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Vernon landscape

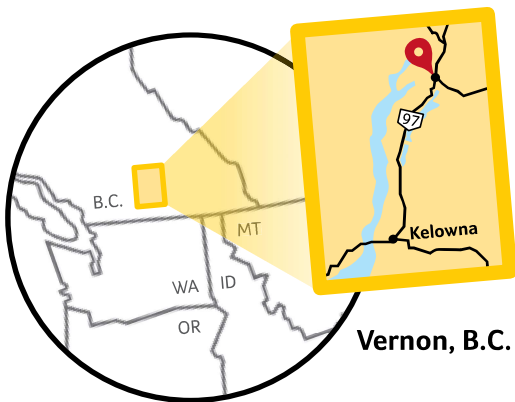
## 28 VERNON, B.C. HARVEST HOLIDAY

BY ADAM SAWYER

Some places just have balance. Not under or overdeveloped. A population robust enough to warrant things like a farmer's market, destination dining establishments, wineries and every sort of craft beverage. But not enough people to cause traffic jams. And outdoor endeavors enticing to the degree that you're somehow able to counteract all that consumption. Enough space to spread out and explore but confined enough to be walkable. History, culture, and points of interest to a level of abundance that you could go back time and again and never get bored. Yet somehow, there are no lines, waiting or reservations required. Right now that seemingly impossible balance exists in Vernon, British Columbia.

When you come, you'll likely fly into Kelowna and make the 45-minute drive north to Vernon through Lake Country, which just happens to be part of the north Okanagan wine region. There are no fewer than 10 wineries along the way, so try to pace yourself. Highlights include Arrowleaf Cellars, Ancient Hill, O'Rourke's Peak Cellars and Gray Monk Estate. In fact, grab lunch or dinner while you're at Gray Monk, as the European-inspired, farm-to-table cuisine of Chef Maurice Desharnais makes the onsite Lookout Restaurant worth the stop all by itself.

A solid choice for home base once in Vernon is the Prestige Vernon Lodge and Conference Centre. The lodge embraces the outdoor



Vernon, B.C.





Okanagan Rail Trail

surroundings by incorporating a natural creek as a key element of its design. With more than 1,000 plants and a pool, the lodge's atrium is a great place to unwind. Plus there's a bar there, so it's like a classy, Canadian Pirates of the Caribbean for grownups.

If you'd like to keep an artisanal buzz going, you've got some stellar options. Marten Brewing Co. is a microbrewery bar and grill in the heart of downtown that offers great beer, food and growler fills.

Okanagan Spirits Craft Distillery is Western Canada's oldest craft distillery and is North America's only designated World Class Distillery. They make everything from vodka, whiskey, gin (with sales of their Evolve Gin supporting

organizations that fight for gender equality), brandies and fruit liqueurs to Canada's first genuine absinthe made of local fruit spirits rather than grain.

The BX Press Cidery presses only in the fall when select varieties of apples are ripe. The juice is fermented over the winter and released only when it has had a long, slow maturation. Plus their Character Series possesses labels and stories that are endlessly amusing.

Mealtime in Vernon is a joy, a.m. through p.m. Hit Eatology for fresh, creative breakfast fare or the Diner on Six for a more traditional, no-frills start to the day. Or get the best coffee in town at Ratio Coffee & Pastry in the historic Vernon Train Station. For lunch, walk a few doors down to the Station BBQ

Pumpkin paddler





Jugglers at Davison Orchards Country Village



Smokehouse for what might be the best overall BBQ in the province. Or choose the Midtown Bistro for a wide array of outstanding house-made options in a cozy but bright, art-filled bistro setting. For dinner, the Phoenix Steakhouse & Bar complements its AAA Angus Reserve Beef, certified Ocean Wise seafood, and local fine wines with equivalently lofty service and ambiance. The Intermezzo Restaurant & Wine Cellar exists in the same rarified air as the Phoenix, but with a Mediterranean flair. If you just feel like sips and nibbles while

walking around downtown, you've got Sweet Hoopla, the Wedge Cheesery, Teassentials and the Hot Bread Shoppe.

When you're ready to get some much-needed fresh air and exercise, the striking natural beauty in every direction offers plenty of opportunities. For golfers, the Predator Ridge Resort was created with great reverence for the spectacular natural setting. The resort is also home to fine dining, a state-of-the-art fitness center and miles of biking and walking trails. To work up more of a sweat, the Okanagan Rail Trail boasts

Davison Orchards Country Village







30 miles of multi-use heaven along a discontinued lakefront rail corridor stretching all the way to Kelowna. With a 1.3 percent maximum grade, it's accessible to all skill levels.

There's plenty more to do in Vernon than just eat, drink, and exercise. Planet Bee is a honey farm, education center and gift shop (and, yes, if you're still imbibing, they have a tasting room where you can sample their house-made meads). Davison Orchards Country Village is a remarkable, family-friendly farm with benefits. Tours, a kid's corral, bakery, cafe, store and an extensive list of warm and fuzzy intangibles make a visit to the more than 80-year-old family farm something you'll want to pencil in. If you have any time left, the Vernon Farmer's Market gathers more than 100 growers and artisans in one place to showcase the true bounty of the Okanagan Valley. It all combines to create a feeling in Vernon that announces, "It's a good thing you're here now, because in five years you might need to take a number."

If you're driving, Vernon is a 2.5-hour scenic drive from the U.S.-Canada border on Highway 97. Reserve your stay at Prestige Vernon Lodge and Conference Centre at [prestigehotelsandresorts.com/locations/vernon-lodge/overview](http://prestigehotelsandresorts.com/locations/vernon-lodge/overview). If you are tasting artisanal adult beverages, remember to travel responsibly; you can find wine-tour operators at [tourismvernon.com/en/see-and-do/Tours.aspx](http://tourismvernon.com/en/see-and-do/Tours.aspx). To plan your Vernon vacation, go to [tourismvernon.com](http://tourismvernon.com). 🍷

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