

IFR
IN•FLIGHT REVIEW

Helijet

Terrific Terroir

**Touring
the varied
wine growing
regions of the
Okanagan Valley**

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Helijet

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COVER PHOTO

A worker harvests Chardonnay grapes at Therapy Vineyards in Naramata, B.C.

HELIJET FLEET



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Change is in the Air



Danny Sitnam
President & CEO,
Helijet

Over the course of 35 years Helijet has grown from one helicopter and a handful of employees to become North America's largest scheduled commuter helicopter service.

To succeed in business this long, we have learned how to adapt and take advantage of new opportunities as they arise, and always with an eye on how we can better serve our customers and the communities they live in. In keeping with this, I'm pleased to inform our customers of an exciting new business agreement

Helijet has entered into with Blade Urban Air Mobility, Inc. ("Blade") of New York.


Blade is a technology-powered urban air mobility tech company committed to reducing travel friction by providing cost-effective air transportation alternatives to some of the most congested ground routes in the U.S. and abroad. To that end, Blade is set to begin marketing and selling Helijet's scheduled service passenger seats through their state-of-the-art sales systems and reservations technologies, while also offering flier experience upgrades. In turn, Helijet will use capital for future growth opportunities and re-investment into our existing infrastructure, aircraft fleet upgrades, passenger terminals, and scheduled service network expansion plans.

How will this affect our travelling guests? The short answer is new technologies being introduced

“New technologies being introduced will soon allow Helijet customers to book flights faster, easier, and with greater access to our products and services”

will soon allow customers to book flights faster, easier, and with greater access to our products and services. Specifically, this partnership with Blade will see that organization take on accountability for selling seats on our aircraft, while Helijet concentrates on operational control of flights as usual. In the short term, Helijet will continue to support the promotion, selling, booking, and marketing of our scheduled air service, but now with the financial support and sophisticated resources of Blade. We will be integrating their booking and reservation technologies over the coming months, with our intention to provide a seamless transition for our guests.

At its core, this new operating partnership between Helijet and Blade is all about preparing for the future. Together, we intend on growing our route network in B.C. and the Pacific Northwest, assessing new routes to serve Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, and other locations along the Cascadia corridor. What's more, both organizations recognize the need to embrace necessary change in the helicopter industry, particularly the transition towards cleaner, quieter, energy-efficient aircraft, including Electric Vertical Aircraft (EVA). It is our intention to deliver the first commercially available and sustainable EVA to market in B.C.

I take tremendous pride in what Helijet and its employees have accomplished over the past 35 years. But this is no time to rest on our laurels; as far as I'm concerned we're only just getting started. In Blade, we have found a unique partner that shares our commitment to exceeding customer service experiences, flight safety standards and innovation. Together, we are looking forward to a future that is literally just around the corner. 



A Midsummer Night's Dream
Sarah Roa (Puck)
Photo: Emily Cooper

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By Garth Eichel



Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AMEs)

Old School A•M•E•

Morris Forchuk

Manager, Procurement and
Fleet Planning, Helijet

A COMMON QUIP in the aviation industry is that pilots merely “borrow” aircraft from the Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AMEs) who are tasked with servicing, maintaining and keeping them airworthy. Not to be mistaken for a “mechanic”, AMEs undergo extensive post-secondary training followed by years of apprenticeship and multiple exams before they become licenced. And so it should be when it comes to flight safety.

Morris Forchuk, Helijet’s Manager, Procurement and Fleet Planning, is Helijet’s longest serving employee, and is the AME most responsible for steering the organization’s maintenance department over the past three decades as the company grew from a fledgling start-up to become North America’s largest helicopter airline.

Morris grew up on a farm in Vauxhall, Alberta, in the 1960s. He says the lifestyle was good, but the economics were not. Drawing on the skills farm-boys acquire around machinery, he enrolled in the AME program at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary, which at the time charged only \$85 tuition.

Upon graduating in 1975 Morris apprenticed at several Calgary-based helicopter companies serving the mining, oil and gas industry in the Canadian north. His paycheques were issued in Calgary, but they were earned in spartan camps throughout the Arctic where he turned wrenches on a variety of aircraft, including the Bell 47, B204, B206 and B212 helicopters, among others.

