

Welcome to the
Canada sunbelt at
Predator Ridge

Thompson Okanagan

Take your pick from a rich harvest of golf courses in this bountiful region

Ski resorts, wineries, orchards, lakes and even a desert—the Thompson Okanagan region in central southern British Columbia has all of these and more. Golf being chief among them. Choose from a couple of dozen beauties. They reflect the diversity of its landscape, ranging from arid tracks through desert scrubland more reminiscent of America's South West to golf in forested mountains.

You can even go scrumping as you play. The

Harvest Golf Club's 7,109-yard course weaves through an orchard of 1,000 apple trees, vineyards and groves of cherries, pears and peaches close to the city of Kelowna.

You're welcome to pick the fruit in season, but dally too long and you'll give course marshals the pip for falling behind. As my playing partners and I discovered when we were caught red-handed, our pockets and cheeks bulging.

The course affords a grand view of Okanagan Lake and designer Graham Cooke serves

up a feast of large, up-and-down greens and generous fairways, with strategically-placed lakes reflecting the rows of vines marching up the slopes. Be warned. The brutal 498-yard, par-4 17th could sour the finish if you choke on your drive.

Orchards and vineyards flourish because of the Okanagan's gloriously hot and sunny summers. This is Canada's sunbelt and its biggest wine-producing area.

The 27-hole Predator Ridge resort covers⇒





1,200 acres of pine-covered ridges, lakes and wheatgrass meadows. Its luxury wooden cottages and villas, from which guests have a grandstand view over greens and fairways, will soon be augmented by a lavish 150-room hotel and wellness centre. Sergio Garcia is said to have bought two cottages, for himself and his parents, after playing in the Canadian Skins Game which Predator hosted in 2000. The three 18-hole combinations all provide a challenging 7,000-plus yards, each nine different in character. A fourth nine is on the cards.

This part of the region is blessed with quality golf, including Gallagher's Canyon and the Okanagan Golf Club. The 6,792-yard, par-72 Gallagher's Canyon is a Bill Robinson and Les Furber joint venture which sits among ponderosa pines and rocky escarpments. You can sharpen up your short game on its 9-hole, par-32 Pinnacle Course.

Jack Nicklaus's Golden Bear Designs team shifted over five million cubic feet of earth when they formed Bo McIvor Lake on the Okanagan club's Bear Course, around which golfers play the 13th to 15th loop.

The marginally-shorter Les Furber-designed Quail Course takes you on an oval roller-coaster ride of multi-tiered fairways and intricately-shaped bunkers before teasing you with a fairway split by a lake on the final hole.

Desert-style golf is on offer at Sun Rivers, another Cooke creation set on parched hills overlooking Kamloops and the Thompson River. The course plays through sand dunes and canyons dotted with sagebrush. Tracks left by the resident big horn sheep are regarded as ground under repair.

The Dunes at Kamloops, also by Cooke, is an intriguing links-style course on what was once the Thompson river bed and features dune hillocks peppered with pot bunkers. Just imagine a verdant lunar landscape.

The South Okanagan has eight courses in a true desert setting on the northern fringes of

Rocky escarpments add to the challenges at Gallagher's Canyon

WHERE TO PLAY

Harvest Golf Club

7,109 yards, par 72
C\$102 (approx £49)

Contact: 00-1-250-862-3103

harvestgolf.com

Cornucopia of golf among bountiful orchards and vineyards

Sun Peaks Resort

6,352 yards, par 72
C\$75-C\$80 (approx £36-£38)

Contact: 00-1-250-578-5431

sunpeaksresort.com

Go hit it on the mountains on this newly-extended alpine charmer

Predator Ridge

Red Tail/ Peregrine courses 7,144 yards, par 72

C\$85-C\$105 (approx £40-£50)

Contact: 00-1-250-542-9404

predatorridge.com

Three nines of the very best to test your mettle

Sun Rivers Golf Resort

7,001 yards, par 72
C\$65 (approx £31)

