

The Kalamazoo Institute of Arts features the works of regional artists in several media. This recent exhibit featured the works of artists in various media. The "Woman with Raised Arms," a bronze by Doris

Caesar, is posed against the background of the stained glass "In a Southern Tradition" by Dwayne Lower.

KALAMAZOO

There's plenty to see and do

By William Coutant
staff writer

Kalamazoo is much more than a train stop with a funny name.

Unlike "the freckled face kid" in the song "I got a gal in Kalamazoo" made famous by Glenn Miller, this city of about 80,000 in southwest Michigan is all grown up. And it has something for just about everyone.

On I-94, halfway between Detroit and Chicago, Kalamazoo boasts not only an industrial and commercial base, but the amenities to go along with a much larger city.

The Amtrak train station is only two blocks from the city's downtown shopping district.

Kalamazoo's downtown mall, the first such mall in the country, features a luxury hotel complex with indoor shops and restaurants, Gilmore's and Jacobson's stores, cafes and smaller specialty shops.

For the kids, Kalamazoo has a museum with special traveling displays; the Kalamazoo Air Zoo, an aircraft museum near the city's airport featuring vintage airplanes that still fly; an antique auto museum that is open from May to October; a nature center with a working farm; a bird sanctuary with resident wild turkeys; and a hatchery with several fish on display in their natural environment.

The Kalamazoo area is famous for producing some of Michigan's best wine. Two area wineries, St. Julian and Warner Vineyards in nearby Paw

Paw, offer tours and free samples. A newer venture that is catching on is the Kalamazoo Brewing Company, which offers tours and tasting in its cozy downtown brewery.

VISITORS TO Kalamazoo will find a city well endowed in the arts. Kalamazoo has a well-established community theater company that produces plays, musicals and other performances throughout the year.

There is also a symphony, an art museum and a ballet company.

WITH FOUR colleges and a population with a taste for everything from country music to professional hockey, Kalamazoo knows how to entertain.

Wings Stadium is home to the Kalamazoo Wings Hockey Club, a member of the International Hockey League. It also hosts everything from rock concerts to swap meets.

Downtown nightclubs include Chaps on Main, which features live jazz, blues and comedy. Club Soda, another downtown establishment, brings in bands playing everything from reggae to rock.

Several Kalamazoo nightclubs play to students from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, Nazareth College and Kalamazoo Valley Community College, leaving no one's musical taste, or urge to dance, unsatisfied.

IF ALL this works up your appetite, Kalamazoo has the variety of restaurants at a variety of prices. You may recognize many of them:

The Olive Garden, Mr. Steak and the national fast food chains. But Kalamazoo offers some unusual dining establishments.

Le Metropole, atop the Kalamazoo Center, specializes in French cuisine. The Final Curtain, in the East Town Mall, features full-length films while you dine.

Patrons of The Black Swann Inn enjoy elegant dining while viewing imported Australian black swan on a lake tucked away in the beautiful Parkview Hills subdivision.

SPEAKING OF imports and ambiance, Kalamazoo also has its share of unusual establishments, geared for a special clientele.

The Pilsen Klub, in the basement of Waldo's on Western's campus serves up 55 imported beers and a quiet, cozy and comfortable atmosphere.

Patrons can enjoy their favorite imported brew and conversation before the bar's fireplace.

AND IF you plan to stay overnight or for the weekend, Kalamazoo has a place.

Hotels include Holiday, Ramada, Red Roof and the Kalamazoo Center Inns.

For something different, Kalamazoo also offers bed and breakfast inns.

One B & B, the Stuart Avenue Inn, is in one of the city's historic areas, just west of the city's downtown.

Whether you spend a day or a weekend, Kalamazoo will prove a lot more than a whistle stop.

Air Zoo is what's up

By William Coutant
staff writer

If you'd like to travel, but you're bringing the kids and you're looking for something they'll like, Kalamazoo is the place.

The Kalamazoo Air Zoo, near the airport south of town, has an impressive menagerie of aircraft.

