

Hemispheres

THREE PERFECT DAYS IN KELOWNA, B.C.



**BRIGHT LIGHTS:
WE HEAD TO LAS VEGAS
TO CHECK OUT SPRING'S
HOTTEST NEW LOOKS**

**HOW SELF-DRIVING CARS
WILL CHANGE AMERICA
(WARNING: IT COULD
BE A BUMPY RIDE)**

**MATT DAMON ON
SOLVING THE WORLD'S
WATER CRISIS—AND
IRKING JOHN KRASINSKI**

**SEEING RED: MEET THE
CALIFORNIA VINTNERS
UPROOTING TRADITION
IN WINE COUNTRY**

THREE PERFECT DAYS

KELOWNA

This postcard-perfect lake town is nestled in Canada's Okanagan Valley, home to more wineries than Walla Walla and better snow than Whistler. And you found it first.

BY JACQUELINE DETWILER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL HANSON

89

DAY ONE

Skiing with snow ghosts, sampling Indian-Canadian fusion cuisine and enjoying a very, very hot coffee

93

DAY TWO

Cavorting with enthusiastic sled dogs, climbing a 60-foot tower of ice and indulging in midday s'mores

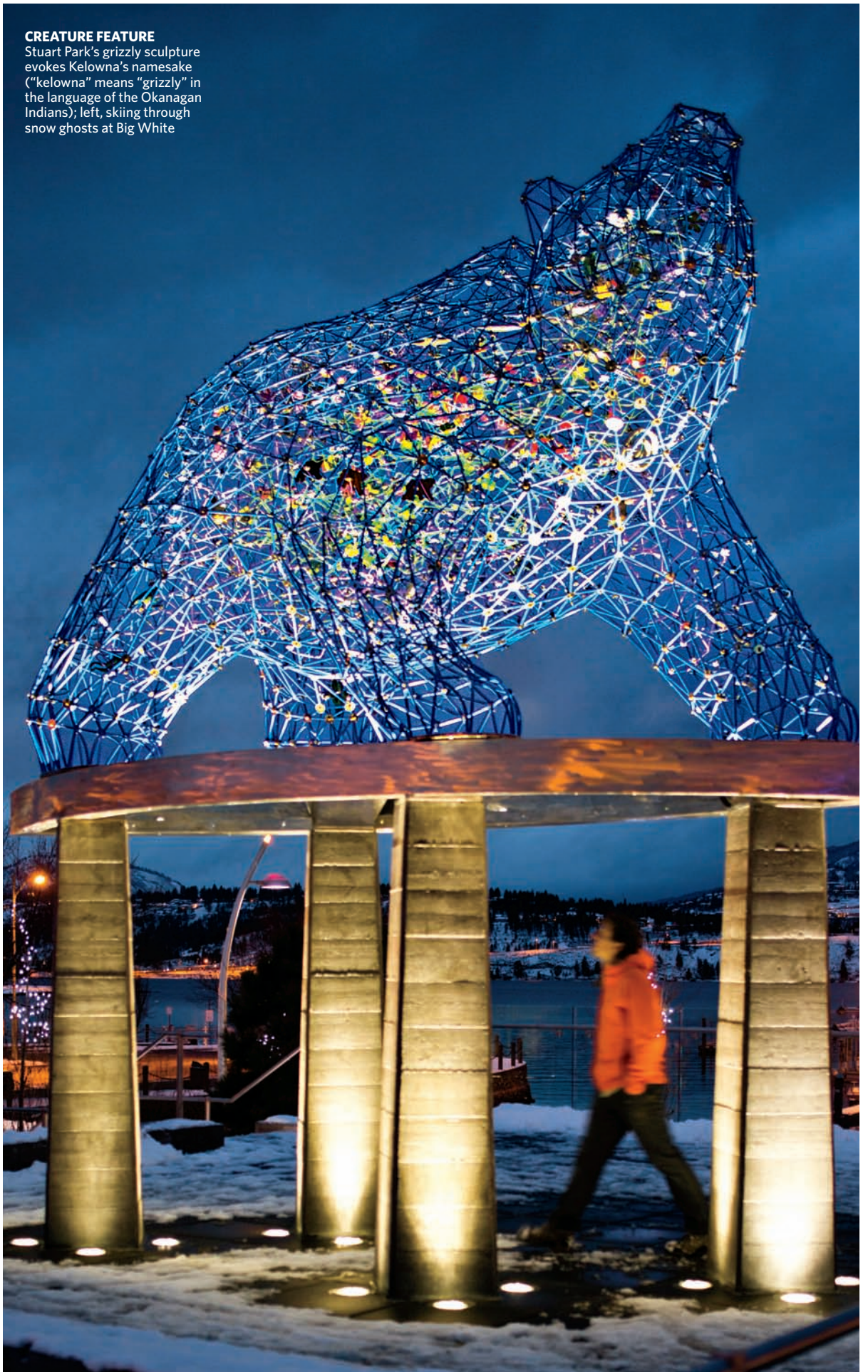
96

DAY THREE

Tasting the fruits of the winemakers' labor and digging into a superlative local cheeseburger

CREATURE FEATURE

Stuart Park's grizzly sculpture evokes Kelowna's namesake ("kelowna" means "grizzly" in the language of the Okanagan Indians); left, skiing through snow ghosts at Big White



WHEN FACED WITH the prospect of describing Kelowna, a winemaking and ski resort town surrounded by three mountain ranges and a lake in Canada's Okanagan Valley, one is tempted to rely on juxtaposition: Napa meets Tahoe, *Sideways* meets *Dirty Dancing*, *Ski Party* meets *Meatballs*.

Otherwise, conveying the scope of the place can be difficult. In valleys abutting a 68-mile-long lake fed by crystalline mountain streams sit nearly 30 wineries, 20 golf courses, countless running and biking trails, and a ski resort with some of the most pillowy powder in the world. ¶ What the comparisons fail to capture, however, is that unlike Napa or Tahoe, Kelowna is a 1,120-square-mile