

What a view at the Tin Horn Creek vineyard near Oliver. The Miradoro restaurant looks out over this beautiful valley

Captured by *Canadian cuisine*

PART
TWO

In the conclusion of his tour of breathtaking British Columbia, **Norman Wright** revels in the Canadian province's culinary delights and its home-grown wine

PHOTOGRAPHY: CLIVE NICHOLLS



Clockwise from left: One of the trestle bridges that once carried Kettle Valley steam trains; Ed Kruger on the Myra Canyon trail overlooking a superb panorama; Produce from local farms is on sale at stalls throughout the Kelowna area; Sea Eagle at the BC Wildlife park in Kamloops



JUST LIKE a scene from an old Western film, the trestle bridge I was about to venture onto was supported by crisscrossed timbers stretching down into the dizzying depths of the canyon.

But instead of crossing aboard a locomotive with a giant cowcatcher and a huge smokestack, with a grizzled old timer in a Casey Jones cap on the footplate, all I had was a bicycle.

When our guide Ed Kruger picked us

up from our hotel in a 4x4 with three bikes on the back and started to wind his way upwards, I have to confess I was becoming more and more apprehensive. Having not being on a bike for a few years, I was imagining that the route would be very up and down.

I needn't have worried. Although the Myra Canyon route is some 12 miles long, its 18 trestle bridges and two tunnels and its former use as part of the Kettle Valley Railway meant it was a flat ride. And what

a ride. The trestle bridges are exciting enough to ride over but the route high up, skirting the side of the mountain, is spectacular. The views down to the city of Kelowna and the vast Okenaga Lake are wonderful and, looking inwards, the rocky forest that clads the crags gives a flavour of the wild and remote vastness of Canada's British Columbia.

When I parked the bike and took a breather sitting on a rock overlooking the lake, chipmunks with their striped heads

practically ran over my feet as they whizzed around gathering food to store for the coming winter. A red-tailed hawk patrolled the boulder-strewn slopes.

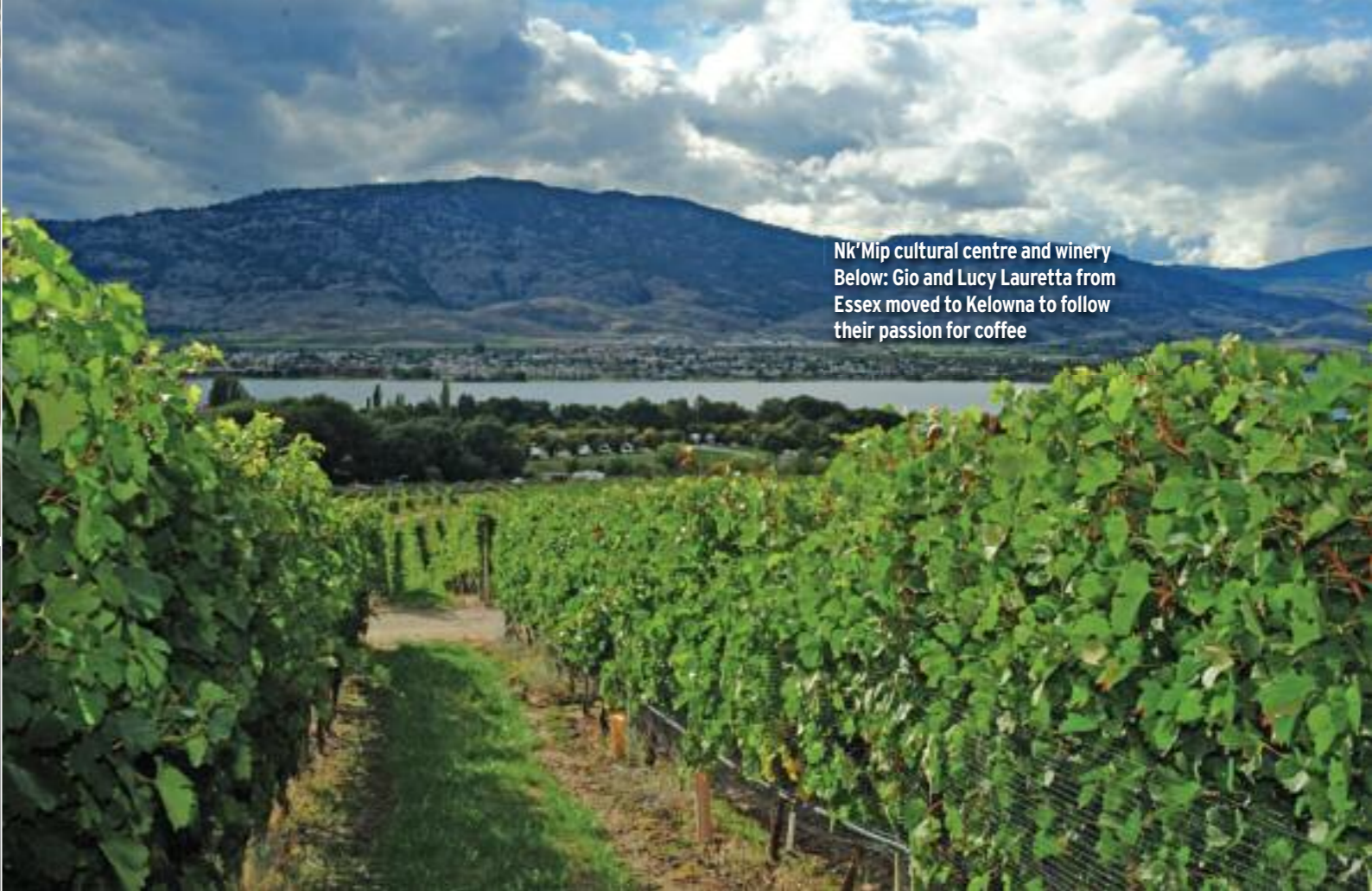
The Kettle Valley railway was part of the Canadian Pacific cross-continent route until it began to be phased out in the Sixties. Now Myra Canyon is part of a national park and the stretch is preserved for cyclists and walkers. There are more demanding trails in the park but this one is easy – that is, until I grew too confident