Morris licenced as an AME in 1977 and continued working in the Arctic for the next decade, generally rotating two weeks-in, two weeks out. The work suited him.

“I liked working up North,” he says with a deserved measure of pride. “I got to do and see a lot of things most people never do. How many people see muskox and polar bears when they go to work?”

Morris spent his formative years working in the Arctic where the unique demands of working in an extreme environment instills a determined work ethic — one that puts the collective good ahead of personal self-interest.

From 1980 to ’87 he worked for Dome Petroleum, based in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories. During this time he was tasked with maintaining a BO105, two S76A helicopters, and a S61N — the latter two both Sikorsky helicopters of the kind to be operated by Helijet.

His experience on type caught the attention of Helijet Operations Manager Ken Glaze. The company had only been operating for a few months when the decision was made to buy a S76A helicopter for sale in Rockford, Illinois. Glaze hired Morris over the phone, and on the Victoria Day long weekend in May, 1987, the two men first met in the passenger terminal of Vancouver International Airport, en route to the U.S. to take possession of the helicopter and ferry it to Vancouver.

Helijet’s early years required careful management of limited resources, placing demands on both the


company and its employees. Morris rose to the challenge, putting in long days and nights on the hangar floor to keep the company's Sikorsky aircraft operating. Such dedication resulted in him taking over as Director of Maintenance in October 1988. He remained in this senior management role for the next 32 years, presiding over the growth of Helijet's maintenance department as the company grew from two helicopters to become the largest scheduled helicopter airline in North America.

"Morris has been worth his weight in gold over the years," says Danny Sitnam, President and CEO, Helijet. "He has been extremely valuable saving the company money, particularly so managing and procuring aircraft parts, which are the biggest ledger on the company books." He adds, "Morris has a unique talent for managing stores well and carefully, and does something no one else can in our organization — stay about two or three steps ahead when thinking through solutions. He has an uncanny ability to look forward and anticipate what could happen, and apply clear logic and common sense to every problem. He doesn't sugarcoat opinions, or let emotion affect decisions; he's like a master chess player — disciplined and always anticipating several steps ahead of everyone else."

In some respects, Morris is an archetypal AME: he is taciturn, low key, hardworking, and not one to suffer fools gladly. But Sitnam says the brusque exterior belies his genuine warmth, great sense of humour, and profound loyalty.

"Morris has 'old school' values, but those are good values," says Sitnam. "He believes in working hard, and doing your job to the best of your ability."

A 35-year career with Helijet stands as testament to his dedication, but Morris notes that loyalty is a two-way street, and particularly so in the aviation industry.

"A lot of people look at what a company can do for them, rather than what they can do for the organization," says Morris. "There is a certain benefit to growing and developing with a company. If you're willing to put in the work and commitment you can get a lot in return." After a slight pause, he adds, "As I approach retirement, and look back on my career, I can say this industry has been good to me. Since graduating from SAIT in 1975 I never once went a month without a paycheque." 



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Let the music play



Live performances are back in full swing this spring with concerts dates to suit every musical taste.

Artist **Billie Eilish** will drop by Rogers Arena on March 24 for her Happier Than Ever Tour, followed by **Dua Lipa** on April 1 with her long-awaited Future Nostalgia Tour. Those whose preferences lean more towards folk and blues will want to see six-time Grammy Award winner **James Taylor** and his All-Star Band on May 12, while country music fans won't want to miss **Chris Stapleton's** All American Road Show on May 14. Australian indie folk singer/songwriter **Vance Joy** will make his one and only Canadian tour stop at the arena on May 27. (rogersarena.com)

On the Orpheum stage, singer-songwriter **Steven Page** will join the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra March 12-13 to perform both his solo works as well as iconic hits from his Barenaked Ladies days. At Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Broadway pays a visit to Vancouver with Lin-Manuel Miranda's smash hit **Hamilton** on stage May 24 to June 19. (vancouvercivictheatres.com)