playground that remains largely untouched by the other kids. You can taste wines poured by the vintners themselves, swoop down black diamond runs all by yourself and procure a lakeside table without making reservations a week in advance. As one local ski instructor puts it, "I *think* I waited in a lift line for five minutes ... once?" Napa meets Tahoe meets Narnia. There. That should do it.

WHOA THERE
A Candle Creek Kennels pup; right, African beef salad rolls at Carvers





KELOWNA BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION

179,839

ANNUAL SNOWFALL, IN FEET, AT BIG WHITE SKI RESORT

24½

LONGEST SKI RUN, IN MILES, AT BIG WHITE

4½

(“AROUND THE WORLD” ROUTE)

YEAR THAT KELOWNA'S FIRST VINEYARD WAS PLANTED

1859

NUMBER OF WINE TRAILS

5

NUMBER OF NHL PLAYERS WHO HAVE VACATION HOMES IN KELOWNA

75

AGE RANGE OF PLAYERS ON THE ROCKETS (KELOWNA'S WHL TEAM)

15–20

AMOUNT OF DRY FOOD, IN TONS, CONSUMED BY SLED DOGS AT CANDLE CREEK KENNELS ANNUALLY

3

(PLUS 3 TONS OF CHICKEN)

DAY ONE | It's a powder day when you wake up in your luxury **Stonebridge Lodge** apartment at Big White Ski Resort, so you don't bother turning on the fireplace or the hot tub while you toss back a cup of coffee. You've stored your skis and boots in the lockers downstairs, and in less than 15 minutes you're out the door and hoofing it to **Beano's Coffee Parlor** in Big White Village. On the way to breakfast, you accidentally take a step off the path and sink into a snowdrift up to your hip. It's gonna be a good morning.

With a fortifying ham-egg-and-veggie bagel in hand, you secure the services of a spunky British ski instructor named Fi, and the two of you head for the slopes via the Snow Ghost Express. As you peer out at a panorama of droopy, haphazardly snow-dusted Dr. Seuss trees, the powder comes down so softly it glitters in the air like a holiday store display. With each hundred-foot rise up



