

Leavenworth, the Northwest's Bavaria

BY LILLY LONGSHORE

It's early April in Washington, and my husband and I are traveling over Snoqualmie Pass on our way from Tacoma to Leavenworth. We're straining to see through the sudden flurries when the snow abruptly disappears. The road clears as we drop in elevation and I know we've arrived at our destination when I see the ubiquitous Bavarian storefronts against the backdrop of snow-capped mountains. Even the local gas station is designed to look Bavarian.

When it could no longer be sustained as a logging town, Leavenworth was reformed into a tourist destination, the result of foresight and planning by its civic leaders. Now, half a century later, year-round festivals and celebrations ensure entertainment to suit everyone's taste. Oktoberfest, Maifest, the Christmas Lighting Festival and the International Accordion Celebration are all accessible, and events at the Festhalle and Leavenworth Summer Theater are also wheelchair-friendly.

I stop by the Danish Bakery for apple strudel and coffee, then head down Front Street to the Nutcracker Museum. "We have an elevator, and we do all we can to make the museum accessible for all," manager Debbie Watkins tells me. This delightfully distinct place displays over 6,000 nutcrackers made of a variety of materials — carved wood, silver, ivory, ceramic. They're shaped like toy soldiers, Disney characters, rabbits, pirates, pilgrims and more. An artfully-painted Santa seated at a sewing machine caught my eye. Some nutcrackers are tiny and some are as tall as a man.

For fresh air, I take advantage of the 1.5-mile packed dirt trail at Waterfront Park on the Wenatchee River, easily accessible in my power chair. Right now, it's a peaceful roll



in the shade, but in the wrong weather it can get muddy.

The main square is a great place to sit in the sunshine. It is also one of three areas with clean, accessible public restrooms. Across the street is Kris Kringl, a festive Christmas shop that smells like cinnamon sticks. As I wheel by a myriad of ornaments and decorations, Bing Crosby sings "White Christmas," filling me with nostalgia. The Obertal Mall is another wheelchair-friendly shopping option.

I meet up with family at Yodelin Broth Company for lunch. We go through a back alley to enter. The food is tasty, and the view of the North Cascade Mountains is fantastic from the deck where we sit. I ask the receptionist at Icicle Village Resort about other accessible eating/

shopping choices, and she tells me the first floors of most shops and restaurants in town are accessible.

Icicle Village Resort, Muchen Haus, Good Mood Food and Kristall's Restaurant also offer accessible dining. For overnight stays, Icicle Village Resort has both accessible rooms and condos. Bavarian Lodge, Enzian Inn and Posthotel provide accessible rooms.

For me, the five-hour ride is worth it to see this lovely Bavarian town. It feels like I'm in an entirely different country, right here at home.



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