



# Wine Trails

Not so long ago, Kelowna sat on the periphery of hard core Okanagan wine touring. Sure there were notable wineries, but no critical mass. Times change. Check out the Kelowna Wine Trails today

Pretty much everybody in the Central Okanagan lives near a winery. My home turf is the Westside Wine Trail, one of five newly designated routes on the Kelowna Wine Trails, and home of some of the Valley's oldest vineyards with vines dating to the 1960s on the flanks of Mount Boucherie. My neighbours include two local industry icons, Quail's Gate, where you can see Allison House, one of the region's original homesteads, and Mission Hill with its signature tower and a carillon that makes my day as the bells chime out. Both offer stellar dining. Nearby, Little Straw Vineyards sports a relatively new name, while Kalala is the Valley's newest organic winery, and my daily drive takes me past an old favourite, Mt. Boucherie,

and newbie Volcanic Hills.

I've visited most of the wineries on the four other wine trails. It's one-stop-shopping on the Downtown Heritage segment in Kelowna's city centre. Calona Vineyards is BC's first commercial winery and the wine shop stocks both Calona and Sandhill vintages.

North of the city, Lake Country's Scenic Sip winds through farmland and horse ranches, taking in another Okanagan wine pioneer at Gray Monk, where the restaurant also boasts Canada's Chef of the Year, Willi Franz. I surprised one of the partners of Ex Nihilo (and justified some of my time studying Latin in high school) when I translated the name as "out of nothing"—although I'd call the current art exhibit "Something!"



Arrowleaf Cellars hosts a wonderful picnic site and Ancient Hills harbours some mysterious old vines.

On the broad vineyard-lined slopes south of the city, the Lakeshore Wine Route lays out its personal perspective on the brilliant lake views that characterize all of Kelowna's wine trails. And speaking of character, this route hosts everything from the artistic to the eccentric with gallery space at Tantalus, a heartwarming forest fire story at St. Hubertus & Oak Bay, repeat

Canadian Winery of the Year awards for CedarCreek and the mystical energy of Summerhill's pyramid. It's a good idea to plan this tour around mealtime as both Summerhill and CedarCreek also present notable dining.

Rolling along the East Kelowna Wine Trail in autumn, I recommend you open the windows and let in the scent of apples ripening in the close-packed orchards. Here the vineyards are small, the wineries intimate and sometimes quirky. I felt an instant connection with House of Rose's unique blend, Hot Flash, and what can I say about peering through funky glasses at The Vibrant Vine's psychedelic 3-D label. On this route I discovered The View's red stiletto, Camelot's sword Excalibur and SpierHead's pumpkin patch. Makes me wonder what I'll find on my next sip trip.

**Clockwise:** Salad and dessert at Mission Hill's Terrace Restaurant; the waterfeature at Summerhill Pyramid Winery; tasting at Mt. Boucherie Family Estate Winery; award on display at Camelot Vineyards Estate Winery; Sandhill's master winemaker, Howard Soon.

Story and photos by  
Laurie Carter

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER





## Winery Dining

*As the Okanagan wine industry evolves, bringing more and more sophisticated palates to the Valley, the vineyard culinary scene is making huge strides to keep pace.*

Many Kelowna area wineries provide shady patios and grassy picnic areas. Some also sell cheeses, deli items and nibbles to enjoy with wine purchased on site. In some cases dining is seasonal or limited to wine festival and other special events. But this area also claims some of the very best restaurants in the Okanagan Valley. Renowned chefs place a strong emphasis on pairing their vintages with locally sourced produce and meals are all served with a memorable view.



### Lake Country's Scenic Sip

#### Grapevine Restaurant

Gray Monk Estate Winery

### Lakeshore Wine Route

#### Sunset Organic Bistro

Summerhill Pyramid Winery

#### Terrace Restaurant

CedarCreek Estate Winery

### Westside Wine Trail

#### Terrace Restaurant

Mission Hill Family Estate

#### Old Vines Restaurant

Quail's Gate Winery

#### Barrel Top Grill

Little Straw Vineyards

**Clockwise:** Gray Monk Estate Winery; wine display at The Vibrant Vine; tasting at Ex Nihilo Vineyards; House of Rose Winery; sculpture from the Nathalie Decoster exhibition on at Mission Hill Family Estate; art and a view at Tantalus Vineyards.