and attempted a sweeping moving dismount back at the truck and hit the trail as my foot caught the saddle. No damage done, apart to my pride.

“The trestle bridges are exciting enough to ride over but the route high up skirting the side of the mountain is spectacular”

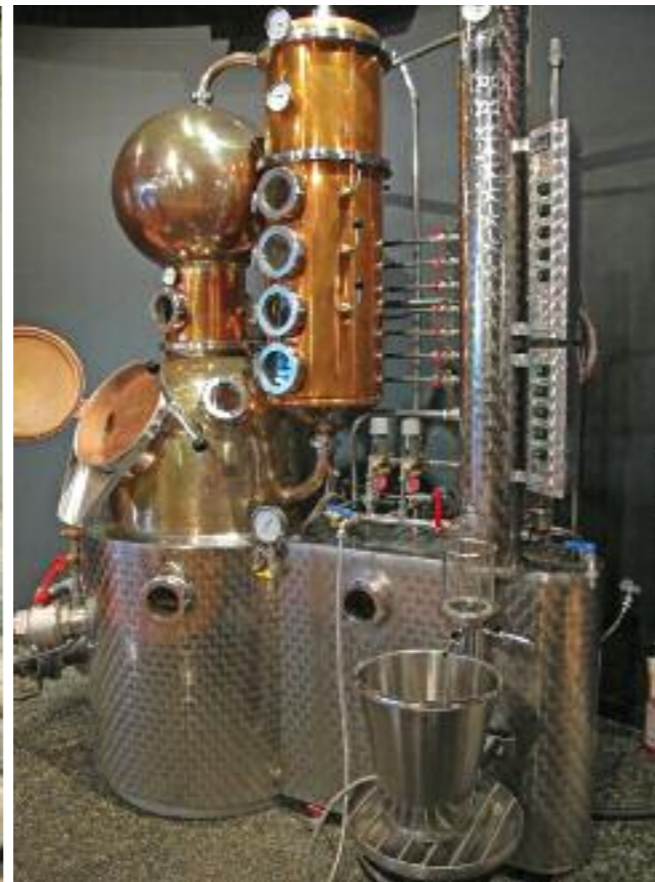
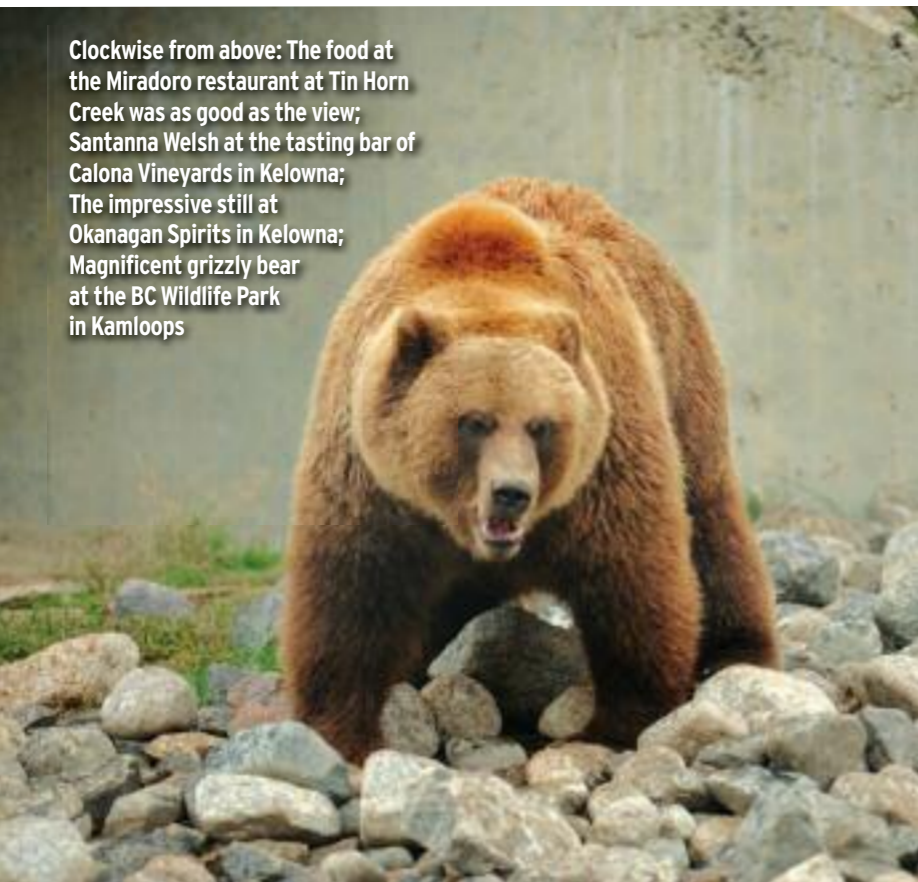
Our stay at Kelowna was part of a trip driving through British Columbia on a circular route starting and finishing in Vancouver. We described the first part of our journey through the coastal mountains and up to the lush, remote valley of the Fraser River in the February issue of *Choice*. Now we were in the food and wine paradise of Okanagan.

