

Mention Frankenmuth and chicken comes to mind. Visit the town in winter and you'll find the town's architectural fare, like the Zehnder's Holz-Brucke (above) and the Bavarian Inn's glockenspiel tower, equally flavorful fare. (Photos by Micky Jones)

No town wears winter quite like Frankenmuth

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

FRANKENMUTH, Mich. -- This is the way winter would be if you designed it yourself -- perfect mounds of unmarked snow in the foreground and the snow-capped fairytale of Frankenmuth behind.

From the top of the town, where Main Street crosses the first traffic light at Jefferson, a few cars move between the red and white rectangular shapes of Zehnder's Hotel on the left and the Alpine front of the Bavarian Inn on the right.

The glockenspiel parades the Pied Piper around and around the Inn, and the carillon rings across the parking lot to the new covered bridge, which already blends into the old town.

From June to December this view of Main Street is clogged with long lines of people waiting for the famous chicken dinners served on either side of the road. In January, only a few people leave their breath puffs on the cold air as they walk briskly between the storefronts.

Many popular tourist destinations are worth visiting off-season, but Frankenmuth has an extra attraction. It wears winter well, its fretwork and fancy rooftops bearing their snow frostings gracefully, as if they were designed for it. And, of course, they were.

and its dancing Pied Piper clock.

This year, there is a new face on the winter landscape: Zehnder's Holz-Brucke, a covered wooden bridge.

The 239-foot replica of an authentic 19th century covered bridge was built to lure cars across the Cass River to new parking sites in Heritage Park. Milton S. Graton of New Hampshire spent two years building the bridge, and it was pulled into place by a team of oxen early in 1980.

There are lots of things to do in Frankenmuth. Eat. Drink. Go to Bronners. Buy crafts. Tour the breweries. That adds a nice plus to a day spent here under a winter-blue sky.

But the real reason for coming to Frankenmuth in winter is much less practical. This is the setting you would choose if you were designing winter yourself, and it's worth a trip just to see the snow-frosted Bavarian haus fronts, even though you know that the city invented them just for tourists.



travel log
Iris
Jones
contributing travel editor

Airline bumping bazaar bargain

I often hear the best travel anecdotes during casual conversations with friends.

Rafi Baeri of the Israeli Government Tourist Office was in town last week from Chicago. He told me a fascinating account of the airline practice of bumping that reminded us both of negotiations in the Arab bazaars of the Middle East.

Baeri had to take a very early plane from Chicago to reach Detroit for an 8:30 a.m. meeting. The plane was full of businessmen strapping into their seats and ready to go, when a voice came over the loud speaker.

The airline had sold five more confirmed tickets than there were seats available, a common practice because of the many travelers who don't show up for a flight. An empty seat is lost revenue.

THE GOVERNMENT allows airlines to overbook and to bump extra passengers if those passengers are compensated and delivered to their destination within a reasonable time.

The ticket agent asked for five volunteers to take a mid-morning plane. He offered a compensation of \$100 each. He only got one taker so the price went up.

At \$150, he got another volunteer and at \$175 he got a third. He had to bid to \$250 before he found five volunteers willing to get off the plane. Of course he paid \$250 each to all five.

DURING ANOTHER conversation, Trudy Friend of the Ford Employee Recreation Association (FERA) mentioned the annual travel rally to be held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at the Edsel Ford High School in Dearborn. Trudy works harder as a FERA volunteer than she did before she retired from Ford to run the employee travel program. She wasn't promoting the rally, because it is really designed for FERA members -- Ford employees retirees, and their families.

I mention it because it is open to anyone who wants to go, and it is a great showcase for the more than 50 trips FERA sponsors all over the world.

Nine travel agents will be there to show slides and discuss trips they arrange for the organization. They are Can-Am Travel, Worldwide Specialists, and Hamilton Miller Hudson & Payne, all of Southfield; Corporate Travel, American Express, and Your Man Tours, all of Dearborn; Travel Co., Warren; Elkin Tours, Farmington; and Randolph Tours, Birmingham.

I have attended several of these giant rallies. The school is always full of eager would-be travelers; they explore possible trips, watch movies and other entertainment, collect handouts and free travel trinkets and compete for door prizes. Food is available at the school cafeteria.

The trips this year go to various parts of the Caribbean, Europe, the Orient and Canada as well as to cities in the United States. They range from color tours to cruises.

Trips are designed for members, but they are open to a certain number of non-FERA travelers. If you're interested in exploring this as an alternate means of traveling, attend the rally or call 322-4151. Edsel Ford is at 20601 Rotunda.