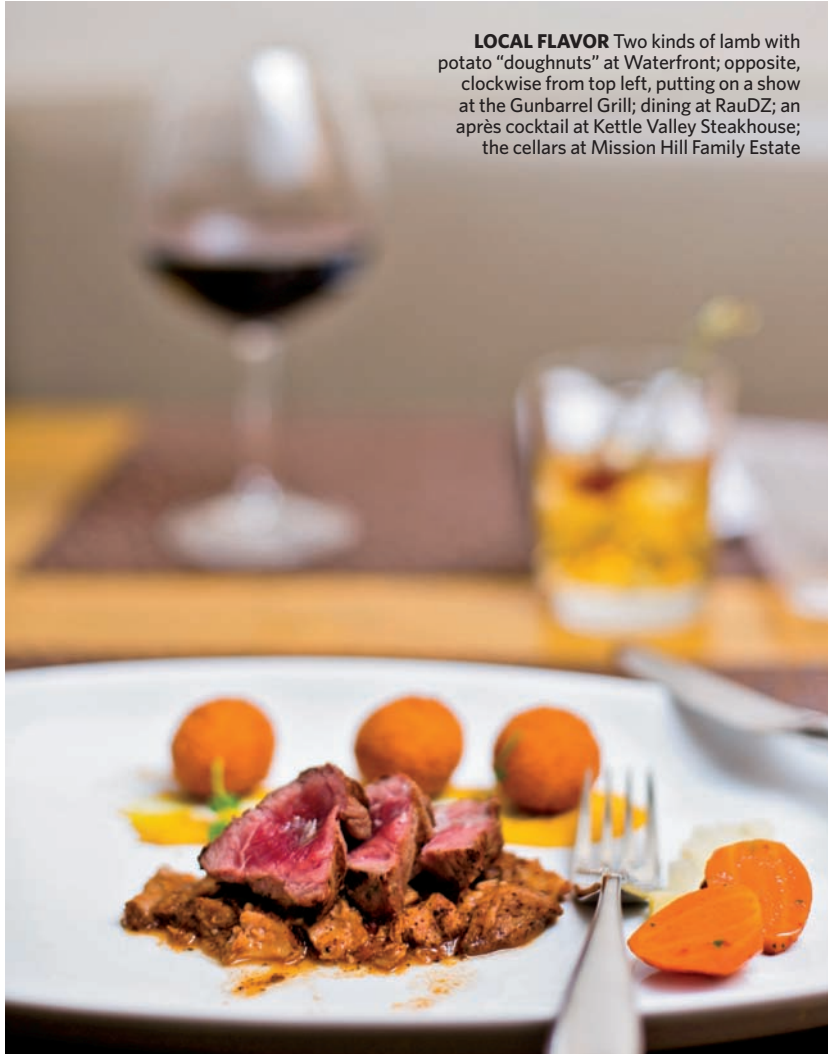
WANT MORE?

Download our iPad app.

the mountain, the trees gain another layer of snow, until they could be mistaken for contorted yeti reaching up for your feet. These are the fabled “snow ghosts” of Big White, Fi says, and the lift you're riding is named in their honor.

You soon find out why. Tree skiing is Big White's showpiece—the fluff between the trunks is thick and airy, staying soft for weeks. You have so much fun slashing through the snow ghosts that your quads don't call for a break until well after noon.

When they do, you stow your skis and wander over to the west side of the village, where the après parties are already beginning at the ice bar behind **Carvers**. Inside, you order a hearty plate of vindaloo poutine, an Indian twist on a French-Canadian classic that combines sweet potato fries, braised lamb and cheese curds. It's so delicious you wonder why there isn't an Indian restaurant



LOCAL FLAVOR Two kinds of lamb with potato “doughnuts” at Waterfront; opposite, clockwise from top left, putting on a show at the Gunbarrel Grill; dining at RauDZ; an après cocktail at Kettle Valley Steakhouse; the cellars at Mission Hill Family Estate

HOW 'BOUT THEM APPLES?

Canada’s fruit basket sees the first non-browning varieties

The Okanagan Valley’s moderate climate and rich silt are a boon for more than just winemakers. Since the S&O Railway arrived in 1892, the area around Kelowna has been one of the most important agricultural regions in British Columbia, particularly in terms of fruit. Today, the Okanagan provides Canada with 75 percent of its apricots, 40 percent of its cherries and 20 percent of its peaches, plums, pears and apples.

Now a local agriculture biotech firm called Okanagan Specialty Fruits has upped the ante. By modifying the gene that produces polyphenol oxidase (the enzyme that makes sliced apples turn brown), the company has created the world’s first non-browning apple, dubbed the Arctic. Reactions have been mixed: Some worry that consumers may be nervous about genetically modified apples; others say the breakthrough will encourage people to eat more pre-sliced fruit instead of fries or chips. With government approval pending, the fate of the Arctic apple is uncertain, but the folks at Specialty Fruits remain bullish. “If it’s successful,” company president Neal Carter said last year, “all the big guys will be piling in to be second.”