The picnic provided for our bike trip with Ed proved it beyond doubt. Local specialist food company Basket Case



Nk'Mip cultural centre and winery
Below: Gio and Lucy Laretta from
Essex moved to Kelowna to follow
their passion for coffee

Clockwise from above: The food at
the Miradoro restaurant at Tin Horn
Creek was as good as the view;
Santanna Welsh at the tasting bar of
Calona Vineyards in Kelowna;
The impressive still at
Okanagan Spirits in Kelowna;
Magnificent grizzly bear
at the BC Wildlife Park
in Kamloops



Picnics (www.basketcasepicnics.com) provided us with an incredible gourmet lunch. We didn't eat it until after the ride so it wasn't the cause of my crash landing...

Our drive to Kelowna started from the Clinton area and progressed from forest through increasingly arid landscape with grey slopes covered by scrub with few trees. This area is technically desert and was a big contrast to the snow-capped mountains we had left behind. Our first

stop was at Kamloops, a name anglicised from the First Canadian Shuswap nation's word meaning 'meeting of the waters'. It is where the north and south branches of the Thompson River join up.

Passengers on the Rocky Mountaineer train tour from Vancouver to Banff and Calgary usually stay overnight at Kamloops. Back in the Gold Rush of the 1860s, it was on the main access route from across the US border and had a reputation as a Wild West town. Now the

wildlife is of the fur and feather kind at the BC Wildlife Park on the outskirts of Kamloops. The park is a conservation centre, not only displaying some of the principal wild creatures of the area but also looking after injured specimens and returning them to the wild.

You can see grizzly and black bears, lynx, mountain lions and magnificent birds of prey like the golden eagle and bald eagle as well as burrowing owls, unique to the desert region around the town. Down the road

from the park we just missed meeting a large black bear in the wild at the Harper's Trail Winery. The vines are fenced off but as part of the route of a charity fun run that morning the gates were open and the male bear managed to get in.

Some runners spooked it and it made its escape – probably improving the runners' times into the bargain.

It's a new winery and Kamloops' first. The early vintages are well worth trying.

Further south-west, we spent a couple of

nights at the resort town of Kelowna at the Delta Grand Okanagan Resort. The town's name derives from First Canadians' word for grizzly bear.

No sign of grizzlies – just a lovely lake front and a sophisticated reputation for food and wine.

Our gourmet trail started with breakfast at Giobean Coffee next door to the hotel and we had a surprise when we met Giovanni and Lucy Laretta – they come from Essex. Well, Gio's roots are in Italy

which explains the level of service, the quality of the coffee and the wonderful pastries and breads. The couple moved to Kelowna and opened their coffee shop in 2010. Before that Gio worked as a coffee specialist for a leading international coffee company in London for 17 years.

