

There's no place like

Equally charming and sophisticated, there's every reason



Niagara Apothecary, now an historic museum



One of many marinas in the area

The good old summertime. It's that coveted time of farmers' markets and fresh produce, long walks through historical hamlets, days filled with browsing quaint boutiques and curiosity shops. Add to this itinerary a wine excursion or two and a culinary tour of artisan and organic fare. And, to top it off, for some folks, nirvana may be just around the next corner in the shape of a 9- or 18-hole lush golf course.

Summertime anywhere in the Niagara Peninsula suggests the warm ambience of vineyards, vast unspoiled green space and the rustic, historic environment that alludes to the unhurried lifestyle to be enjoyed here. It's

no wonder that Niagara has become an increasingly popular destination for boomers with retirement in mind.

Throughout the expanse of the region, villages, towns and cities such as Twenty Valley and Vineland, Fort Erie and Ridgeway, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Welland have gone to great lengths to welcome all manner of newcomers, especially retirees.

Niagara-on-the-Lake, for instance, makes it easy to get to know people in the community thanks to organizations like the Newcomer's Club and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Supper Club. Welland, appropriately known as The Rose City because of its horticultural

heritage, offers plenty of classes at the Rose City Seniors' Centre. Their summer sampler includes an introduction to ballroom dancing, Taoist Tai Chi, yoga, and Spanish conversation.

Everywhere you go, unique taste experiences await your discriminating palate, from sweet to savoury and all points in between. At the Good Earth Cooking School in Beamsville (minutes west of Vineland), you can turn fresh ingredients into culinary delights to be enjoyed under their whimsical awning bordered by lush gardens, vineyards and orchards. Drive a bit southwest to Smithville for a walk on the decadent side at The Sweet Spot. What was once Marge's

Niagara

to call this place home



Window shopping on a Ridgeway main street



Thundering Waters Golf Course at Niagara Falls

Beauty Shoppe is now a showcase of richly decorated cakes, fresh pies, and a variety of popular squares.

Wine festivals are certainly not few and far between here. The Niagara New Vintage Festival takes place in June, followed by the Niagara Wine Festival in September, and the Niagara Ice Wine Festival in January. This year, the Rotary Club, in partnership with the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake and local epicurean restaurants, presents PASSION on August 22. Featuring 21 wineries and 15 restaurants from the area, along with exhibits of local fine artists whose work you can purchase, you can taste the pairings of wine and gourmet food.

And, if you hurry, you might make it to Flavours of Niagara Food, Wine and Jazz Festival at Port Colborne, running June 26 - 28.

Culture comes in all shapes and sizes too, not the least of which is the world-class Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake. As well, everywhere you visit this summer you'll discover art galleries, music festivals, and poetry readings. Ridgeway Summer Festival runs July 11 and 12 and features an antique car show, line dancing, sheep-herding, bed races, baking and eating contests, and live music.

In the planning stages, Project Niagara is a proposed outdoor music venue, cultural centre and nature des-

tinuation, scheduled to open in 2012.

Anyone looking to commune with nature in a more refined atmosphere will surely enjoy the Niagara Parks' Botanical Gardens, spanning 99 acres of beautifully maintained gardens, the Butterfly Conservatory, ponds and an arboretum. Oaks Garden is the entranceway to Queen Victoria Park where concerts and special events take place against the backdrop of the American and Horseshoe Falls.

For the sheer fun of it, gamers will appreciate The Fort Erie Racetrack and Slots and Niagara Falls' Fallsview Casino. ■

tourismniagara.com
niagararegion.ca