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THIS WEEK

TRAVEL

Travel:
KTW newsroom
editor@kamloopsthisweek.com
Ph: 374-7467 Ext: 222



 **video-online]**

www.kamloopsthisweek.com

For a further look at the newest resort hotel in Osoyoos, check out video footage on our home page online. Click on "Lifestyles".

The view from the second floor of the Walnut Beach Resort in the desert climate of Osoyoos. The resort hotel opened in April and is already a hit with tourists, who have ultra-modern suites to enjoy (below). For more information on the resort, go online to walnutbeachosooyoos.com.
Christopher Foulds photos/KTW

Walnut Beach beckons

By Christopher Foulds
KTW EDITOR
editor@kamloopsthisweek.com

THE OIL-PATCH KIDS SAT NEXT to each other in a row, soaking up the hot tub's heat as they faced Osoyoos Lake and private Palapa Beach, about 20 feet below their majestic view of Canada's only desert.

The five kids, a cousin combination from Lac La Biche, Alta., were taking a break at Osoyoos' Walnut Beach Resort as their two families made their way to Sooke on Vancouver Island for a salmon-fishing trip.

But first, two nights at the newest resort hotel in the southern Interior.

Pointing to their two boats moored at the resort's private dock on the resort's private beach alongside Lakeshore Drive, the Wild Rose quintet said they were in no hurry to continue their journey west.

Their favourite part of Walnut Beach Resort?

Easy, they said — where they were now relaxing.

The hot tub is one of two on the Sun Arbour Pool Terrace, a trellised oasis that includes a 30-foot pool, all manner of patio chair and loungers and five brand new barbecues for communal use.

And drinks in the sun are as close as the nearest server entering the deck area.

All this overlooks Canada's warmest lake, looking west, as the three-storey, 112-room resort hugs its centrepiece in a horseshoe embrace.

Walnut Beach Resort opened in April, created and constructed by Abbotsford's Palcor and managed by Toronto's Atlific Hotels and Resorts.

"It's the only hotel in Osoyoos with its own private beach," says Sonja Cuthbert, Walnut Beach's director of guest experience.

"It's also the only hotel/resort right on the water."

Walnut Beach Resort is also all about location, location, location.

Nestled between Osoyoos Lake and a quiet bend on Lakeshore Drive, the resort is far enough away from the hustle and bustle of the town's Main Street motel row, yet only a 10-minute walk or two-minute drive to all amenities.

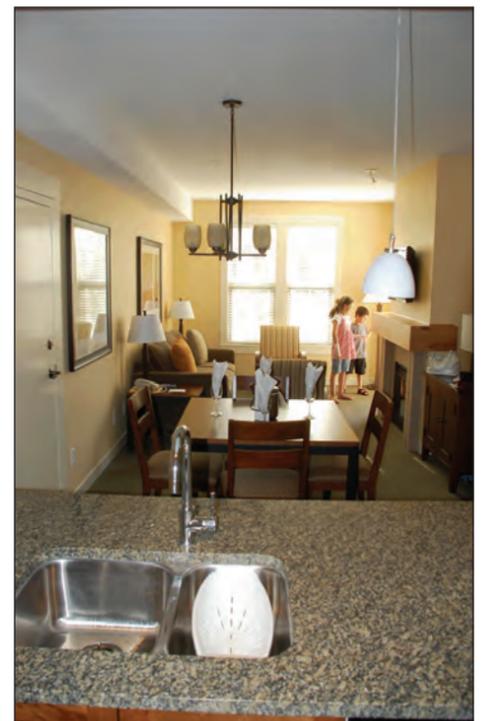
The resort features full suite ownership in which owners place their suites into rental pool.

The suites are more like upscale apartments, with most containing everything even the most discriminating traveller demands, including cozy fireplaces.

The Sommelier penthouse suite spreads over 1,351 square feet and sleeps up to eight. Four different two-bedroom suites, ranging in size from 889 square feet and 1,085 square feet, sleep up to six.

Three styles of one-bedroom suites, from 625 square feet to 786 square feet, sleep between four and six, while the 447-square-foot studio suite sleeps four.

◆ See MASSAGE C2



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Massage a treat after a day in the sun



LEFT: Palapa Beach is the private retreat reserved for those staying at Walnut Beach Resort. The beach is right on Osoyoos Lake, Canada's warmest, and includes a private dock that offers numerous boat slips. BELOW: The Sun Arbour Pool Terrace features two hot tubs and a heated pool. Christopher Foulds photos/KTW

◆ **From C1**

All suites, with the exception of the studios, include washer and dryer, while the resort itself offers a full-service, coin-operated laundry room.

