

Try village life and chicken

By ANITA CRONE

About 70 miles from Southfield, off I-75, it's Christmas 365 days a year.

If Christmas in the summer doesn't appeal to you, how about a Bavarian village or just some of the best chicken dinners you ever tasted?

Or how about an old fashioned general store or a wood carver or glassblower?

All of those things can be found in Frankenmuth, a perfect place to spend an August day.

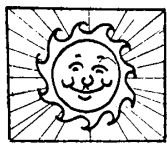
For a Christmas tour in the summer, stop in at one of Bronner's three Christmas showrooms. Each one specializes in a different part of holiday decor.

FIRST, SEE the do-it-yourself part of Christmas. One complete store features candles and small wreaths, ornaments, and special stars for the top of the tree.

Bronner's imports hand-blown ornaments from 15 European countries.

If you're in the market for the tree to hang the ornaments on, Bronner's can accommodate you with any size or any style tree, from a 12-foot scotch pine to a two-foot tree that glows in black light.

summer places



Bronner's also features mammoth nativity sets or Santa Claus to adorn the outside of even the largest home or business establishment.

WANDERING down the main street of town, take a peek in the window of the Schnitzelbank Shop.

There, woodcarver and teacher George Keilhofer can be seen carving his latest commissioned piece.

Keilhofer first came to Frankenmuth as the guest of William Zehnder for the 1966 Bavarian festival. He enjoyed his stay so much that when Zehnder invited him to remain as a permanent resident of the city, he packed up his wife and daughter and moved.

As visitors drive into the picturesque city, the first thing that catches the eye is the Maypole, done by Keilhofer.

KEILHOFER now has 300 would-be woodcarvers taking classes from him. The students come from as far away as Toledo, for the four-week instructions.

They learn from a real master. Keilhofer has constructed statues for a Catholic church in Alma and a statue of Martin Luther for Martin Luther College in Minnesota.

The works of the students also are on display in the Schnitzelbank Shop.

No small town would be complete without a glass blower, and Frankenmuth is no exception. In the glass Haus, anything from lamps to tiny swans can be bought — and the glass workers are glad to just sit and talk.

REST STOPS are plentiful along Main Street. One of the nicest is the cheese house. There you can taste any of 150 different kinds of cheeses, while enjoying coffee in the snack bar.

For those who prefer something stronger than tea or coffee, there's the Tiffany Biergarten.

Sixteen Tiffany chandeliers gave the Biergarten its name, and an original 18-foot oak bar gives the Biergarten the authenticity of a by-gone era.

If you want to see the real thing being made, instead of drinking in the Biergarten, tour the Carling Brewing company plant in Frankenmuth.

THE PLANT conducts seven tours daily, beginning at 9 a.m. and continuing each hour.

But the main reason for coming to Frankenmuth is the all-you-can-eat chicken dinner.

Take your pick of either Zehnder's or the Bavarian Inn, but

prepare yourself for a meal to fill the hungriest stomach.

The taste treat begins with homemade bread and locally prepared butter. Then comes the chicken nudelsuppe mit crispy crackers.

Platters of fried chicken keep coming until you have eaten enough for an army, with different relishes, dressing, potatoes and noodles as side dishes.

If in the course of your meal you hear chimes, it's the 35-bell glockenspiel telling the hour.

THREE TIMES each day, at noon, 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., the 4½ foot figures revolve on four separate tracks, telling the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

The glockenspiel tower is located outside the Bavarian Inn.

No visit to Frankenmuth is complete without a stop at the general store.

There the shopper can pick up souvenirs of the stay in Michigan's Bavarian Village or indulge in penny candy (it still costs one cent despite inflation).

Mail can be sent from the stores post office.

For history buffs, the city's historical museum is a mini-tour of the heritage of the town.

Sometimes a tiffany lamp-maker can be seen hidden in a corner constructing the famous lamp shades. Or china painting, just as it was done centuries ago — by local townspeople.

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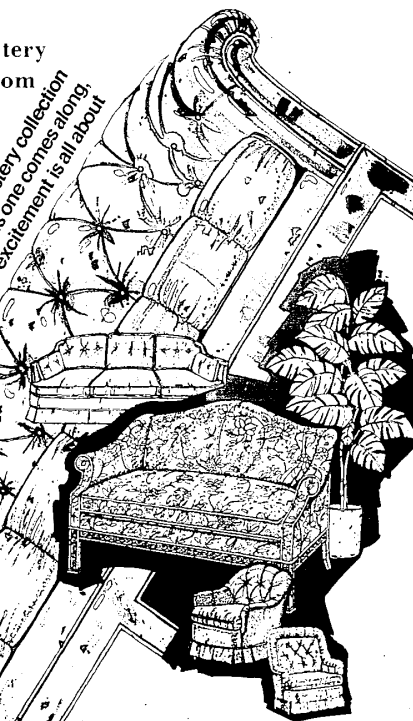
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