

TRAVEL

Cruise around Michigan enjoying fun festivals

BY MARY QUINLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

Looking for an adventure packed with heaping portions of family fun? If so, check out a Michigan festival.

The mitten-shaped state oozes with a variety of funky, unique, and familiar festivals. And, even though each celebration showcases a little something different — they all share one common ingredient — a good time.

"The festivals feature a platter of special entertainment served just the way you like it," said Sue Bila, executive director, Michigan Festivals & Events Association.

Her suggestion to festivalgoers is: "Have fun, and enjoy a special closeness with your family."

Here's a sampling of what's happening during the next several months:

May 10-12: Mesick Mushroom Festival, Mesick. Morels rule at this celebration. Activities include a parade, carnival, largest mushroom contest and celebrity appearances. Call (800) 22-LAKES or check www.mesick-mushroomfest.org.



Favorite stop: The Point Iroquois Light Station, on the shore of Lake Superior 20 miles west of Sault Ste. Marie, is one of the stops for visitors on The North American Lighthouse & Tall Ships celebration.

■ The North American Lighthouse & Tall Ships Celebration comes to Mackinaw City in late August.

May 17-19: Railroad Days, Durand. A tractor pull, kids games, food, arts & crafts at the depot and a model train exhibit attract railroad enthusiasts of all levels. Call (989) 288-2878.

June 8: World's Longest Breakfast Table, Battle Creek. Shop for arts & crafts, take the kids on carnival rides and share a breakfast table with other cereal lovers. Call (800) 397-2240 or check www.battlecreekvisitors.org.

June 7-9: National Asparagus Festival, Hart. Celebrate the asparagus harvest with an arts & crafts fair, food, farm tours and entertainment. For information call (800) 874-3982 or visit www.oceana.net/na/.

June 14-18: Ovid Carriage Days, Ovid. Enjoy an auto show, fireworks, music, a rodeo and kids activities. For info call (989) 834-5052.

June 14-16: National Strawberry Festival, Belleville. Everything is strawberry — especially the yummy food. New this year — helicopter rides. Call (734) 697-3137 or visit www.national-strawberryfest.com.

June 26-29: Yankee Doodle Days, Grand Ledge. Dress in patriotic colors, listen to a musical revue, eat, watch a roller hockey competition or visit the Opera House. For info call (517) 627-2383 or go to www.grandledgeml.com.

June 27-30: Flea and Ox Roast, Irons. Antiques, arts & crafts, a flea market and rodeo provide fun for everyone. Contact (231) 266-6317 or www.irons.org.

July 6: Japanese Star Festival, Saginaw. Origami, calligraphy and the Japanese Ten Ceremony will be celebrated. For information call (989) 759-1648.

July 12-15: Michigan Elvis-Fest, Ypsilanti. Pay tribute to the "King" while you enjoy Memphis-style barbecue, Elvis movies, a classic car show and more. Call (734) 480-3974 or

visit www.michiganelvisfest.org.

July 16-20: National Baby Food Festival, Fremont. The young and the young-at-heart are welcome. Events include a baby crawl, arts & craft show and an adult baby food-eating contest. Contact (800) 692-9229 or www.fremontchamcon.org.

July 25-28: Munger Potato Festival, Munger. You're in potato country so eat and enjoy. Arts & crafts, fireworks, flea market and more. Call (989) 659-3270.

July 26-28: Yala Bologna Festival, Yala. So — what's the big deal about bologna? Find out at a party that includes entertainment, a parade, cardboard boat and outhouse races, and lots of bologna sandwiches. Call (810) 387-9253.

Aug. 1-4: Pig Gig, Bay City. Feast on barbecued ribs while listening to music or watching a water ski show. Call (989) 684-8410 or check www.piggig.com.

Aug. 9-11: St. John's Mint Festival, St. John's. Savor a variety of mint-flavored foods and candy, watch a rodeo, shop for arts & crafts, listen to music or take an agricultural tour. Call (989) 224-7248.

Aug. 9-11: Great Lakes Folk Festival, East Lansing. Music galore, arts & crafts and activities for the kids. Call (989) 684-6630 or www.lansing.org or www.greatlakesfolkfest.net.

Aug. 16-18: Linwood National Pickle Festival, Linwood. Celebrate the end of summer with cucumbers, music, the "biggest-little parade" and activities for the youngsters. Call (989) 697-3056 for info.

Aug. 24-28: The North American Lighthouse & Tall Ships Celebration, Mackinaw City. Hop on a trolley or a boat to view the area lighthouses. Tours of tall ships will also be available. For info contact (800) 666-0160 or www.mackinawcity.com.

Aug. 31: Llama Fest, East Lansing. Llama shearing, an arts & crafts show and food. Call (517) 264-8598 or visit www.michiganllama.org.

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Mackinac Point: This old lighthouse was de-commissioned in the 1950s when the lights of the big bridge made it unnecessary. The 1892 structure now serves as a maritime museum.

Mark these dates for fun all summer

Michigan fests attract thousands of visitors each year. According to the Michigan Festivals & Events Association, the following list represents some of the most popular summer festivals:

June 26: International Freedom Festival, Detroit. Celebrate the friendship of two countries along the shore of the Detroit River. Spectacular fireworks, music, a midway and kids games are featured. Call (800) 225-5389 or check www.visittetroit.com.

July 6-13: National Cherry Festival, Traverse City. Root for your favorite cherry-pit spitter, treat yourself to a yummy selection of cherry-flavored foods and drinks, and listen to music. Kids' games, arts & crafts and fireworks will also be

featured. For info call (231) 947-4230 or check www.cherryfestival.org.

July 17-20: Ann Arbor Street Art Fair and Ann Arbor Summer Art Fair, Ann Arbor. Stroll the city's sidewalks to view and purchase an eclectic mix of artwork. Food and kids activities available. For info on the Street Fair, call (734) 994-5260 or check the web: www.ortfair.org; for Summer Fair Information, call (734) 662-3382 or visit www.michiganuguld.org.

Aug. 30-Sept. 2: Arts, Beats, and Eats, Pontiac. A combo of music, food and arts & crafts delight all ages. Call (248) 975-8850 or visit www.artbeatsandets.com.



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