He and Lucy spent a great holiday in and around Kelowna and decided to move their family and start the business.

Gio quotes his grandfather saying to him as a small boy in Italy: "Coffee should



Clockwise from left: Jas Dosanj cooking healthier Indian cuisine in Kelowna after emigrating from Southampton; Lonely truck on the Crowsnest Highway heading up into the mountains; Striking sculpture at the entrance to the Nk'Mip cultural centre and winery



Passport to British Columbia

Getting there

Air Transat runs services from Gatwick, Manchester or Glasgow to Vancouver; flight time is around ten hours from Gatwick. It is a low-cost airline but the service levels are excellent - it just didn't feel like the usual transatlantic endless haul. For reservations, tel: 020 7616 9187, website: (www.airtransat.co.uk).

Where to stay

Delta Grand Okanagan Resort, Kelowna, is a large luxury complex right on the waterfront, website: (www.deltahotels.com)
 Watermark Beach Resort, Osoyoos, is a perfect location on the lake with excellent food: (www.watermarkbeachresort.com)
 In Vancouver for our final night we stayed at the Metropolitan Hotel and ate at its open kitchen restaurant, Diva at the Met. Excellent food and an eye-opener on how hard the chefs have to work: (www.metropolitan.com).

Where to eat

The Noble Pic Brewhouse, Kamloops, a Michelin-starred pub with great food and beer: (www.thenoblepic.ca)
 Giobean Coffee the Italian Way, Kelowna, great coffee, great service: (www.giobean.com)
 Poppadoms, Kelowna, superb Indian cuisine but healthier: www.poppadoms.ca
 Miradoro Restaurant at Tinhorn Creek Winery, Oliver: (www.tinhorn.com/restaurant)
 Nk'Mip Cellars, Osoyoos: (www.nkmipcellars.com).

Where to taste

Harper's Trail Winery, Kamloops: (www.harperstrail.com)
 Summerhill Pyramid Winery, Kelowna: (www.summerhillbc.ca)
 Calona Vineyards, Kelowna: (www.calonavineyards.ca)
 Okanagan Spirits, Kelowna: (www.okanaganspirits.com)
 Okanagan Crush Pad, Summerland: (www.okanagancrushpad.com).

Find out more

Destination British Columbia: (www.BritishColumbia.travel)
 Tourism Vancouver: (www.tourismvancouver.com)
 Tourism Kelowna: (www.tourismkelowna.com)
 Tourism Kamloops: (www.tourismkamloops.com)
 Monashee Adventure Tours (www.76cycle.com)
 BC Wildlife Park (www.bczoology.org).

be as strong as a lion, dark as night, but as sweet as love." It is certainly all of that, served with enthusiasm and friendliness. Another family from England emigrated to Kelowna to start a restaurant – serving Indian food with a difference. The Dosanj family moved from Southampton to found Poppadoms. The difference is that the authentic Indian regional dishes are produced in healthier ways without using so much fat, especially ghee clarified butter. Harry Dosanj

explained: "My dad suffered heart problems and as he recovered we realised he had to have a healthier diet. My mum devised ways of cooking that achieved that while keeping the authentic flavours and textures." Mum, Jas, runs the kitchen in the restaurant. Harry runs the front of house and bar including mixing his specially developed spicy cocktails. Kelowna is a centre for British Columbia wine production so as well as

enjoying the food we also headed on the winery trail and tasted the best on offer. Then we moved on to Oliver and finally to Osoyoos on Lake Osoyoos near the US border with Washington State. The Tinhorn Creek Winery near Oliver is in a magnificent setting overlooking a wide valley full of vineyards and produce farms. The creek was the site of gold mining; now the gold is the view from the vineyard's Miradoro restaurant – the food, too. Osoyoos was the perfect place to

finish our wine and food trail. The Watermark Beach Resort offers pools, hot tubs, a spa and a great bistro restaurant right on the lake front. You can hire a boat on the lake or take a fishing trip. Before we left to drive back to Vancouver we visited the First Canadian Nk'Mip cultural centre and Winery. The winery is the first aboriginal vineyard and the centre celebrates the culture and history of the Okanagan nation. Amid the culture is science and a rattlesnake

research unit! Signs of winter came as we drove back through the Manning Provincial Park along the aptly named Crowsnest Highway. At the highest points of the pass we were above the snow line and flurries were just covering the road. We left a perfect day in Osoyoos, drove through a desert then found snow in the mountains and ended up in the slick city of Vancouver just illustrating the fact that variety is the spice of beautiful British Columbia.