All suites include a full kitchen, with fridge, stove, microwave oven, dishwasher and coffee maker, with all appliances stainless steel.

There are also designer countertops, a dining area, a living room area with wall-mounted flat screen TV and MP player and couch/pullout sofa, bedroom with wall-mounted flat screen TV and a full bathroom.

For those whose training regime continues while on vacation, Walnut Beach features a fitness room with treadmill, stationary bike and elliptical trainer, outside of which a dry sauna and steam room beckon.

For those needing kinks worked out, booking massages in a private room is available.

A day at the private beach, using the resort's private dock, swimming in the pool and getting in a cardio workout will undoubtedly work up the appetite.

That is where executive chef Jeff Miller and his cuisine crew enter the picture.

Working from the Promenade Wine and Tapas Bar, Miller, who has created culinary wonders at nearby Mount Baldy and Burrowing Owl Estate Winery, serves up a delectable weekend barbecue menu during the summer.

The menu is varied and dinners surprisingly affordable.

Examples: classic Caesar salad (\$10), corn-husk-wrapped filet of wild sockeye salmon (\$21), broiled lemon garlic tiger prawns (\$22), sirloin steak

(\$24), rib-eye steak (\$32).

Kids eat almost free, with their meals — hot dog, mini-burgers, chicken fingers or grilled cheese sandwich — topping out at only \$7.

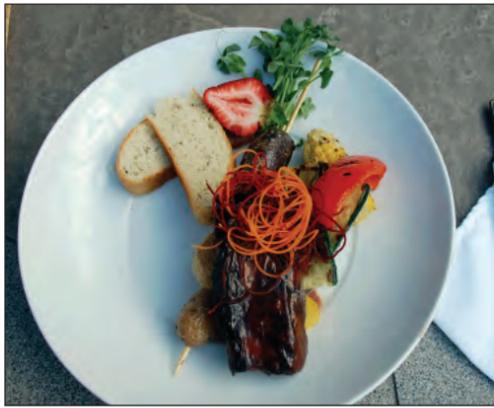
The Promenade's wine list is as impressive, as it offers a variety of selections, specifically from the Osoyoos and Oliver area.

◆ **See WALNUT C3**



TRAVEL

Walnut Beach evokes memories of Mexico



◆ From C2

Thirteen reds, 11 whites, three bubbly roses and one dessert are on the menu, from the Okanagan Vineyards Semillon/Chardonnay 2005 at \$29 a bottle to the Black Hills Nota Bene 2006 at \$129 a bottle.

The Promenade is also a popular wedding and special-events destination.

A personal observation:

Our family discovered the jewel that is Osoyoos a decade ago, when resorts were virtually unheard of and motels were of the Rat Pack variety (motel row was and remains a series of buildings that seem to have jumped out of a Sinatra flick, circa the 1960s).

Year after year we would pack up the car and spend a week in the desert heat, staying at one or another of the affordable motels.

Walnut Beach Resort is another experience altogether.

It is luxury defined and, as such, will set you back more than a standard motel.

In February, I spent some time at the Krystal Resort in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and that Pacific Ocean resort reminds me very much of Walnut Beach, with the weather, the scenery and the hotel's proximity to the lake and beach — in particular the location of the Sun Arbor Pool Terrace.

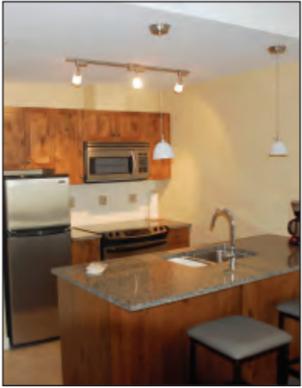
The suites are top-of-the-line; our one-bedroom abode featured two wall-mounted, flat-screen Toshiba televisions — one in the bedroom, another in the living room. The decor is contemporary and the furnishing comfortable.

While Walnut Beach Resort is indeed a destination that will impress, a couple of minor things could be done to improve the experience:

1) Wireless Internet access should be free, as it is in virtually every other lower-priced motel and hotel on the road to anywhere. As it is, Walnut Beach follows the lead of many other upscale hotels in charging for access to the Web.

2) A few more loungers are needed on the pool deck. All were taken by 9:30 a.m. on both days of our stay.

Nevertheless, for a weekend of blissful luxury, the Walnut Beach Resort is definitely worth the drive.



IMAGES OF WALNUT BEACH
Clockwise from top left: Tigers prawns and sirloin steak, as mastered by executive chef Jeff Miller; the heated pool on the Sun Arbor Pool Terrace ; the comfort of the Promenade Wine and Tapas Bar; and the kitchen in a one-bedroom suite. *Christopher Foulds photos/KTW*