Fresh from the European leg of their tour, local indie band favourite **Mother Mother** will perform two nights, April 29 and 30, at the Royal Theatre in Victoria, while JUNO Award winner **Dan Mangan** will take to the stage May 16. For something completely different, take a step back in time with New York's legendary **Glenn Miller Orchestra** as they perform their many timeless classics including *In the Mood*, *String of Pearls* and more, April 2. (rmts.bc.ca)



PHOTO CREDIT: 2018 David Bergmane (Steven Page)



James Yi in Kim's Convenience. Photo: David Cooper

KIM'S CONVENIENCE

ON NOW UNTIL MARCH 27: VANCOUVER

Korean shopkeeper Mr. Kim and his family grapple with evolving neighbourhood dynamics and generational divisions in this comical yet heartfelt production. See the play that inspired the TV hit show of the same name at the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage. artsclub.com

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

MARCH 29-APRIL 24: VICTORIA

Jon, a prize-winning novelist on the brink of his third divorce, is frustrated teaching creative writing to lazy college students. Annie is a clever first-year student who greatly admires her professor. It's a familiar story of seduction—or is it? Playwright Hannah Moscovitch is known for tackling complex subjects with humour and wit, both of which are on captivating display in this Belfry Theatre production. belfry.bc.ca

VANCOUVER WHITECAPS FC REGULAR SEASON

VARIOUS DATES: VANCOUVER

For the first time since 2019, the Vancouver Whitecaps FC will host all 17 home matches of their regular season at BC Place. Cheer on the 'Caps as they meet both long-time rivals and two new clubs for the first time in 2022. whitecapsfc.com

BALLET HISPÁNICO

APRIL 8 & 9: VICTORIA

New York's Ballet Hispánico is celebrating its 50th anniversary with the biggest production in its history: *Doña Peron*. With choreography by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and music by Peter Salem, the ballet captures the strength and struggle of Eva "Evita" Peron, one of the most recognizable women in Argentinian history. dancevictoria.com



Image courtesy of Ballet Hispánico

HSBC CANADA SEVENS

APRIL 16 & 17: VANCOUVER (MEN'S)

APRIL 30 & MAY 1: LANGFORD (WOMEN'S)

HSBC Canada Sevens combines action-packed rugby play on the field, with the ultimate party atmosphere in the stands. Teams from six continents will take part in the Men's Sevens tournament at BC Place, followed by the Women's Sevens tournament on their home turf at Westhill Stadium in Langford. canadasevens.com

JURASSIC QUEST

MAY 13-15: VANCOUVER

MAY 20-23: ABBOTSFORD

Jurassic Quest will roar into town this spring with life-like dinosaurs, rides and interactive activities for the whole family. jurassicquest.com

BARD ON THE BEACH

JUNE 8 - SEPTEMBER 24: VANCOUVER

After two years of dark stages, Bard on the Beach is returning to its iconic waterfront site in Seáákw/Vanier Park for its 33rd season. Tickets go on sale in April for all three plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Harlem Duet* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

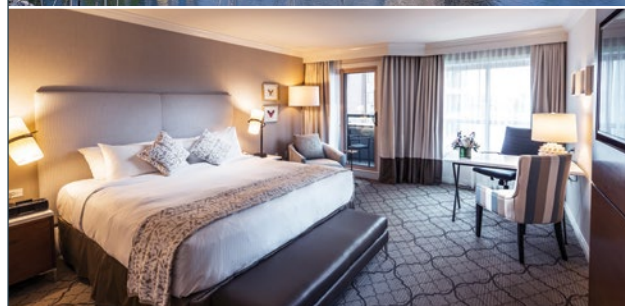
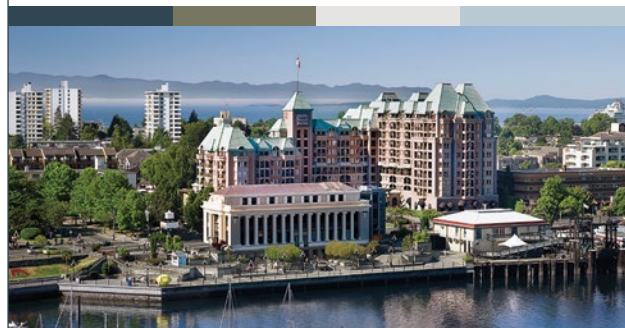
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HEART OF GOLD

IDAR BERGSETH, OWNER OF VICTORIA'S IDAR JEWELLERS, ON HIS LIFE-LONG LOVE OF GEMS, PRECIOUS METALS AND CREATING ONE-OF-A-KIND HANDCRAFTED JEWELLERY

Becoming a goldsmith isn't your typical career path. How did you get your start as a jewellery designer?