FAIREST OF THEM ALL?
The non-browning Arctic apple

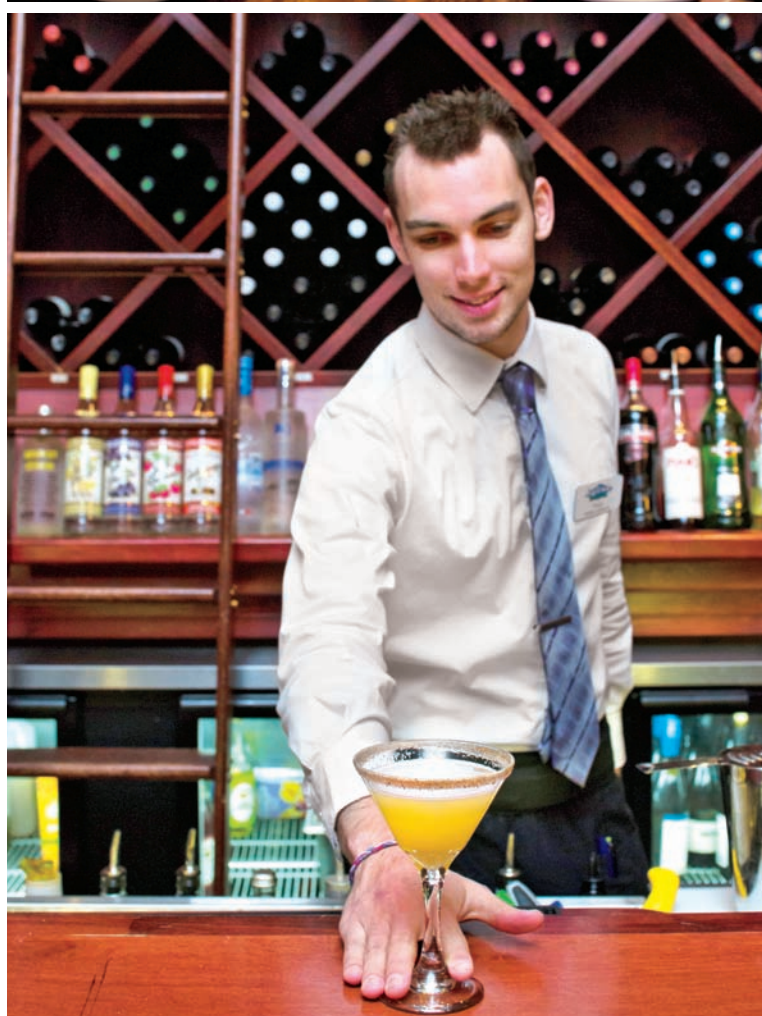
COURTESY OKANAGAN SPECIALTY FRUITS

on every ski mountain; in fact, you ponder the financial viability of such a venture while skiing circles around snow ghosts the rest of the afternoon. When the light finally starts to fade, you call it a day and return to Stonebridge for a shower.

Warmly clad in an abundance of flannel, you walk back into the village to find a lively crowd at **The BullWheel**, a sporty burger bar with hockey on several TVs. You’ve heard the bit about Canadians being friendly, but here the patrons are so personable that within minutes nearly everyone at the bar has leaned in to smell the maple-finished Crown Royal you’re drinking. “I think they age it in maple syrup barrels?” ventures one patron as a friendly debate erupts about how it’s made. (A quick check with

Google shows that it is finished in maple-toasted oak barrels.)

Before long, The BullWheel’s famously gregarious and well-traveled manager, Al, is regaling the assembled company with the story of the time he drove a three-wheeled mototaxi across the Peruvian Andes (the jersey Al wore on said trip, along with a few of his other sartorial artifacts, can be found on the bar’s walls). Although you would love to stay and hear more, your stomach has started grumbling. So you take a gondola over to **Kettle Valley Steakhouse**, where your waiter suggests a local wine to pair with a 1½-inch cowboy-cut rib steak in Madagascar peppercorn sauce. The result is a meal befitting someone who skied 20,000 vertical feet today (namely, you).





