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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **OKANAGAN BEACHES RANKED AMONG THE BEST IN CANADA**

For decades the Okanagan's warm, sandy beaches have been popular destinations for vacationers. Now the millions of people who use the world's top travel website have confirmed that Okanagan beaches aren't just good – they're fantastic!

In its just-released 2011 Travellers' Choice Awards for Best Beaches, TripAdvisor has announced that travellers have ranked the beaches of the Okanagan Valley second among the Top 10 Beaches in Canada. Three valley beaches in particular – Kelowna's City Park Beach and Penticton's Okanagan Beach and Skaha Beach – were considered so scenic and inviting that they were ranked tops in the country, second only to the ocean beach at Tofino, B.C.

The Okanagan beaches beat out other locations in B.C. and across Canada including Parksville, B.C. (3rd place), Cavendish, P.E.I. (4th), Charlottetown, P.E.I. (5th), Cape Breton Island, N.S. (6th), Sunshine Coast, B.C. (7th), Wasaga Beach, Ont. (8th), Harrison Hot Springs, B.C. (9th), and Galiano Island, B.C. (10th).

"This high-profile praise for our world-class beaches is well deserved," says Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association CEO Glenn Mandziuk. "It not only recognizes our region as a premier destination for beaches and watersports, it also gives a big global boost to our marketing and promotion," Mandziuk adds. "This high ranking lets the millions of travellers who use TripAdvisor know about the wonderful experiences they can have here, not just at our beaches but also at our wineries, golf courses, fine restaurants, resorts, ski hills and other excellent amenities."

Tourism Kelowna Media Relations Manager Catherine Frechette says, "The Hot Sands Beach in Kelowna's City Park and beaches along Okanagan Lake in general have long been family favourites during the summer months, and we're so pleased that TripAdvisor's readers have been voicing their enthusiasm for our beaches to win us this accolade."

"There are just over 8.8 million unique visitors for Canada on TripAdvisor, so this endorsement gives Kelowna's beach offerings some serious exposure to a significant travel audience," Frechette adds. "Furthermore, these awards reach an audience of people who are actively planning their vacations and seeking independent travel reviews from other travellers. Thanks to our many visitors and fans who took the time to give Kelowna beaches the thumbs-up on TripAdvisor."

Penticton & Wine Country Tourism Marketing Manager Jessie Campbell notes, "On the shores of two beautiful lakes – with Okanagan Lake on the north and Skaha Lake at the south –

Penticton’s beaches continue to be a popular destination for families and friends during the hot summer months. And with over 2,000 hours of sunshine annually, there’s no better place to base your summer vacation than on the shores of a now top-rated Okanagan beach.”

TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel website, recently announced the winners of its 2011 Travellers' Choice Beaches Awards, naming the top beaches in the world, the U.S., Europe, Asia, Canada, the South Pacific, the Caribbean & Mexico, and Central & South America. Results were based on the highest rated beach destinations by travellers in TripAdvisor reviews. The Canadian results are at: [www.tripadvisor.ca/TCBeaches-g153339-Canada.html](http://www.tripadvisor.ca/TCBeaches-g153339-Canada.html). A recent TripAdvisor survey in the U.S. found that 68 per cent of travellers plan a beach vacation in 2011. TripAdvisor’s group of 18 travel websites receive more than 50 million unique monthly visitors.

In its Top 10 Beaches in Canada category, TripAdvisor stated: “The Okanagan Valley, in the interior of British Columbia, is a popular Canadian vacation destination known for skiing in the winter and watersports in the summer. The area’s quaint towns and lush vineyards are connected by a network of clear blue lakes and rivers and surrounded by rolling, sun-dappled hills. Head to Kelowna for one of several wine festivals or to Penticton for the sugary summer Peach Festival. To the south is Osoyoos, home to an arid desert filled with rare plants and animals.”

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**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Glenn Mandziuk**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
*Thompson Okanagan Tourism Assn.*  
*Tourism*  
 250-860-5999 ext 216  
 ceo@totabc.com

**Catherine Frechette**  
*Media Relations Manager*  
*Tourism Kelowna*  
 250-861-1515 ext 203  
 catherine@tourismkelowna.com

**Jessie Campbell**  
*Tourism Marketing Manager*  
*Penticton & Wine Country*  
 250-490-2464  
 jcampbell@penticton.org

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The **Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA)** works to advance the interests of the tourism industry and the more than 3,200 tourism stakeholder businesses and organizations in the region. It pursues strategic leadership and partnerships aimed at tourism industry development, community development, and marketing promotion.

As a Destination Marketing Organization, **Tourism Kelowna** invests in advertising, promotion and sales strategies that build consumer demand for the destination resulting in increased visitation and spending. It also operates two Visitor Centres – on Harvey Avenue at Ellis Street and at the Kelowna International Airport. There are over 30 beaches and beach accesses in the Central Okanagan, from pebbly beaches to sandy ones, and from secret coves to bustling shores.

**Penticton & Wine Country Tourism** is the external marketing function of the City of Penticton, and is administered by the Penticton & Wine Country Chamber of Commerce. Its mandate is to externally market Penticton to measurably increase tourism businesses growth.