It started when I was a kid, collecting fossils in Saskatchewan. I was fascinated by them, and it evolved into cutting cabochon stones when I was a teen and hanging around a rockhound shop. When I was 18, I apprenticed with a manufacturing jeweller in Vancouver and eventually I got an apprenticeship with Karl Stittgen. He wasn't a goldsmith, but he was a wonderful designer and he was adventurous. He hired master goldsmiths from all over Europe and suddenly I was surrounded by all these people who were very, very good. It was a different time—in the 1960s, gold was reasonable and we could experiment with it. Some things worked and some didn't, but I learned a tremendous amount during that time.

When did you make the leap to creating your own designs?



I had a small workshop and eventually decided it was time to go out on my own. We moved to Victoria and my wife, Nikki, and I opened a little shop on Broad Street. She was the boss and took care of the finances and I did the design. Our jewellery at that time was very limited and contemporary. I think it took three months before



MYTHICAL GARDEN : Idar Bergseth handcrafted the Mythical Garden Ring as a wedding ring for his wife, Nikki, in 1968.

we sold our first piece! And then it caught on and suddenly we were very busy. We moved to Beverly Hills for several years and had a store there, but in 1983 we came back to Victoria, eventually bought this location on Fort Street and have been here ever since.

How has the jewellery business evolved since you started?

After that experimental time in the '60s, jewellery became much more structural and very difficult to make. The designs were heavy and bold. Of course, over the years precious metals have become very expensive, and I think that's part of the reason tastes have changed. It also used to be men would come in and buy for women and they made the choices. Now women come in and buy it for themselves. They know what they like and what they want. We get lots of design ideas and input from our customers and in that way the process has changed a lot.

How does the custom design process work?

Customers usually visit the website first and they have an idea of what they like. When they come into the store, our design consultants in the front can help guide them, work through their idea, and narrow down what they want. My daughter, Lara, will sometimes draw up a sketch, or we'll set up a model in wax. We sweat out every detail, but it's worth it. And that's the beauty of working with precious metals: you can melt it down, you can modify it, change it until you get it just the way you want it.


Many of your designs incorporate white, yellow and red gold. Tell me about that.

There are a few reasons why. For our rings with fine floral structure like our Calla Lily rings, we use yellow gold or red gold for the flowers, but you need something strong to hold it all together, and the 19K white gold we use is very strong and durable. I also like to use the three colours, because if you cast a ring, you can usually only use one colour and casting is far inferior to handmade. But if you forge something and hammer it out by hand, you can incorporate the three colours of gold and give it a lightness yet make it wearable. First and foremost, it's about the aesthetics, but it's also about making pieces that can be worn.

Do you have favourite gems?

I like coloured diamonds—they're hard to get. Red, orange, yellow, pink and blue are all beautiful. The range of colours of sapphires is also fantastic and they are the most practical stone for wearing because they are hard and durable, and they have value. Rubies are the same mineral, so they wear well, too. And I absolutely love emeralds, but they tend to be more fragile and not as easy to wear everyday. Really, there's no stone I don't like. I'm still a rockhound at heart!

What is your advice for people wanting to buy jewellery as a gift?

Usually, it's best if both partners get involved and we encourage that. It makes things easier for everyone and it's fun—it's fun to have that input. I've taken the motto: try the piece on the person and see how they react. You'll know if it's right. 



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Terrific TERROIR



The Okanagan Valley is home to eight distinct wine growing sub-regions, including the picturesque Naramata Bench (above).

