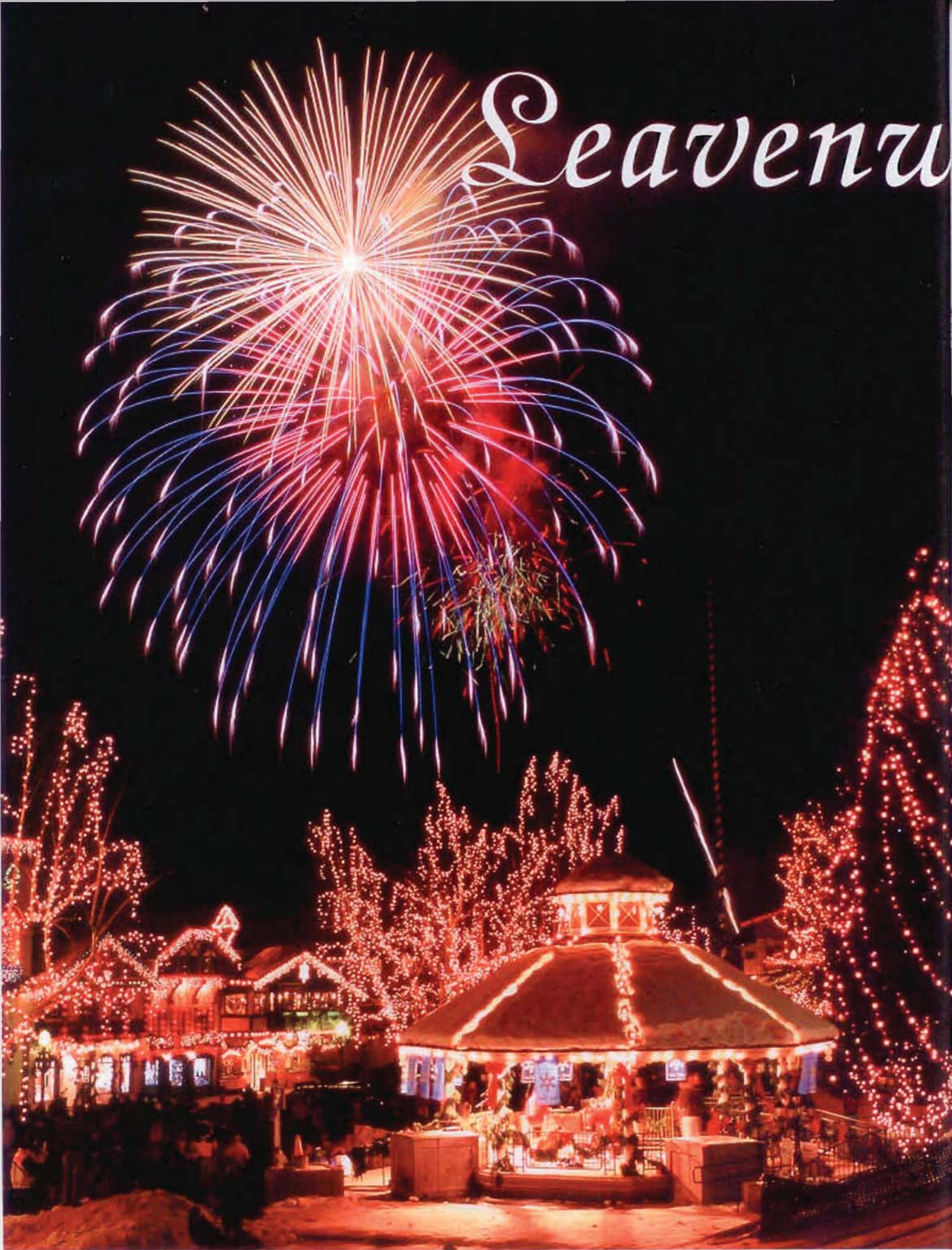


Leavenworth



orth



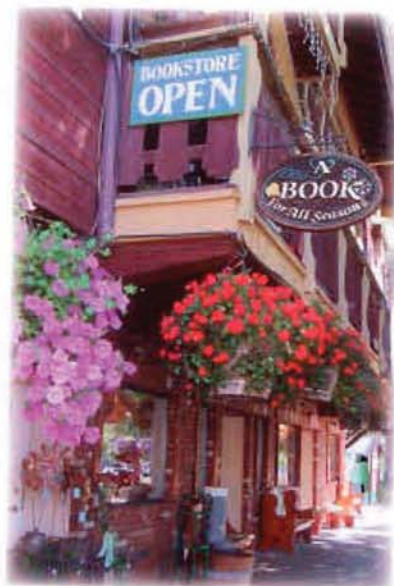
JOHN KLEIN

A Bavarian town for all seasons



STORY BY JOANNA NESBIT

*I*M ALWAYS SURPRISED, when approaching Leavenworth on Highway 2, by the sudden shift from Tumwater Canyon's solitude to the open landscape of Upper Valley and the busrle of this Bavarian-themed village. This is not my first visit, nor will it be my last, but I still find the scalloped architecture in the beautiful alpine setting remarkable. I'm not the only one. Flanked by craggy 8,000-ft. peaks and lying at the junction of three valleys, Leavenworth, population 2,195, draws more than a million visitors a year.



JOANNA NESBIT



DON ADAMS

LEFT: The Ice Fest, held in January, ends with a fabulous fireworks display.

Over the decades, Leavenworth's festivals have garnered national attention, but the town's proximity to the Wenatchee River, Icicle Creek, and North Cascade range also allow a year-round outdoor scene that's as much a part of Leavenworth's identity as its Bavarian trappings. The area is also home to nine wineries, outlying lodges, the Lake Wenatchee Recreation Area, and fruit orchards to the east.

GETTING ORIENTED

DESPITE THE BAVARIAN atmosphere, Leavenworth is no theme park. Real people live here and love it. To fully appreciate the present, you must understand the town's past. Start with a walking tour led by Ryan Johnson or his wife, Julie Lodge. They offer three different tours regularly from June to mid-September and by appointment the rest of the year. "Boontown to Bavaria," the most inclusive, is packed with history and anecdotes, detailing Leavenworth's evolution as frontier settlement in the late 1800s, thriving timber and mining town in the early 1900s, and struggling hamlet after the Great Northern Railway was rerouted in the early 1920s.

