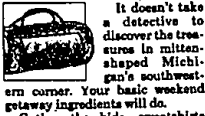


# LET'S GO! TRAVEL

## Discover hidden treasures in southwest Michigan

BY MARY QUINLEY  
SPECIAL WRITER



It doesn't take a detective to discover the treasures in mitten-shaped Michigan's southwest corner. Your basic weekend getaway ingredients will do.

Gather the kids, sweatshirts and snacks, and point the van westward on I-94 to St. Joseph (twin city to Benton Harbor). Joey wants to learn some basic sign language skills. And Suzie's interested in zoeotropes. Does anyone have a clue how to freeze our shadows to a wall? The downtown Curious Kids, Museum offers solutions.

"Our philosophy is 'Learn By Doing,'" said Sherri Alexander, Education Director. And everything in the museum involves "doing."

The museum's two floors crammed (nicely!) with sit-down, stand-up and climb through "hands-on" exhibits require little tykes to make some crucial choices about their ventures.

Six-year-old Jessica knows exactly where to begin. She makes a baseline for the do-it-yourself Face

Painting Station. Finding an empty seat she focuses on her image in the mirror and skillfully applies shades of plum purple and hazy yellow to her cheeks.

The young boy in the next seat applies the finishing touches to the murky-brown football smeared on his forehead.

While the big kids mull over the apple for display, pick-pickers work diligently at "picking" apples from a tree and sending them up the hopper for "processing."

Call (616) 983-CKID. Admission free charged.

Lake Bluff Park across from the museum provides an ideal vantage point for both railroad buffs (our family has two!) and freighter-watchers.

The Amtrak squeals into town, exchanges passengers and slips away. Depending on weather and schedule, the train bridge maneuvers a 90 degree turn making room for an approaching freighter.

Just minutes north of downtown hidden on the shores of the St. Joseph River, U.S. Coast Guard station personnel conduct free mini-tours, time permitting.

Informal tours given by appointment only include a peek at the watch room to listen to radio conversations and current weather reports.

The Coast Guard urges visitors to call (616) 983-6114 before making plans to tour the station.

During warmer months, you can take off our shoes and climb, crawl or creep to the top edge of the sand hills at Warren Dunes State Park in nearby Bridgman. Or, just sit at the bottom and enjoy the spectacular lake view.

Once everyone collapses at the top edge of the sand dune, take some long deep breaths and gaze out beyond the beach at the churning teal-gray waters of Lake Michigan.

**Cook Energy Information Center**

Everything you always wanted to know about nuclear energy (and more) is cleverly explained in laymen's language via three theater presentations at the Cook Energy Information Center in Bridgman.

In Theater I a mock television studio features live-like newscasters Jared and Valva.

"Those reporters look real weird," whispers a young audience member.

Yes — the two futuristic humanoid resemble real people (a little rigid perhaps) as they report Energy Update 2001. The show focuses on the various types of energy needed to supply electricity for the earth in the next century.

Curious about the inner workings of a nuclear plant? A 26-foot scale model rotates in Theater II. Visitors stand on a platform watching and listening as flashing yellow bulbs highlight the plant's major systems.

Theater III positions the viewer inside the plant for a bird's-eye view via a wide screen presentation.

Kids love the energy-related touch screen computer tests and the hand-powered generator in the lobby.

Admission is free to the Cook Energy Information Center which is open Tuesday through Sunday. Call (800) 548-2555 or (616) 465-6101.

Before you begin your search for Michigan's southwestern towns call first. Many of the area attractions are not open every day, and some are seasonal.

For further information contact the Southwestern Michigan Tourist Council, 2300 Pipestone Road, Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022 or call (616) 925-6301.

What's your favorite winter getaway? Send photos, and information to: Keely Wygonik, editor, Let's Go!, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. We'll print as many photos and stories as space permits.

Send photos and travel recommendations to Keely Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer Newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. For more information, call (313) 953-2105.

We're also looking for recommendations for good places to go with families — overnight, for a weekend or week. What's your favorite winter getaway? Is it some place warm or cold?



COOK ENERGY INFORMATION CENTER

**Educational getaway: Everything you always wanted to know about nuclear energy is cleverly explained at the Cook Energy Information Center in Bridgman. Hands-on exhibits like this one, make it a popular family destination.**

## Take your Observer on vacation

Thank-you for sharing your vacation photos with us. We're trying to get in as many as we can. If your photo hasn't appeared in Let's Go! yet, don't fret, it will!

It's fun to share news about your family vacation with friends and neighbors by sending photos to the Observer.

To be considered, take your Observer newspaper on vacation and

snap a photograph of your family holding the newspaper in a scenic spot. Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope if you would like the photos returned to you.

We'll print as many photos as space allows each week. Photos will be returned shortly after publication.

Send photos and travel recom-

Send photos and travel recommendations to Keely Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer Newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. For more information, call (313) 953-2105.

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