

LET'S GO! TRAVEL

Really BIG mall gives shopping whole new meaning

BY MARY QUINLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

Serious shoppers, browsers and swarms of families gravitate daily to the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn.

The Mall of America is open seven days a week except for certain holidays. For more information, call (612) 883-8800.

Billed as the nation's largest, indoor retail and entertainment complex, this mega-mall gives shopping a whole new meaning.

Searching for that hard-to-find Christmas gift? Perhaps the kids need a jolt of roller coaster curves or trampoline twists.

An amusement park, cinemas, over 40 eateries, live entertainment and more than 400 shops are designed to satisfy the crowds.

Four anchor stores — Bloomingdale's, Macy's, Nordstrom and Sears — hug the outside corners. Filene's Basement — not really in the cellar — carries discounted brand-name fashions for the entire family. Pappagallo, Ann Taylor and Victoria's Secret cater to women.

The merchandise runs the gamut, from sleek swimwear to bowling balls to exquisite jewelry to ultra-modern furniture.

The D. Dawley Hat Shoppe prides itself in carrying racks of "one-of-a-kind" hats for men and women. You can find western-

style derbies and a Russian-style headress called the topor.

A life-size lightweight fiberglass gorilla sells for \$5,000 at the Natural Wonder store. Birdhouses, bronze sculptures and hand-tuned wind chimes fill the store's shelves.

Shirts and sweatshirts with matching earrings in soft hues of pink, yellow and blue line the walls at Jansay casual wear. Prices are reasonable.

Yes, that was Duffy Duck waving to shoppers and hugging the kids. Be on the lookout for him as you stroll by the Warner Bros. Studio store.

A basketball cage, driving range and 48 television screens attract sports fans to the mall's All American Sports Bar located on the fourth floor. Pizza, subs and hot dogs are favorite edibles.

Thinking about adding roller blades to your Christmas list? Stop at Oshman's Super Sports USA. Take a spin in the designated "try it out" rink before you buy. A golf range, batting cage and archery range tempt potential customers to try their skills.

Calling all train enthusiasts! The Great Train Store on the first floor overflows with a selection of rail-related key chains, whistles, models, clothing, books and lots more.

Bring the kids on this shopping trip. The Mall of America was designed with the entire family in mind.

A 7000-square foot LEGO Im-

Travel agencies offering packages for mall trips

Many travel packages are offered between Detroit and the Mall of America. Here's a sampling:

- Pre-Holiday Trips: One-day trip by Hamilton, Miller, Hudson & Payne: Nov. 29 and Dec. 14, depart Detroit Metro Airport at 8 a.m., return 11:30 p.m. Prices start at \$139.99 per person. Call your travel agent.
- Can-Am Mall of America Trips: Two-night trips from

Michigan cities starting at \$240.99; includes Amtrak service shuttle service between hotel and Mall and free tote bag. Call your travel agent.

■ Northwest Mall of America Trips: Discounted package airfares to Minneapolis-St. Paul when purchased with a Worldvacations hotel package. A wide range of accommodations and prices. Call your travel agent.

agination Center provides a colorful kids playground. The area houses a 20-foot tall dinosaur, animated circus characters and space vessels constructed with LEGO blocks. Children are invited to create their own LEGO structure.

Knotts Camp Snoopy, nestled in the heart of the mall, boasts a roller coaster, log ride, carousel and kiddie rides. A 38-foot inflated Snoopy figure provides a lively jumping area for the younger set.

During the holiday season, massive red, green and gold trim prevail. Get your photo taken at Santa's home near Snoopy's dog house.

Blooming flowers, waterfalls, trees and plants supply the back-

ground for the park's rustic Minnesota woods playground.

Snakes, hawks and parrots interact with the crowd at the wilderness Wildlife Theater.

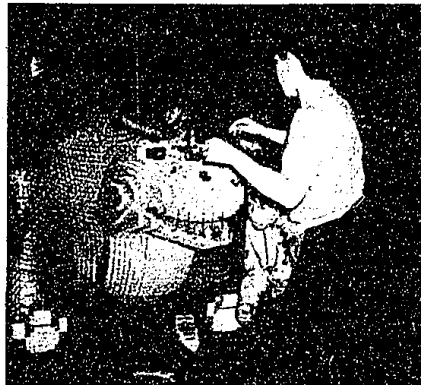
"Does the snake feel slimy?" asks the naturalist.

"No, his skin feels dry!" says 8-year-old Jason, beaming.

After the show everyone gathers around to see (and touch) for themselves.

For slapstick humor in 3-D fashion, gather the family at the Ford Playhouse Theater. A special "family room" provides a hideaway for parents and their small children.

Hungry? The Stampede Steakhouse in Camp Snoopy serves burgers, steaks and ribs. Or you



MARY QUINLEY

Playing: Kids can build with LEGO blocks at the Mall of America.

can venture back to the mall for a wide selection of fast food and a variety of sit-down restaurants.

Boogie's Diner, fashioned with the 1950s in mind, serves thick, creamy milkshakes. For a leisurely lunch complemented with wine, try the Napa Valley Grille. Ice cream, candy and chocolate

shops are scattered throughout the complex.

Parking is free and so are the blackjack instructions at the Grand Casino Store. Or try the complimentary cheese samples fresh from Wisconsin at Rybicki Cheese. The mall's rotunda fashion shows and family performances are also free.

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