Contact: 00-1-250-571-7888

sunrivers.com

Arizona-style desert golf - there's even bighorn sheep

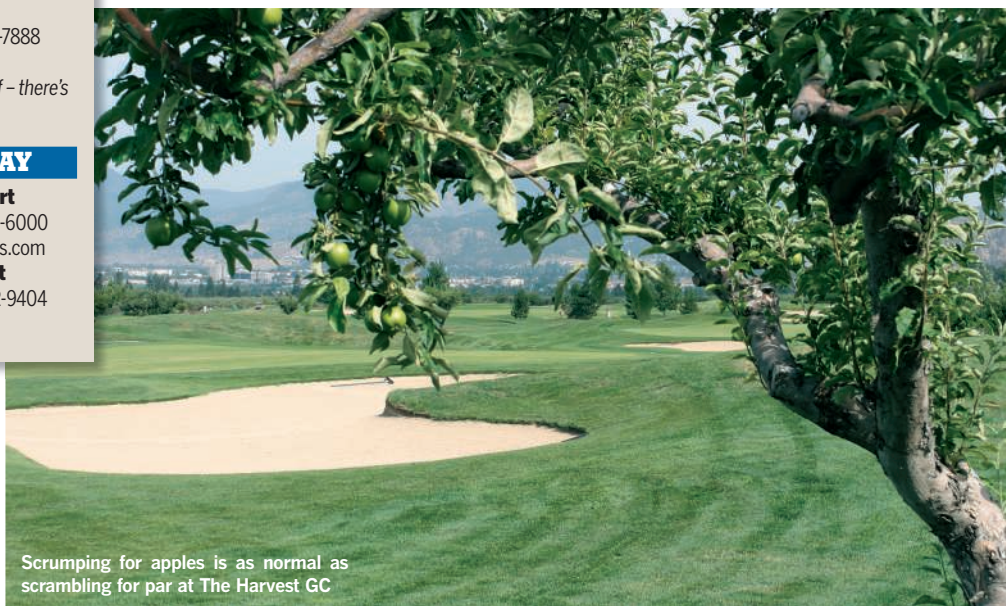
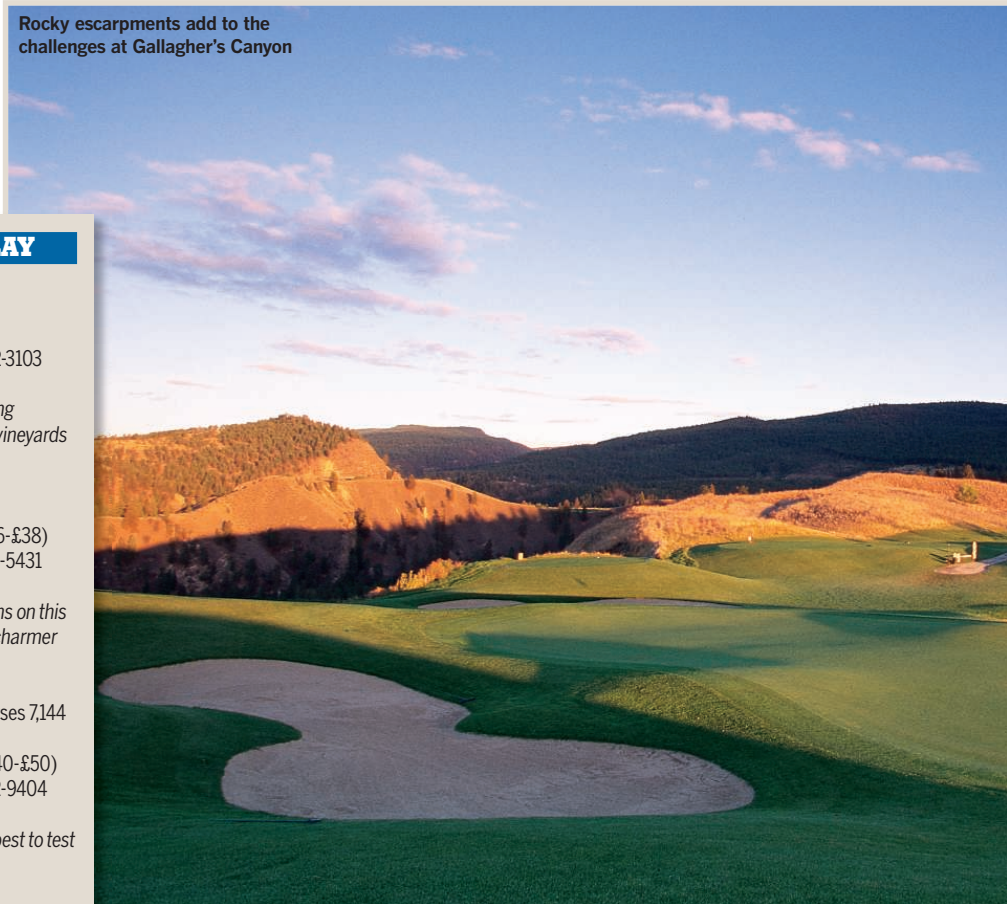
WHERE TO STAY

