



TRIP IDEAS

THOMPSON OKANAGAN CYCLING TOURS

The Thompson Okanagan region is cycling central. Spend a summer's day pedalling through vineyards and across abandoned rail trestles, or plan an epic ride across ranching country.

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Mission Creek Greenway

Ride from lakeshore to canyon along Kelowna's Mission Creek Greenway. This 17-km/11-mi route follows the shady banks of Mission Creek from the heart of Kelowna to the stunning geological formations of Gallagher's Canyon. Walkers and joggers also use this level, multi-use trail through town; further into the canyon the path gets both steeper and more scenic. Pick up the trail on Lakeshore Road or at points en route.

Post ride, grab a table on the patio at Lakeshore Road's award-winning Cabana Bar and Grille, or dine lakeside and stay the night at the Manteo Resort Waterfront Hotel and Villas, just minutes from the Greenway.

Kettle Valley Rail Trail

Ride across gorges and pedal through vineyards on the 450-km/280-mi Kettle Valley Rail Trail (or KVR), which follows the century-old Kettle Valley Railway route. The whole trip takes about eight days, but cyclists can join it anywhere en route. A highlight is the Myra Canyon stretch (an easy day trip from Kelowna), where cyclists ride across 18 gorge-spanning trestles.

Further south, roll through vineyards and stop for a tasting at any of about two dozen wineries along the Naramata Bench. Try the Pinot Gris at Poplar Grove Winery or stop for a vineyard-side meal at Hillside Estate Winery & Bistro. In Penticton, stock up on picnic fixings at the Bench Artisan Food Market or fill up panniers at the Penticton Farmers' Market. Ready to stop for the night? Settle into a waterfront room at the Penticton Lakeside Resort.

International Bicycling & Hiking Trail

The 18-km/11-mi International Bicycling & Hiking Trail follows the Okanagan River from just north of Oliver to Osoyoos Lake. The route is gentle, level and car-free, and covers an area so rich with wineries it's been dubbed the Golden Mile. Pedal along the shady riverside and through farmland, with mountain views and wineries at every turn.

Sample lush reds at Hester Creek Estate Winery or Tinhorn Creek Vineyards, and stop for lunch on Sonora Room's patio at Burrowing Owl Estate Winery. In Osoyoos, rest up at the Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa, an eco-friendly oasis complete with a golf course and spa. Or bliss out on the private beach, the only licensed beach in Canada, at the new Walnut Beach Resort.

Bike Parks at Mountain Resorts

Looking for something a little faster? Grab the bike and hop a chairlift at Sun Peaks or Silver Star resorts for lift-accessed downhill, freeride, single-track and cross-country routes. Each mountain is well set up with rentals, tours, skills camps and lots of bike-in, bike-out accommodation.

In Kamloops, hone skills on jumps and stunts at Kamloops Bike Ranch before heading 45 minutes north to Sun Peaks Resort. Dubbed one of the "Five Best Mountain Bike Parks in North America" by BIKE magazine, Sun Peaks boasts 595m/1,954ft of vertical and 29 runs ranging from easy to challenging.

There's more single-track for all levels of riders at Silver Star Bike Park near Vernon. Stay in the village or check out Vernon's new Sparkling Hill Resort, home to a cold sauna where a few minutes at -110 Celsius leaves cyclists feeling as invigorated as a long ride.

Merritt Ranchlands

The rolling ranchland around Merritt has uncrowded cross-country and technical trails. Pick up a map at the British Columbia Visitor Centre in Merritt (many of the trails are found right behind the centre) then rest trail-tired legs at the Quilchena Hotel. This 1908 lodge is the real deal: there are even three bullet holes in the bar.

More Wild West ambience abounds at Historic Hat Creek Ranch near Cache Creek; bike local trails then bunk down in a miners' tent, a teepee or a traditional First Nations winter home, called a kekuli. The kekuli is built partly underground and can sleep up to 20 adults.

Thompson Okanagan Transportation

From Vancouver, it's about a four-hour drive to Kamloops or about 4.5 hours to Kelowna. It's also possible to fly to either city directly from many Western Canadian cities. Once there, pick up a bike map at a Visitor Centre, and check with local bike shops for the latest scoop on trail conditions. Prefer a tour? Try Monashee Adventure Tours in Kelowna.



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