

Guide a labour of love

By PORTIA PRIEGERT

Special to The Okanagan Sunday

Okanagan grandmother Laurie Carter loves hiking — as well as skiing, going to the beach, tasting wines and more.

So her book, *Grandma Wears Hiking Boots: A Personal Guide to the Okanagan Valley*, was a chance to indulge — and share — her many passions.

"For the last decade, I've been writing and shooting photos about the Okanagan for magazine, newspaper and online articles," said Carter. "I felt it was time to pull together my experiences in a single guide to the Valley."

"My vision for *Grandma Wears Hiking Boots* is to give readers more than the bare-bones information of a traditional guidebook. I want to convey a sense of what it's like to actually do the things that make the Okanagan such a popular destination."

The self-published book, which Carter is launching this month with events around the Valley, features 85 hikes, attractions and historic sites, as well as a good sampling of wineries and restaurants.

Carter joked that the book includes so many different activities it should have been called: *Grandma Wears Hiking Boots and Sneakers, Snowshoes and Skis, Flip-flops and Terminally Gorgeous Heels* — but there wasn't enough space on the cover.

Carter, who moved to the Okanagan in 1991, writes in a breezy style, offering anecdotes, observations and recommendations to engage everyone from armchair travelers to serious trekkers.

She describes the book as a hybrid between travel literature and a standard guidebook.

"Although the book is written in the travel-lit style, it has many reader-friendly features like a Glance quick reference guides, loads of colour photos and more than 30 colour maps," she said. "I personally love having maps to help me orient myself when I'm reading a story, so they were an integral part of the plan from the beginning."

Carter, who wrote travel stories for eVent for three years with her



Bruce Kemp Photography

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husband, Bruce Kemp, is planning follow-up books in the same series, including one about touring the rest of Canada.

She says the hardest part about the Okanagan book was deciding what to leave out.

"There's another book sitting there ready to be written at this moment," she said. "There is just so much. I guess what I went for was stories. I looked for places where I had a story I thought would be fun to read."

Choosing a top recommendation for visitors is equally tough.

"That really does depend on the guest," she said. "If it's somebody who is the least bit active and interested in the outdoors, I would take them on the Bear Creek trail. They get great views. They get to see what the environment is like. I think people get quite a good sense of the Valley from that trail."

For those interested in history, she recommends riding the Kettle Valley Steam Railway or touring the S.S. Sicamous in Penticton.

"One of the absolutely top drawer, most superb tourist experiences in the Valley is the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre in Osoyoos. It's great because it covers environmental areas as well as cultural ones."

The 272-page book, which sells for \$24.95, is published by Carter's company, Little White Publishing, which specializes in travel and photography books.

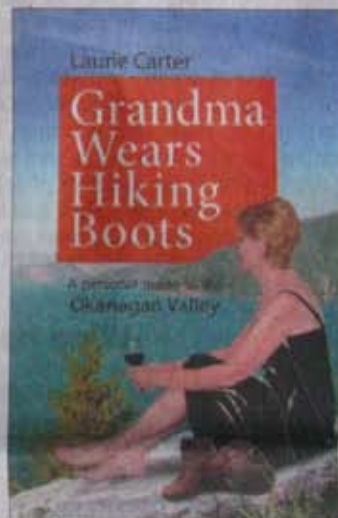
"Because I'm determined to maintain the quality and value of full-colour books, I felt I had to take control of the whole production process," she said.

"I want to do the best I can for my readers and I'm confident that they will see that commitment and enjoy the end result."

Carter says many local authors are choosing to self-publish everything from poetry and fiction to humour and children's books.

"There are a number of distribution companies operating in the Valley," she said. "I know of at least three that help authors get their books into places like Chapters."

"And the Internet also makes it possible to do so much on your own as well. Not only is it viable,



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but I think it's a real trend."

Carter, who lives in West Kelowna, works on the editorial staff of *Okanagan Life* magazine and has written a travel mystery, *China Doll*.

She is promoting her book at two upcoming public readings in the Central Okanagan. One is at 7 p.m. on Tuesday at the Westwood Retirement Resort in West Kelowna and the other is Nov. 30 at the Centre for Arts and Technology Okanagan in Kelowna from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, visit LaurieCarter.com.