leaving a bunch out—there are a lot of guys that are here, and it’s fun to get out with them, for sure.”

LOCAL FLAVORS

“BNA and Bernie’s Supper Club. A good buddy of mine owns them, and the food and atmosphere are great. We live right near Home Block at CedarCreek, and that’s a pretty awesome restaurant. It’s just down the street from us, so we like to go there in the summer, just to treat ourselves. Eldorado, that’s a classic spot, especially in the summer. Quails’ Gate has a really good restaurant, too. It’s a little farther commute for us, but that’s a beautiful spot.”

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

“In the summers, getting on the water. When the kids were younger, we had a pontoon boat, but now we’ve graduated to a surf boat, so the kids are into that stuff. But just being outside—golfing, doing a little biking, and hiking, actually. That’s been another thing we’ve started doing a little more of, getting outside to hike. We’ve got a place at Big White, which we love. We’ve spent Christmas there the last number of years, so we like getting out to ski. In the summer, it’s a nice place to go up and do some hikes.”

CedarCreek Estate Winery (top left), and Wade Redden (below) during his playing days with the New York Rangers.



Mission Hill Family Estate’s 2023 Border Vista Sauvignon Blanc (top), and Quails’ Gate Winery (above).

Valley Vintages

Brisk nights, sun-filled days, and diverse microclimates give the Okanagan a natural viticultural advantage, producing elegant cool-climate whites alongside increasingly confident red blends. These four wineries showcase the region’s range, delivering standout vintages and tasting experiences that match the quality of the wines.

Mission Hill Family Estate

Mission Hill is the Okanagan’s most recognizable winery. Envisioned by proprietor Anthony von Mandl, the estate was built to attract visitors to the region and establish the Okanagan Valley as a wine and wine-tourism destination able to stand beside the world’s best. A 12-story bell tower, with four bells cast in France, rises above stone arches, open courtyards, and terraces overlooking Okanagan Lake.

TRY: The Bordeaux-style Oculus, Canada’s first 100-point red wine. Merlot-forward, with Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and a touch of Petit Verdot, it sits comfortably among the world’s most serious, cellar-worthy wines.

Phantom Creek Estates

Phantom Creek Estates represents one of the most ambitious and high-profile winery developments in British Columbia’s history. It sits on the Black Sage Bench, a distinct subregion of the Okanagan known for its sun-soaked, semi-arid conditions and soils shaped by ancient geological forces.

TRY: Phantom Creek Vineyard Cuvée 2020, awarded a gold medal at the 2024 Decanter World Wine Awards. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, Malbec, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot, it has a long, commanding finish that refuses to fade quietly.

Quails’ Gate Winery

This well-established winery is family owned and operated, with multiple generations now involved in its evolution. Vineyards spread across the Upper and Lower Boucherie Bench, set above the shores of Okanagan Lake and framed by the extinct volcanic slopes of Mount Boucherie.

TRY: 2022 Stewart Family Reserve Pinot Noir. Bright red cherry and raspberry meld with hints of forest floor and spice, finishing with supple tannins that mirror the lake-cooled slopes where the grapes were grown.

Burrowing Owl Estate Winery

The winery’s name comes from the burrowing owl, a threatened species native to the South Okanagan grasslands. The estate has long recognized this heritage, tying its identity to conservation and land stewardship. Its 10-room Guest House and generous outdoor pool extend the experience beyond the cellar door.

TRY: 2022 Chardonnay. This full-bodied, buttery, nutty wine opens with aromas of ripe peach and pineapple, followed by rich notes of vanilla. The wine is aged primarily in French oak, with a short stint in stainless steel. —C.K.



The Bear Course at Okanagan Golf Club (left), and the Predator Course at Predator Ridge (right).



Golf gave structure to the landscape, and luxury followed.

place on the world stage through wine. The local Mission Hill Family Estate's 1992 Reserve Chardonnay captured the Avery Trophy for "Best Chardonnay in the World" at the International Wine & Spirit Competition in London in 1994. Predator Ridge, which had opened a few years earlier, was ready for the attention, poised to help anchor the valley as an international leisure destination. Golf gave structure to the landscape, and luxury followed.

In 2010, Gernot Langes-Swarovski, of the Swarovski family, added a European-style wellness retreat to the mix. Sparkling Hill Resort sits on a granite bluff overlooking Okanagan Lake, its architecture and design threaded with more than 3.5 million Swarovski crystals that reflect the changing light throughout the day.

The Rise Golf Course, in nearby Vernon, arrived in 2008. Designed by Fred Couples, the layout is perched 1,000 feet above the lake, its elevated setting extending sightlines across vine-covered slopes toward distant peaks. Other standout courses in the area include Tower Ranch and the Bear Course at Okanagan Golf Club, both of which leverage the valley's diverse topography for unforgettable play.

Predator Ridge, set at the northern end of the valley, is home to two of the region's—and Canada's—most acclaimed

opened in 1991 and traverses rolling hills and fields of native grasses, drawing on the openness of the land to evoke a Scottish links style. The Ridge Course, which debuted almost two decades later, plays through a diverse landscape that encapsulates the natural beauty of the Okanagan.

"Predator Ridge is made up of three distinctive settings," the course's designer, Doug Carrick, says. "The upper rolling grasslands that surround the heart of the resort; the midsection escarpment characterized by dramatic elevation changes and rugged rock outcroppings; and the secluded lower meadow landscape defined by soft, rolling topography and pine forests."

The Ridge Course explores all three environments, but despite its variety and drama, the layout remains accessible. "The one comment that I hear most often is how playable the

The same granite found along the fairways of the Ridge Course also contributes to the Okanagan's viticultural success. These volcanic rocks retain heat that helps ripen fruit, while long daylight hours and cool lake air give life to vineyards that now spread across the region's hillsides. Today, more than 200 wineries thrive in the Okanagan, including Phantom Creek Estates, a lavish \$100 million project and the most significant winery investment in British Columbia.

Taylor Whelan, chief winemaker at Mission Hill Family Estate, has seen the evolution of the local industry firsthand. "The wine quality has improved as the region has matured," he says. "The Okanagan today is much more established and self-confident than it was 10 to 20 years ago."

That maturity translates not just to better wines, but also to elevated experiences for visitors. A private tasting on a yacht on Okanagan Lake, for instance, links Mission Hill with two other leading local wineries. The cruise is an upscale way for guests to move between estates and sip limited-production wines, all while enjoying the bounty and

THE NHL CONNECTION

Head to any youth hockey game in Kelowna and you'll likely find retired NHL players, perhaps Josh Gorges and Shea Weber, sitting on the bench coaching the next generation. Mike Smith and Byron Ritchie spend their time developing young athletes at Rink Hockey Academy, which also operates Rink Golf Academy in partnership with Predator Ridge. Carey Price and Jarome Iginla now call the Okanagan their permanent home, as does former defenseman Wade Redden, who played 14 years and more than 1,000 games in the NHL. Redden first came to the area during his playing career to teach at Okanagan Hockey Academy and later settled in Kelowna. We spoke to him about his adopted home and why it's so popular with his fellow NHL alumni. —C.K.

THE DRAW

"The climate. You get an extra month of summer in the spring and fall, the winters are mild, and everything feels a