SLOPE AND GLORY Carving through the trees at Big White; below right, nachos with all the fixings at The BullWheel



Because skiers are notoriously early to rise—and therefore early to drink—it's still barely evening when you've finished eating. There's no way you're getting to bed without a nightcap. You opt for the legendary Gunbarrel Coffee—decaf, of course—at the **Gunbarrel Grill**. Working from a cart in what looks like the lodge of an exceptionally talented hunting family, your waiter heats a sugar-rimmed glass and fills it with brandy, coffee and cream, then pours flaming Grand Marnier down the barrel of a shotgun into your drink. The other patrons clap in awe as this process is completed; within minutes, similar carts bearing shotguns appear at many of their tables. Launching the evening's drinking festivities, you decide, is enough of an accomplishment to merit hanging up your ski beanie for the day.

DAY TWO | Your legs are screaming from yesterday's powderfest, so you skip the hill and sleep in awhile before strolling over to **Santé** for a leisurely breakfast of eggs Benedict with smoked salmon and capers. After that, you're off to see a man about 31 dogs.

The man's name is Tim, and the dogs are Alaskan huskies. As the proprietors of **Candle Creek Kennels**, Tim and wife Kerry have adopted a passel of mutts that didn't quite make Iditarod teams, in addition to other unwanted sled dogs from all over British Columbia. While Tim selects the dogs for today's ride, it becomes clear that the energetic pups still *really* enjoy pulling sleds, Iditarod or no. They hop on top of their doghouses, bark, roll around on the ground and chomp mouthfuls of snow. Once roped in, the eight lucky winners pull you on a zippy three-mile loop through a



THREE PERFECT DAYS || KELOWNA

solemn pine wood—and even pose for pictures before you grudgingly take your leave.

On your way back to the gondola, you can't help but notice what looks like a 60-foot, powder-blue frozen waterfall. You stop into a nearby warming shed to ask what it's for, and find yourself quickly outfitted with crampons, a harness and a pair of pickaxes. Jim, a certified climbing guide with almost four decades' experience, hooks you into a top rope as he informs you that this is Big White's **Ice Climbing Tower**. "Just, uh, climb it?" you say, and Jim nods as if scaling a six-story column of ice is the easiest thing in the world. Ten agonizing minutes later, you actually reach the top and, with your pickax, ring a small bell that hangs there. You think your back may punish you for this later, but you've earned some mighty impressive pictures.

To celebrate, you take the gondola to **Globe**, a petite tapas joint known for having the best coffee on the mountain. There you scarf down a sandwich of Italian charcuterie followed by a set of s'mores, which arrive alongside a flame for roasting the house-made marshmallows.

In a sugary fog, you bid farewell to Big White and drive down into the town of Kelowna itself, where you check into the lakefront **Hotel Eldorado**. Your room reminds you of a boathouse, with antiques wood floors, cozy cream linens and the occasional paddle mounted on the wall. Still a bit chilled, you're immediately drawn to the programmable whirlpool tub in an alcove with waterfront windows (covered with white wooden slats, adjustable for privacy). Dinner, you decide, can wait an hour.



CLASSICS ROCK
Browsing rare books at
Pulp Fiction Coffee House

OK, maybe a little more than an hour. You eventually amble downtown to **Waterfront**, a restaurant and wine bar whose chef, Mark Filatow, is one of the few in Canada who are also members of the prestigious Sommelier Guild. With his help, you order a round of creamy Pacific oysters, braised pork-stuffed ravioli in white wine and pancetta cream, and a buttery duck breast with mushroom and spaetzle sauté paired with glasses of spectacular local riesling and pinot noir. A waiter arrives with a dessert menu, but—after two days of skiing, ice climbing and dogsledding—you're spent. You head back to the hotel and reluctantly close the slats.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

THE INSIDE SCOOP FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER JAMES FIELD



Alyn Nash

SNOW PRO, BIG WHITE
SKI & BOARD SCHOOL

"The Crawford Trails at Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park are fantastic for mountain biking. They're 10 minutes outside of town, but you might not see anyone there apart from your friends."



Valaura Vedan

CONTENT MANAGER/EDITOR,
WELCOMETOKELOWNA.COM

"I love the Grateful Fed. It's a pub, but an almost insanely small one. They just started an acoustic jam session on Saturdays. How they fit a band in there, I'll never know."



Kim Dillabaugh

ASSISTANT COACH, KELOWNA ROCKETS
HOCKEY TEAM

"There's a pub-ish restaurant downtown called Sturgeon Hall. It's about two blocks from Prospera Place [where the Rockets play], so people go there to have dinner before the game."