After the railroad left, Leavenworth lived a tenuous existence for awhile. In the 1960s, a group of townspeople formed Project LIFE (Leavenworth Improvement for Everyone) to rethink the town, but, Ryan tells us, it was Ted Price and Bob Rodgers, successful owners of a Bavarian-themed morel and restaurant at Coles Corner, 16 miles away, who spearheaded the Bavarian makeover. Embracing the concept in 1965, Leavenworth converted store by store to vault out of obscurity and become a magnet for Pacific Northwest tourists.

Our group is as intrigued by Ryan as the tour itself; we are surprised to learn he and Julie moved to Leavenworth just over two years ago. Discovering

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TOP LEFT: Munchen Haus is the spot for authentic Bavarian sausages.

SECOND FROM TOP: Ryan Johnson and Julie Lodge offer walking tours of Leavenworth.

THIRD FROM TOP: Mike and Cindy Hendricks at River Haus in the Pines.

BOTTOM: Christkindlmarkt and the Christmas Lighting Ceremony.



JACQUANNA FRESBETT



JACQUANNA FRESBETT

Leavenworth after years of seasonal work and travel, including a year in Bavaria, the young couple began planning walking tours within a couple months of arriving, inspired by those they took in Europe. Listening to Ryan's lively delivery and attention to detail, I'm struck by how much he personifies the same inventive spirit that brought Leavenworth back from the brink in the 1960s. Indeed, you'll find many transplants here who echo Ryan's love of the region.