TOURING THE VARIED WINE GROWING REGIONS OF THE OKANAGAN VALLEY BY SUE DUNHAM

IN 2014 THE OKANAGAN VALLEY was named the second best wine region to visit in the world by readers of *USA Today*. Edged out of the top spot by Alentejo, Portugal, the Okanagan finished ahead of several famed regions, such as Tuscany, Italy, and Napa, California, among others. Not bad for a growing region with only 4,000 hectares (ha) of vineyard.

The attention was overdue, but it is worth noting the Okanagan is not a homogenous wine region, but a collection of distinct sub-regions, each with its own growing conditions and cultural identity. What makes each area exceptional is their respective *terroir* — an all-encompassing French term with no English equivalent that describes the influence the natural environment has on the aromas and flavours of wine.

Understanding the unique *terroir* of the Okanagan requires a bit of time travel.

During the last ice age some 12,000 years ago a massive ice dam near Okanagan Falls held back glacial meltwaters that filled the Okanagan Valley with a vast body of water known as Glacial Lake Pentiction. When the ice dam collapsed it unleashed a megaflood

that fundamentally reshaped the landscape as it went. Glacial Lake Pentiction was nearly drained, its high-water mark dropping hundreds of feet. The subsidence revealed the effects of repeated glaciation: deep canyons, rounded mountaintops, and enormous volumes of deposited silt, sand and gravel. This resulting mixture of soils makes large swathes of the Okanagan ideal for growing a wide range of grape varieties used in winemaking.

Topography and climate matter, too. The best vineyards in the Valley are generally found on west- and southwest-facing slopes where grape vines receive maximum sun exposure — crucial for helping grapes achieve physiological ripeness in B.C.'s cool continental climate.

Grape vines were first introduced to the Okanagan in the mid 19th century for the purpose of making sacramental wine. A small commercial winemaking industry began in the early 20th century, but was soon snuffed out by prohibition legislation enacted in 1917. The result was most arable land being devoted to fruit orchards. Small scale grape growing continued after



PHOTOS (clockwise from top centre): Ruby Blues is one of the more colourful and historic wineries on the Naramata Bench. Most small vineyards in the Okanagan are lovingly tended by hand. The scenic Kettle Valley Rail Trail is an excellent way for cyclists to explore a variety of wineries in Summerland, Penticton and the Naramata Bench. Gustav Allander, winemaker at Foxtrot Vineyards, racks Chardonnay into barrel in the winery's cellar.

prohibition was repealed in 1920, but it was another 12 years before the province's first winery, Calona Vineyards, was licenced in 1932. (One of the original partners in the winery was W.A.C. Bennett, B.C.'s premier from 1952 to 1972.)

The provincial government began licencing other estate wineries in 1980, but it was the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the U.S. in 1988 that fundamentally altered the economics of agriculture in the Okanagan. In the wake of the agreement, the federal and provincial governments committed \$27 million in funding to encourage Okanagan farmers to pull out inferior *Vitis labrusca* grape vines and replace them with superior *Vitis vinifera* vines. The following year the government created the Farm Gate Winery Licence, the first of which was issued to Lang Vineyards on May 25, 1990. At the time, only 13 wineries existed in the province. Now, more than 30 years later, there are 186 licenced wineries in the Okanagan, many of which produce world-class wines.

For the past couple years British Columbians have largely opted to vacation close to home. The logical

destination for many has been Okanagan wine country, but with 186 wineries spread over 250 km of valley, it can be hard to narrow the scope and focus of any wine tour in the Interior. To that end, it is worth considering the unique qualities of each sub-region.

Kelowna is the region most closely associated with B.C.'s wine industry and it was here that Father Charles Pandosy, a French Catholic priest, planted the province's first grape vines in 1859 at the Okanagan Mission. Today, the area boasts 366 ha of vineyards, and is home to some of the oldest and biggest family estate wineries in the Okanagan, including Calona Vineyards (the oldest operating winery in B.C.), Quails Gate Winery, Summerhill Pyramid Winery, Gray Monk Estate Winery, and grandest of all, Mission Hill Family Estate Winery.

A wide range of varietal wines are produced in the area, but the northern latitude and heavier soils of limestone, clay and sandy loam lend themselves most to Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir.

