

Beauty awaits in Bella Vista



By Vernon Morning Star

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Our hiking explorations continue by heading out to the Bella Vista/Okanagan Hills section of the Grey Canal. This trail truly earns its name of "Bella Vista" – beautiful views.

It is situated high on a hillside and squirts along the edge of The Rise subdivision. In just over 1.5 kilometres, your leisurely stroll will travel by orchards, vineyards and grasslands. It is well worth visiting for the outlook it offers of the surrounding hills, Vernon, the Commonage and Okanagan Lake.

To reach this trail, take Bella Vista Road, towards The Rise, which becomes Okanagan Hills Boulevard. Take the first right turn onto Vineyard Way and park beside the trail on the right, near the end of the road.

You'll see two buttresses at the beginning of a short paved connector which will lead you down to the trailhead. At this point, you have the choice of either taking a short section to your right (300 metres) or a longer section to your left (1.3 kilometres).

The longer section is on a wider gravel path.

As you reflect on the views below and across the valley, you can almost imagine the glaciers that flowed through this area eons ago to form this landscape of low hills and oblong lakes. The sediments left behind by this glacial activity now form the basis of our agricultural lands.

Looking northward, your gaze will often be caught by the distinctive shape of Bluenose Mountain in the distance, while the valley offers different shades of green from the cultivated lands. The green takes on a shade of silver as the path enters a field of sweet smelling sagebrush. This dry environment gives you a taste of what the original vegetation of the area was like before irrigation, that of a high desert valley.

After a short gentle climb, the path ends at a power station offering good views of Vernon. The return trip is just as pleasant with views of Okanagan Lake.

Continue on to the short section which is flanked on one side by a row of cattails giving you the feeling of a private walkway with views of the lake sparkling below.

Dogs are allowed on leash. Please use dog bags and garbage cans located at trailhead.

Claude Rioux is with the Ribbons of Green Trails Society.

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