DOWNTOWN SHOPPING AND FESTIVALS GALORE

LEAVENWORTH'S COMPACT DOWNTOWN, with 65 specialty shops, is geared for strolling. Boutiques offer jewelry, handbags, glasswork, and more. Families will enjoy the Hat Shop, while the Australian Store takes you Down Under and The Cheesemonger's Shop specializes in imported meats and cheeses. Stop in at A Book For All Seasons, Leavenworth's independent bookstore, or Kris Kringl for a perennial Christmas experience. If you tire of shopping, Waterfront Park is a few minutes' walk away, where a footbridge leads to Blackbird Island for a short nature walk.

Leavenworth is famous for its festival weekends, including, of course, Oktoberfest, held the first three

weekends of October. The weekend after Thanksgiving marks the start of the holiday season with Christkindlmarkt, a Bavarian-style Christmas market. The Christmas Lighting Ceremony, Leavenworth's most popular and magical event, runs the first three weekends of December. Visitors often schedule accommodations a year ahead, so try arriving for the Sunday tree lighting if Saturday is booked up.

There's some big news in Leavenworth for festival-goers and anyone who's inspired to visit: A new Amtrak station (Icicle Station) has just been constructed and it is scheduled to open right around the time this issue goes to press. Now you'll be able to leave the car at home and take the Empire Builder train from either Seattle or Spokane (and points in between), with daily service to Leavenworth.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

THE LEAVENWORTH AREA is full of outdoor opportunities. Winter is a stunning season, with miles of cross-country ski trails, snowshoeing, and snowtubing. Great downhill skiing is to be had at Stevens Pass and Mission Ridge, both less than an hour away. Mountain Springs Lodge offers snowmobile tours for all ages as well as horse-drawn sleigh rides, which are also



AUGUSTA SPOONER



PHOTOS COURTESY LEAVENWORTH SUMMER THEATER

The Sound of Music at Ski Hill Amphitheater.

available (along with hay rides in the summer) at Red-Tail Canyon Farm and from downtown Leavenworth.

In the summer, you'll find river rafting, kayaking, tubing, hiking, mountain biking, fishing, rock climbing, and golf. The Wenatchee River, known for big wave excitement and low hazard, provides premier rafting and kayaking for all levels. Late July and August, when river levels are lower, offer the best tubing. Fifty rock crags within 10 miles make Leavenworth a popular rock climbing destination, and more than 700 miles of forest service trails allow hikers to explore the Enchantments Basin in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and Glacier Peak Wilderness.

ART AND CULTURE

LEAVENWORTH SUPPORTS A thriving arts community. "Village Art in the Park," an outdoor juried art show in Front Street Park, runs May-October. July and August bring Leavenworth Summer Theater's productions to the stage, including two plays selected each season and the annual performance of *The Sound of Music*, going into its 16th year. This popular production, performed outdoors at Ski Hill Amphitheater, uses the evening stars and surrounding mountains as natural backdrops, while the hill behind the

audience allows Maria to literally sing her way through a meadow.

Visitors may not realize they can also catch chamber music in Leavenworth. The Icicle Creek Music Center, partnered with Sleeping Lady Mountain Retreat on a 67-acre woodsy campus in Icicle Canyon, is a hidden gem offering top-notch public performances as well as music retreats and educational programs. The Icicle Creek International Chamber Music Festival, held each July, brings in world-class musicians. The campus features a trapezoid-shaped concert hall with stunning mountain views, an outdoor stage, rehearsal rooms, and cabins for students and musicians.

Leavenworth's Nutcracker Museum is known for its collection of more than 5,000 nutcrackers from 40 countries. The Upper Valley Museum, a small historical museum on the Barn Beach Reserve (BBR), houses a display of the area's history as well as rotating exhibits.

The BBR, near downtown, is comprised of the Upper Valley Museum, eight surrounding acres designated as a protected greenbelt, and the "Barn," a green-built learning center recently named one of the Northwest's Top Ten Green Projects at the annual American Institute of Architects Seattle award program.

Sleeping Lady Mountain Retreat

also serves as a model of sustainable use, demonstrating conservation in daily operations and featuring many examples of salvaged wood in its construction, including 14 rebuilt buildings dating from earlier tenants, a Civilian Conservation Corps camp, and Camp Field, a Catholic summer camp. The recently remodeled Kingfisher Dining Lodge offers seasonal vegetables from its 2-acre organic garden. I recommend a dinner reservation to experience the beautiful dining lodge's beam structure and new demonstration kitchen framed by a serpentine copper server line.

