

TRAVEL

Weekend getaway

Visit the state many presidents have called home - Ohio

BY MARY QUINLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

Alice, a life-size mechanical allonaurus, greeted us. She opened her wide jaws ever-so-slowly and growled. Not to worry. She was just saying "hello."

We were indoors at The McKinley Museum and National Memorial in Canton, Ohio about a three hour drive from Detroit. If you're looking for an excuse to celebrate President's Day (Monday, Feb. 21), or need a reason to plan a weekend jaunt, consider this tribute which is dedicated to the 25th president of the United States.

"The McKinley has something for the entire family," said Jan Kotilina, public relations manager. "Everybody will be entertained. We have a planetarium, hands-on exhibits and a historic town. We're a presidential site and a national memorial."

Alice is only one of the treasures you'll encounter as you peruse the complex. Be sure to check out the Paleo Indian hut, the working beehive (can you find the queen?), the Ecology Island, a Foucault Pendulum (proof that the Earth rotates)



Monumental: The McKinley National Memorial in Canton, Ohio, is dedicated to William McKinley, the 25th president of the United States.

and an H-O gauge model-train display. Wander into the McKinley Room. Here you'll discover the

world's largest collection of William McKinley memorabilia.

Lislan Two mannequins, representing the president and his wife, Ida, are engaged in a conversation. They're discussing the topics of the day - Spanish rule in Cuba and the deep address they feel at the loss of their young daughter, Katie.

Before departing, meander along to the museum's Industrial Hall. Find the Hoover Vacuum exhibit. Then (this is super silly) take turns weighing yourselves with the suction of the vacuum.

When everyone has stopped giggling, step outdoors to explore the impressive memorial.

A pink granite monument, adorned with thick bronze doors, stands in the midst of a lush park with bike paths and picnic areas - something to remember

if you're thinking about visiting in the spring or summer.

If you don't mind steps (there are 108), slowly climb up to the monument entrance.

Inside, a double sarcophagus holds the remains of the assassinated president and his wife. In the back wall of the rotunda, the couple's two young daughters are entombed.

Look high above the sarcophagus to the red, white, and blue dome. Forty-five painted stars represent the states of the union when the monument was built in the early 1800s.

As your self-guided tour of the memorial ends, you can leave the building from the rear - it's easier on the legs and is handicapped accessible.

Presidential homesites and monuments

More presidents were born or raised in Ohio than in any other state. Here's a brief look at the Buckeye State's presidential homesites and monuments. Some offer tours and others host special events.

Call the site before making plans to visit.

■ The Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center in Fremont, (800) 998-PRES or (419) 332-2081, features a stately 33-room mansion, a museum, library and a wooded estate.

■ The only memorial to the nation's 27th president is in the Mount Auburn section of Cincinnati. Call the William Howard Taft National Historic Site at (513) 684-3262.

■ Ulysses S. Grant's Birthplace, (513) 553-4911, can be found near the banks of the Ohio River in the town of Point Pleasant. The three-room, frame cottage is open to the public.

■ The Warren G. Harding Presidential Home and Memorial, (740) 387-9630, is located in Marion. President Harding conducted his famous "front porch" campaign at this residence.

The Harding Memorial, the largest presidential monument outside Washington, D.C., is a short drive south of the Harding Home.

■ View the final resting place of President William Henry Harrison in North Bend at the Harrison Tomb State Memorial, (800) 331-5353. North Bend, located in the southwest corner of the state, was the residence of both the nation's ninth president, William Henry Harrison, and, his grandson, Benjamin Harrison, the 23rd president.

■ Check out the one-room schoolhouse in Georgetown where Ulysses S. Grant attended classes. Call the Grant Schoolhouse at (937) 378-4119 to arrange a visit.

■ A major restoration was just completed at the James A. Garfield National Historic Site in Mentor. Reporters nicknamed this home "Lawnfield" because they camped out during the presidential campaign on the Garfield's front lawn. For information, call (440) 255-8722.

■ The final resting place of President Garfield may be viewed at Lakewood Cemetery in Cleveland. Call the Greater Cleveland Convention & Visitors Bureau, (800) 321-1004.

For information on the McKinley Museum and National Memorial, call (330) 455-7043, or visit their Web site: www.mckinleymuseum.org.

While you're visiting Canton, Ohio that is, you can visit the Pro Football Hall of Fame, the Canton Classic Car Museum, and the Cultural Center for the Arts.

If you're planning a visit in the spring or summer and enjoy golfing, Stark County holds the distinction of not only being the home of McKinley, but also "Ohio's Golf Capital."

For travel information, contact the Canton/Stark County Convention and Visitors Bureau, 229 Wells Avenue Northwest, Canton, Ohio 44703-2642, or call (800) 533-4302 or online at www.visitantoniohio.com.

Mary Quinley is a Livonia resident and the author of "52 Ohio Weekends," (Country Roads Press).

Special Events

Feb. 18 - Wildwood Metro Park, Toledo; personal recollections of President Abraham Lincoln as told by Dr. Richard S. Young.

Feb. 20 - Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, Fremont; "Rutherford B. Hayes & George Crook: A Friendship Forged in War," a free lecture by Civil War author Peter E. Cozzens.

Feb. 21 - President's Day.

■ Akron Zoo, Akron; Presidents Day program focusing on the bald eagle and wildlife native to the U.S.

■ James A. Garfield Historic Site, Mentor; "Who Wants to Be A President?" "Abraham Lincoln" will be the host of this program based on the television game show.

■ William Howard Taft Birthplace, Cincinnati; free guided tours.

Daily - The U.S. Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton; four presidential aircraft on display.

For information on all presidential events, call (800) BUCKEYE, or visit the Web site: www.ohiotourism.com.

GOT AN IDEA FOR A TRAVEL STORY?

We are looking for stories and pictures about people who love to travel.

Have you been to any faraway places?

Been to places a day's drive from southeastern Michigan?

Had any funny, unusual or adventurous travel experiences?

Gone on any notable cruises or group tours?

If so, tell us about it by contacting assistant managing editor/Observer features Kelly Wagonik by phone at (734) 953-2105; by fax at (734) 591-7279; by e-mail at kwagonik@oe.homecomm.net

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