The collection includes World War II combat planes and the DC-3, the aircraft many still remember as the first passenger plane on which they flew.

The air museum "pieces" all have another unusual feature, said museum volunteer Fred Russell.

"They all fly," he said. "Weather permitting, in the summer they fly a different one every day."

The 2 p.m. flights are a delight to the museum's visitors, who can enjoy the show from the front of the museum, which is next to the international airport, Russell said.

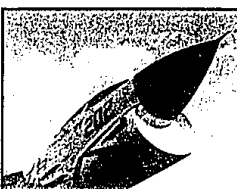
The "Zoo" is named for its collection of flying felines: Wildcats, Bearcats, Hellcats and Tigercats.

KALAMAZOO ALSO shares in the state's automotive history.

The distinctive Yellow Cabs were made in Kalamazoo. The plant now makes parts for General Motors.

But during the warmer months, the Gilmore Classic Car Club Museum, 15 miles north of Kalamazoo, shows off its collection of 120 antique cars on afternoons.

Kalamazoo's museum, in the library building downtown, features traveling exhibits, such as realistic dinosaurs that



JIM JADGFELD/staff photographer

A U.S. Navy Crusader jet stands guard outside the Kalamazoo Aviation History Museum. This model doesn't actually fly, but most of the museum's vintage planes take turns flying during the warmer months, much to the delight of visitors to this popular attraction.

move, and the historic collection "The Treasure Chest of Toys."

It features permanent attractions as well, like an Egyptian tomb, an Invention Center and a planetarium.

VISITORS TO the 600-acre Kalamazoo Nature Center can enjoy 11 trails that wind through meadows and woodlands, as well as an interpretive center, a restored homestead and a working farm.

The Kellogg Bird Sanctuary allows walks on trails among the wild turkeys and peafowl that live there. The sanctuary's Wintergreen Lake is host to thousands of migrating Canada geese each fall.

The Michigan Fisheries Interpretive Center, 6 1/2 miles west of the city, features several species of fish in their natural environment.

Who knows? Parents might find they enjoy the sights more than the kids do.



JIM JADGFELD/staff photographer

The decor is authentic, functional and comfortable at the Stuart Avenue Bed and Breakfast.

Eat, sleep, be cheery

By William Coutant
staff writer

Kalamazoo has its share of hotels and motels, from the luxurious Kalamazoo Center Inn to Holiday, Ramada and Sheraton Inns and less expensive Red Roof and Knight's Inn.

But for those looking for something different, Stuart Avenue Inns may be the answer.

"We have two basic types of clientele," said innkeeper Bill Gustafson. "We have a lot of businessmen during the week and a different kind of weekend guest."

Those weekend guests, who could be parents of graduating college seniors or "romantic couples — he's from Detroit, she's from Chicago" — enjoy the trappings and amenities of restored late 19th century houses once owned by Kalamazoo's most wealthy and influential families.

All five houses are decorated for the period, and supper, as well as breakfast, can be part of the stay.

IF YOU'D RATHER dine at a restaurant during your stay, there are plenty from which to choose, from familiar chains, like

Olive Garden, to the less familiar and distinctive restaurants.

Chardonnay's features a large wine selection. Le Metropole, in the Kalamazoo Center complex, specializes in French cuisine.

The Final Curtain shows full-length films while customers enjoy a drink or dinner. Not surprisingly, it's also next door to a theater complex in the East Town Mall.

The Black Swann, named for the beautiful imported birds native to Western Australia, features entrees from Chateaubriand to Michigan Trout, table-side food preparation, a beautiful open dining room with a fireplace, and a spectacular view of a lake graced with waterlilies, including the swans.

AFTER DINNER, Kalamazoo offers a wide variety of entertainment, including one bar geared for less volume — and less noise.

The Pilsen Klub, on the campus of Western Michigan University, serves 55 varieties of imported beer, some specialty drinks and even a special Latvian dinner.

But the quiet, cozy bar offers patrons a good place for some relaxing conversation.

Here you can watch pour nice Hackerpschorn Weiss beer, and a slice of lemon and enjoy. Be careful not to pour to fast, this beer has body that won't quit.