DAY ONE

- Stonebridge Lodge** 5257 Big White Rd.; Tel. 250-765-8888
- Beano's Coffee Parlor** Village Centre Mall; Tel. 250-491-3558
- Carvers** Inn at Big White; Tel. 250-491-2009
- The BullWheel** Whitefoot Lodge; Tel. 250-765-6551
- Kettle Valley Steakhouse** Happy Valley Day Lodge; Tel. 250-491-0130
- Gunbarrel Grill** Snowshoe Sam's; Tel. 250-765-1416

DAY TWO

- Santé** White Crystal Inn; Tel. 250-491-8122
- Candle Creek Kennels** Big White Ski Resort; Tel. 250-491-6111
- Ice Climbing Tower** Big White Ski Resort; Tel. 250-491-6111
- Globe** Trappers Crossing; Tel. 250-765-1501
- Hotel Eldorado** 500 Cook Rd.; Tel. 250-763-7500
- Waterfront** 1180 Sunset Dr.; Tel. 250-979-1222

DAY THREE

- Pulp Fiction Coffee House** 1598 Pandosy St.; Tel. 778-484-7444
- Olive & Elle** 1585 Pandosy St.; Tel. 250-862-2778
- Quails' Gate** 3303 Boucherie Rd.; Tel. 250-769-4451
- Mission Hill Family Estate** 1730 Mission Hill Rd.; Tel. 250-768-7611
- RauDZ** 1560 Water St.; Tel. 250-868-8805



SHIPSHAPE At the lakeside getaway Hotel Eldorado

Kelowna's famous wineries, and you want to be able to taste as much as you like. The first stop is **Quails' Gate**, a homey oak-and-brick affair with a roaring fireplace and a tasting room overlooking the vines in their ranks. A friendly attendant pours you some delicate riesling and a rich, spicy pinot noir. Another specialty, you learn, is the Quails' Gate chenin blanc, which was served to President Obama on his first visit to Canada, in 2009. You order a glass with your lunch of crab cakes and parsnip soup in the winery's restaurant.

Next up: **Mission Hill Family Estate**, a grand Mediterranean-inspired hilltop palazzo. With vines located in five pockets all over the Okanagan Valley, Mission Hill can make anything from supremely light vignerons to heady bordeaux blends. You ask for a representative sample and then beeline it to the capacious courtyard to enjoy the view.

After returning to the Eldorado and indulging in a lengthy nap, you're off to dinner at **RauDZ**, a restaurant that focuses on the bounty of the Okanagan, historically the breadbasket of British Columbia. You settle on venison carpaccio with apples and walnuts, and a veggie-stacked cheeseburger the size of your head. After all that wine, you're thinking you might try something different to drink. Luckily, bartender Gerry Jobe has just the thing: the whiskey old-fashioned that won him the gold in a recent cocktail competition.

As he stands at your table filling a lantern with chocolate and tobacco smoke in preparation for mixing your cocktail, you marvel at the amount of time he's spending on you. Come to think of it, you didn't even make a reservation.

You wonder if the other kids *really* need to know that this particular playground exists. You take a sip of your cocktail. Let them have Whistler.

Brooklyn-based Hemispheres senior editor
JACQUELINE DETWILER *thinks New York City is like a giant playground that all the other kids have discovered.*

DAY THREE | It's a struggle to leave the view from your room at the Eldorado, but seeing all the boats in their slips reminds you that Kelowna has free Sunday parking, so you drive downtown to check out the shops. On Pandosy Street, you stumble upon **Pulp Fiction Coffee House**, which provides you with a crumbly blueberry "scrumpet"

and a creamy cappuccino to enjoy as you flip through covers of racy 1950s dime-store novels. Across the street is the winsome boutique **Olive & Elle**, where you pick up some French-style soaps and red plaid flannel blankets as gifts.

Outside, you meet up with a local who's agreed to drive you around for the afternoon. You're planning to visit a few of

BOARDING PASS ➔ From its many wineries, inviting shops and delicious eateries to its adventure-ready mountains and pristine lake, the town of Kelowna, British Columbia, epitomizes year-round appeal. United can take you nonstop from Los Angeles to Kelowna, or fly you to Vancouver (a not-too-lengthy drive away) from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, Denver and Chicago, plus seasonal service from New York/Newark and Washington, D.C. Before boarding, consider purchasing a day pass to relax in a spacious United Club; memberships are also available. **For detailed schedule information or to book your flight, go to united.com.**