Heading south from Kelowna on Highway 97, hugging the west shoreline of Okanagan Lake, one passes



The Okanagan Valley has 9,617 acres under vine, and is home to 186 licenced wineries, making it the largest wine growing region in B.C. Other significant wine regions include the Similkameen Valley, the Fraser Valley, the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island.

through scenic Peachland, Summerland and Penticton in quick succession. Several wineries in these areas benefit from south-facing slopes, moderating lake effect, and volcanic soil mixed with fertile clay, producing commendable Riesling, Gewürztraminer, and Pinot Noir. Noteworthy wineries in the area include Sumac Ridge Estate Winery and Dirty Laundry Vineyard.

On the other side of the lake is the Naramata Bench, which runs north of Penticton to the sleepy town of Naramata. Small as it is, this 15-km plateau of groomed vineyards perched atop white clay bluffs overlooking Lake Okanagan is one of the premiere wine regions in B.C. There are only 250 ha under vine here, but an astonishing 52 licenced wineries. The high concentration of wineries owes largely to the area's natural beauty, as much as the soil type — fine-grained lacustrine silt interspersed with ribbons of sand and gravel. Numerous varietals are planted here, but Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir and Merlot stand out most. Notable producers include the likes of Poplar Grove Winery, Da Silva Vineyards, La Frenz Winery and Nichol Vineyard, to name just a few.

South of Penticton, along the northeast shore of Skaha Lake, is the Skaha Bench where the dominant Olhausen soil series is covered with an eolian layer of silt and clay, making it suitable for Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir and Merlot. This 10-km-long growing region has a mere 75 ha of vineyard supporting five wineries, but this sub-region punches well above its

weight class with the likes of Pentage Winery, Painted Rock Estates, Blasted Church Vineyards, Black Dog Cellars and Crescent Hill Winery.

Further to the south, between Skaha Lake and Vaseux Lake, is Okanagan Falls. Manicured vineyards backed by dramatic bluffs makes this one of the most scenic and photographed wine regions in B.C. The sloping terrain is comprised largely of glacial sand and clay with excellent drainage. This combined with hot days and cool nights produces grapes with intense concentration. Aromatic whites, such as Riesling and Gewürztraminer, thrive here, as do Bordeaux-style red varietals, like Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Noteworthy wineries include Synchronesh, Noble Ridge, Stags Hollow Winery, Meyer Family Vineyards, and Blue Mountain Vineyards and Cellars.

Summer temperatures climb the farther south one goes, making the sunny slopes around Oliver and Osoyoos ideal for flavourful whites and rich reds.

Grape vines abound in and around Oliver: with 1,434 ha under vine the area accounts for almost half the wine produced in the Okanagan. In fact, Oliver is home to two of the largest wine producers in Canada — Jackson Triggs and Inniskillin.

South of Oliver, on the western slope of the Valley, is the Golden Mile Bench, and to the east is the Black Sage Bench. Vineyards in both are generally south-facing on alluvial fans of stoney and gravelly soil. The Golden Mile receives more morning sun than afternoon heat, making the region suitable for Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer and Merlot, produced by recognizable wineries such as Tinhorn Creek Vineyards, Gehringer Brothers Estate Winery and Hester Creek Estate Winery. The Black Sage Bench on the east side of the Valley gets more hot afternoon sun, making it better suited to red varietals like Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Syrah. Significant wineries here include Burrowing Owl Vineyards, Black Hills Estate Winery and Desert Hills Estate Winery.

The most southern wine growing region in the Okanagan Valley is Osoyoos. Located near the Canada-U.S. border, this is one of the hottest places in Canada. Higher temperatures and sandy soil overlying granite bedrock makes this big red wine country. In fact, many wineries farther north in the Okanagan source their grapes from here to make their red varietals and blends.

Each wine region in the Okanagan Valley is distinct from the next. The large estate wineries of Kelowna are a world apart from the small farm-gate wineries around Penticton, Oliver and Osoyoos. Still, the one truism any visitor can be sure of is that there's something for everyone throughout the Okanagan. **H**

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