

About Osoyoos:

Canada's only desert extends past Osoyoos Lake to Skaha Lake, and west up the Similkameen Valley towards Keremeos, approximately 24 km. (15 miles). This area receives an average rainfall of less than 12 inches per year. The desert plants and animals of this area are found nowhere else in Canada. The "Osoyoos Arid Biotic Zone" is a continuation of the Sonoran Desert that extends from Mexico right up to the Okanagan Valley. While irrigation has made Osoyoos a lush green oasis, it is interesting to note that the desert continues undisturbed where there is no water. The Osoyoos area receives over 2000 hours of sunshine annually and provides all the characteristics of a true desert (rocks, sand, cactus, sagebrush, soft rolling hills), along with early springs, long hot, dry summers and beautiful sunny autumns.

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Daytime temperatures during the summer months average around 38C/100F and dropping to 16C/60F at night.

Osoyoos History:

The name Osoyoos (O-sue-use) is an Okanagan Indian word meaning "the narrows" or "the place where two lakes come together". Nomadic tribes appear to have been the Osoyoos region's first visitors around 1066. Early records indicate that no permanent Indian residents were in the area prior to 1800.

The only historical records of this early time period are pictographs on mountain walls and in caves. David Stuart and a French companion, Montigny, are credited with being the first white men to enter the Osoyoos district in September 1811. Employed by the Pacific Fur Company, these explorers were en-route to Fort Kamloops looking for a better trade route through the interior of British Columbia. They noted that Osoyoos was an ideal campsite.

After the Hudson's Bay Company bought out the Pacific Fur Company, the Hudson's Bay Company Brigades used the area as a trading route from 1812 - 1848. The British Columbia gold rush in the 1860s helped to further open the Osoyoos area. A customs house was built in 1861. Customs collector John Carmichael Haynes, justice of the peace for Osoyoos and Kootenay districts, was a pioneer settler at Osoyoos and accumulated 8900 hectares of land for cattle and a horse ranch.

The first commercial orchard was established nearby in 1890. The South Okanagan Irrigation Project brought an irrigation canal to the area by 1919. Osoyoos was incorporated in 1946. Agriculture and tourism are now the community's largest economic sectors.

For more information please visit www.destinationosoyoos.com