VACATION VALUE

- TENNIS (6 crts.)
- RAQUETBALL (10 crts.)
- SQUASH (3 crts.)
- BOWLING (8 ins.)
- ICE SKATING
- SWIMMING (2 pools)
- SAUNAS (3)
- JACUZZIE (2)
- 354 ROOMS



ONLY 1 HOUR FROM
DETROIT OR PORT HURON

THREE NIGHTS
ONLY

\$5775 *

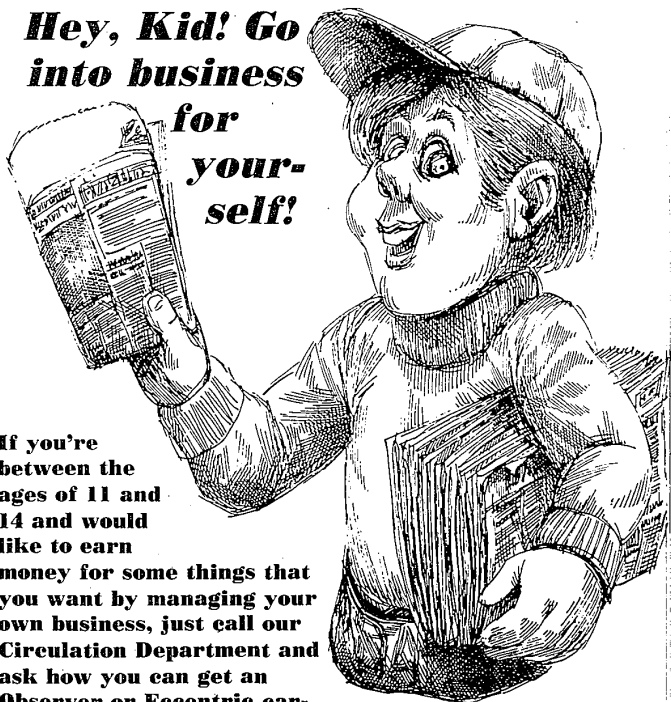
PER PERSON
(BASED ON DOUBLE
OCCUPANCY, PAYABLE
CANADIAN FUNDS,
CURRENT RATE OF
EXCHANGE APPROX. 15%)



CALL 1-519-351-1100

*CHILDREN UNDER 12 FREE WITH PARENT'S ACCOMMODATIONS

Hey, Kid! Go into business for yourself!



If you're between the ages of 11 and 14 and would like to earn money for some things that you want by managing your own business, just call our Circulation Department and ask how you can get an Observer or Eccentric carrier route. Then you'll really be in business.



CIRCULATION

591-0500
in Livonia

644-1100
in Birmingham

651-7575
in Rochester

FRANKENMUTH MEANS literally "the courage of the Franks" because its settlers came here as missionaries to the Indians from the province of Franken in the old kingdom of Bavaria. Hotels on either side of Main Street, where Zehnder's and the Bavarian Inn now stand, were famous for their chicken dinners by the mid-1800s.

The hard-working Christian ethic of the German founders is visible everywhere, from the neat historic farmhouses to the 16-foot-high stainless steel cross erected during the Bicentennial to give thanks to God "From a Grateful Community."

The landscape begins to acquire that fairytale look when you are still five miles from Frankenmuth. The sun adorns the neat farmhouses and silos and crosses Christmas tree farms beside the road.

You drive into Frankenmuth past Bronner's Christmas Decorations, where life-sized Wise Men and their camels are frozen mid-stride on the snowy lawn.

One of the ways you know the town is German is the way they spell house; they spell it haus. It sounds the same, but it looks very gemütlich, especially on an alpine store front.

There is a Klock Haus, a Wedding Haus and a Craft Haus before you get to the first brewery, near that first traffic light at Jefferson.

Main Street curves past Zehnder's and the Bavarian Inn to the next traffic light at East Genesee, with a Glass Haus and Bier Stube along the way to the new School Haus Square, a shopping mall in an old brick school.

The song book they give out with the beer mugs in Frankenmuth may include "My Wild Irish Rose," but nobody doubts that the town is built in the Bavarian style and that its main industry is tourism.

TOURISTS SEE the name Zehnder around every beer barrel and behind every dining room table, but few understand how that Zehnder family name weaves into the history of local hospitality.

The first hotel-restaurant, a boarding house for travelers and their animals, was the Exchange Hotel, built on the present site of Zehnder's Hotel. One of its owners later built Fischer's Hotel across the street at the present site of the Bavarian Inn. (Another of its owners built Goetz Hotel up the street, now the Tiffany Bier Garten and Rau's Country Store. The town seems to have been full of hotels; one is now the Frankenmuth Historical Museum.)

The William Zehnder family bought the boarded and vacant Exchange Hotel in 1928. (They thought a restaurant would be similar to running a farm.) They survived the Depression and a whopping fine for serving beer during Prohibition.

In 1950 the family bought the Fischer Hotel across the street and then the Goetz Hotel up the street.

The famous Bavarian Festival began when the Bavarian Inn was created out of the old Fischer Hotel in 1959, and the Zehnders have been all over town ever since.

Winter festivals, which are not as well known, are held at the Inn; this year on Feb. 27-28 and March 4-6.

THE BAVARIAN INN Glockenspiel Tower has been a highlight since 1967, with its 35-bell carillon