Some of the bar's patrons come from the "spillover" of large "college night" crowds from other bars, said bartender Mark Hamady.

"They come in here and it's quiet, Hamady said. "They really like that. It's a nice change."

K'zoo: It has its own brew

By William Coutant
staff writer

"Industrial strength," that's what Larry Bell called the kind of beer you usually buy in a store.

So the Kalamazoo man decided to brew his own beer without the pasteurizing and filtering that bring a brew to "an inch of its life."

Bell found he could make good beer with a good head without all the processes that sap beer and ale of their body and flavor. His beer was so well-liked, and his operation became so large, that he decided to make it pay.

"I OUTGREW a home-brewing hobby," Bell said. Now, after almost five years in the business, the only trouble Bell has is making enough beer.

Bell managed to convince a local bank to loan him \$7,000 to start his business, but it wasn't easy.

"Trying to convince a bank to loan you money to start a brewery? Most of 'em wouldn't even talk to me."

But they're talking to him now. The brewery, which sells much of its beer and ale in southeastern Michigan, including Troy, Ann Arbor, Southfield and Birmingham, is negotiating for a \$30,000 loan to increase its capacity and sell in northern Indiana and southern Wisconsin as well as other parts of Michigan.

THE OPERATION is still small, using 20-year-old school soup cookers and beer cartons that advertise more familiar brands. Still, customers are loyal to the brews, which come in a variety of styles, from dark ale to pale beer.

"I love it," said Dan Miller, a Dearborn Heights native who lives in Kalamazoo and no longer drinks his better-known namesake. "I buy it by the gallon, so it's not much more expensive than a regular 12-pack."

But for some, there's the rub. The beer retails for from \$10 or more for a six-pack. Bell said the price is relative when it comes to enjoying his beer.

"IF YOU'RE eating some spicy food, you really want a beer that will stand up to it, not something you drink like water," Bell said.

The brewery has made 11 different types of beer or ale since its opening. Some, such as Bell's Best Brown Ale, are standbys, while others, like Two Hearted Ale have had swings in popularity.



JIM JADGFELD/staff photographer

Browmaster Larry Bell has found a market for the beer and ale made at his small Kalamazoo brewery. Bell has enjoyed enough success in his nearly five years in the business that he expects to expand his operation and sell his products in northern Indiana and southern Wisconsin.

"I don't know," Bell said with a laugh. "What's our flavor of the month?"

BELL'S BREWS also have distinctive labels, most often made from drawings of local "characters."

Bell said his brewing process and aging time vary depending on the type of brew. He also does some experimental brewing for a local spice company.

A city of arts in all seasons

By William Coutant
staff writer

Don't let Kalamazoo's size fool you. Thanks to four theaters and a large group of professionals willing to support the arts, this city of some 80,000 can hold its own with bigger towns in the areas of theater, dance, music and art.

Kalamazoo's Civic Theater is enjoying its 51st season, while the New Vic in Kalamazoo and The Barn Theater in nearby Galesburg both offer professional productions.

Western Michigan University also hosts professional productions, including Broadway musicals, at Miller Auditorium on campus.

THE Kalamazoo Symphony, under the direction of Youssif Takeda, a pupil of the late Cleveland Symphony conductor George

Szell, provides a forum for some of the world's finest visiting classical performers.

This year violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg and conductor Yehudi Menuhin are among the featured guest performers.

In the warmer months, the symphony performs outdoors in its free series of Symphonies in the Park.

THE Kalamazoo Institute of Arts is the hub of a thriving regional art community. The institute, in the city's downtown, has hosted collections of artists from Pablo Picasso to Andy Warhol.

Permanent collections include works by Alexander Calder and Charles Burchfield, along with pieces in a variety of media by regional artists.

The institute tries to bring art in its many forms to a wide audience, curator Helen Sheridan said.

A current exhibit features works of artists in two media. This September, the works of Chicago artist John Himmelfarb will be shown in a special exhibit.

Kalamazoo also has a ballet company celebrating its 21st season.