WINERIES

THE WENATCHEE VALLEY and Leavenworth area have, in recent years, turned to grape growing and wine-making. Leavenworth has many wine tasting rooms in town, but it's worth visiting the wineries themselves for unique settings and experiences. Just east of Leavenworth lies La Toscana



COURTESY EAGLE CREEK WINERY



JOANNA NESBITT

When You Go

GETTING STARTED

Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce (509-548-5807; leavenworth.org)

Cascade Foothills Farmland Association—Great maps and activity guides; event tickets. (509-548-6784; visitwashingtonfarms.com; visitwashingtonwineries.com)

DINING

Gustav's—Burgers and sandwiches, family-friendly. (509-548-4509, gustavsleavenworth.com)

München Haus—Authentic Bavarian sausages and beer garden for the whole family. (509-548-1158; munchenhaus.com)

King Ludwig's—German fare, live German music and dancing on weekends. (509-548-6625; kingludwigs.com)

South—Latin fusion specialties. (509-888-4328; southleavenworth.com)

Los Camperos—Tasty Mexican cuisine. (509-548-3314)

Café Mozart—Elegant central European cuisine, upscale prices. (509-548-0600; cafemozzartrestaurant.com)

Katz Chop House—Fine steaks, seafood, and delicious appetizers, upscale prices. (509-888-KATZ)

Kingfisher Dining Lodge (Sleeping Lady Mountain Retreat)—Elegant dining in Icicle Canyon, reservations required. (800-574-2123; sleepinglady.com)

SHOPPING

Hat Shop & Wood Shop (509-548-4442; hatshopwoodshop.com)

Australian Store (509-548-3088)

The Cheesemonger's Shop (877-888-7389; cheesemongersshop.com)

Kris Kringl (888-557-4645; kkringl.com)

Der Sportsmann (800-548-4145; dersportsmann.com)

Feathered Nest (509-548-2064)

A Book For All Seasons (866-227-8747; abookforallseasons.com)

RECREATION

Northwest Mountain School—Climbing and skiing guide service. (509-548-5823; mountainschool.com)

Wenatchee River Ranger District U.S. Forest Service—Enchantment permits. (509-548-2550; fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee)

Osprey Rafting Company—Rafting, kayaks, and tubes; rentals and guided trips. (888-548-6850; ospreyrafting.com)

Tube Leavenworth—tube rentals for the whole family. (866-712-8823; letsgotubing.com)

Icicle Outfitters and Guides—Horse rides, hunting trips, sleigh rides. (800-497-3912; icicleoutfitters.com)

Alpine Carriage—Narrated horse carriage rides. (509-548-7543)

Das Rad Haus—Mountain bike rentals. (509-548-5615; dasradhaus.com)

Uber Scooter Rentals—Leavenworth's newest adventure rentals. (509-888-8807; uberscooters.com)

Winery, owned by Warren and Julie Moyles, whose winery and guestrooms were inspired by two years in Italy. Call ahead for a private appointment. Eagle Creek Winery offers estate wines as well as wines sourced from vineyards in the Columbia Valley appellation. Wine tasting is available from May–October. Their in-town tasting room, d'Vinery, is open year-round.

A PLACE TO STAY

LEAVENWORTH ABOUNDS WITH fine lodgings, but I particularly enjoyed the hospitality of my bed & breakfast, River Haus in the Pines. A short walk from town, River Haus offers restful privacy with three guestrooms, easy access to the river, and a delicious breakfast. Owners Mike and Cindy Hendricks, who visited Leavenworth for years before relocating, offer thoughtful extras, such as packages that include house concerts and beach towels and beach chairs for the river. They're glad to help guests plan trips and activities. From River Haus you can stroll to town or head out to catch something of the outdoors.

Wherever you go, pay attention to the people who live here and why. Their stories are as individual as they are, but all contain the same theme—everyone loves this beautiful alpine valley. ■



JOANNA NESBITT