Delta Sun Peaks Resort

Contact: 00-1-250-578-6000
deltasunpeaks.bcresorts.com

Predator Ridge Resort

Contact: 00-1-250-542-9404
predatorridge.com



Scrumpling for apples is as normal as scrambling for par at The Harvest GC

the Sonora Desert. They include the 27-hole Osoyoos Golf & Country Club, expanding to two full 18s with the addition of another nine desert holes in 2006, and the Inkameep Canyon Desert Golf Course on land owned by the Osoyoos Indian Band. Tyrolean-style ski resort Sun Peaks has just extended its original 9-hole configuration, yet again by Cooke, to make a

full 18 holes. Nestling below three mountains and at 4,000ft up, the course has a shorter season than those in the valleys, opening from mid-May to mid-October. Your ball flies a bit further than at lower altitudes, too. So keep your titanium 454 driver in the bag on some holes to avoid running on into the dense pine and spruce or the winding McGillivray Creek.

PETER ELLEGARD



GOLFBC

“Relive your golfing heroics with a Bloody Caesar, Canada’s national cocktail of vodka and clamato”

The course is right on the village’s doorstep. But you will probably appreciate a buggy because of the elevation changes and distance from some greens to the next tee. Keep an eye out for wildlife such as deer, coyotes and bears. My golfing partners and I saw a mother and cub scamper up a roadside bank near the course. After your round you can get whisked up to the mountain top by chairlift to take in the views and go for ramble. And for a night-cap, there’s nothing better than to relive your day’s golfing heroics with a Bloody Caesar – Canada’s national cocktail of vodka and Clamato, a peculiar but moreish blend of tomato and clam juice.

We tried them in the Bavarian décor of the Powder Hounds Restaurant, then gazed up at the mass of stars in the ink-black sky as we walked back to the hotel.

Thankfully my head was as clear as the mountain air next day. Ready to face another day’s golf challenges in this delightful cocktail of a region.

PETERLEGGARD

Thompson Okanagan Facts

GETTING THERE

Kamloops and Kelowna are about four hours by road from Vancouver.

Air Canada Jazz (flyjazz.ca, 0871-220-1111) flies to Kamloops and Kelowna from Vancouver and Calgary, Alberta. **Westjet** (westjet.com, 00-1-403-250-5839) operates to Kelowna from Vancouver and Calgary, and **Horizon Air** (horizonair.alaskaair.com; 00-1-800-843-1338) serves Kelowna from Seattle.

KEY ATTRACTIONS

- **Shuswap Lake** is known as the Houseboat Capital of Canada and has 25 provincial marine park sites to explore along its 621 miles of shoreline.
- Hike or bike the mountains at **Sun Peaks**. There are 26 biking trails, numerous trails for rambling and mountain chairlifts even have bike racks.
- Watch for bears and other wildlife in vast **Wells Gray Provincial** or along rural roads near Sun Peaks, Kamloops and Merritt.
- Visit a wine festival. They take place throughout the year, and you can even join in a “grape stomp.”

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Relive a day in the life of early explorers on a historical lake canoe tour in a replica **voyageurs’ canoe** at Sun Peaks.
- Water parks around the shores of **Okanagan Lake** will help the kids to cool off in the summer heat.
- Watch out for train robbers as the **Kettle Valley Steam Railway’s** restored 90-year-old steam engine journeys on a six-mile ride along



PETERLEGGARD

See the courses – and possibly the wildlife

tracks overlooking a deep canyon.

- Hunt for minerals in a disused mine on a geology tour at **Grand Forks’ Big Rock Candy Mountain**.

GENERAL INFO

Time difference: GMT -8

Tourist Information: totabc.com; www.hellobc.co.uk

Tel: 00-1-250-860-5999; 0906-871-5000 (60p per minute)

Climate: The Okanagan Valley is one of the warmest regions in Canada, and

summer temperatures of 30°C are not unusual. It is also one of the sunniest, with over 2,000 hours of sun per year. Golf can be played from March until November on most courses.

THOMPSON OKANAGAN FACTS

- There are more than **60 wineries** in the Okanagan, most of which offer tours and tastings. Some also have restaurants.
- **Harvest Golf Club** grows nine varieties of apple, two varieties of pear, plus three types of grape, cherry, nectarine, peach and apricot.
- **Kelowna** is a native Salish word which means grizzly bear.
- Prickly-pear cacti, sagebrush, scorpions and rattlesnakes inhabit Canada’s only desert, at the southern tip of the **Okanagan Valley**.
- **Okanagan Lake Bridge** is the longest floating bridge in North America, at almost a mile long. Okanagan Lake is 68 miles long and even has its own version of the Loch Ness Monster, called Ogotogo.



Retreat to the mountains at Sun Peaks

PETERLEGGARD



Links-style layout at The Dunes at Kamloops