

A World of Pleasure awaits you at the 2005 National Bottle Show in Michigan!

by Liz Maxbauer

At a recent bottle show I was talking to a fellow bottle collector, sharing the excitement of the upcoming 2005 National show in Grand Rapids, Michigan (August 13-14). A northeasterner, the collector had never been to Grand Rapids and said, "Tell me about Michigan." As I went on, he expressed his surprise and was impressed with all that Michigan has to offer. Later, I began to wonder if others would also benefit from this information. As a native "Michigander," please allow me to give you a narrative tour of my beautiful home state.

Whether you are looking for cultural events, the performing arts, world-class golf, a variety of museums, quaint coastal villages, amusement parks and outdoor recreation, Michigan has it all. I would encourage you to bring your family and extend your visit to take advantage of all that Michigan has to offer.

There is not a better place to start our Michigan tour than with Grand Rapids, where you will find the comfort and friendliness of a small town combined with the amenities of a big city. Once known as the furniture capital of the world, Grand Rapids has recently experienced a \$500 million dollar renaissance in new cultural, recreational, meeting and sports facilities. Our host hotel and convention center, outstanding restaurants, museums and entertainment are all within walking distance of this safe and clean downtown area.

Grand Rapids, Michigan's second largest city, is located in southwest Michigan, approximately 30 miles from Lake Michigan on Michigan's "West Coast." It is easily accessible from interstate 96 and U.S. 131, and only 184 miles from Chicago and 426 miles from

Pittsburgh. Grand Rapids is serviced by the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, which serves two million passengers annually. This airport is the second-busiest commercial airport in Michigan and is an easy 20 minutes from the convention center, DeVos Place.

And what a gorgeous convention center it is! DeVos Place, recently finished last December, 2004 is huge (on 13 acres, having one million square feet) yet it is easy to navigate. From the wave-shaped roof to interior water motifs, the convention center symbolizes the beauty of this great-lakes state, visually welcoming visitors to its downtown riverfront location. The natural light from the wall of floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the river will be a big bonus to bottle collectors in our convention hall. The convention center's proximity to museums, theaters, concert halls and outdoor sculptures makes it a natural destination for bottle collectors who want to bring the whole family. It also has a 75-foot high, glass enclosed "Grand Gallery," which is a climate controlled five block enclosed skywalk that connects Monroe Avenue to the Riverfront, Van Andel Arena and the Amway Grand Plaza, our host Hotel.

The Amway Grand Plaza, a four-star, four-diamond historic hotel, is the epitome of elegance. From there, I encourage you to take a walking tour around the city to fully appreciate its beauty. Once you start

looking, you'll see artwork almost everywhere, including "La Grande Vitesse," a soaring red metal sculpture by Alexander Calder at Calder Plaza where there will be a festival called "Soul of the City" accompanied with music and food. You can enjoy the sculptures along the river walk, visit the many art galleries, window shop, or sit a spell at Rosa Parks Circle to people watch or perhaps listen to the free music concerts offered at the amphitheatre there most summer weekends. You could enjoy a progressive dinner, stopping at a few of the more than 60 restaurants within walking distance. All but 10% of these restaurants are unique (not chain restaurants), where you will find a vast array of cuisine including bistros, Irish pubs, steak and seafood houses, ethnic specialty restaurants, bakeries and more. Our host hotel also houses Michigan's only AAA-Five Diamond Restaurant (The 1913 Room). There are also many options for fun in this thriving entertainment district.

There are also five excellent museums within walking distance. The Public Museum of Grand Rapids will be hosting a major traveling exhibit from July 2nd to October 31st entitled: "Cherished Possessions: A New England Legacy," featuring 175 artifacts reflecting family



Exterior of DeVos Place, Grand Rapids.



DeVos Place meeting rooms.



Grand Gallery at the DeVos Place.



Farmer's Market

stories of life in New England. It also has world-class exhibits on history, nature and cultural heritage. Also, don't miss the Gerald R. Ford Museum "America's most entertaining presidential museum, the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids Children's Museum and Planetarium or the Voight House Victorian Museum.

A short drive away, you could also visit the John Ball Zoo, featuring over 1000 animals in a 110 acre park. Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park is approximately ten minutes away and features 125 acres of the most comprehensive outdoor sculpture collection in the Midwest (sculptors such as Rodin, Moore and Lipchitz), as well as indoor and outdoor gardens, waterfalls and nature trails.

If golf is your passion (besides bottle collecting), see why Michigan has earned its reputation as "America's Summer Golf Capital." The entire area boasts premier championship golf courses and professional sports. Grand Rapids is also home to the West Michigan Whitecaps – a Class-A affiliate of the Detroit Tigers. The weekend of August 12th, they will be playing Wisconsin. Come see the fireworks!

Michigan is a water-lovers paradise. We have 11,000 miles of inland lakes and more coastline mileage than any other state except Alaska. In the neighboring coastal communities of Saugatuck or Grand Haven 30 miles to the west, you could take a sunset cruise, or pilot a boat yourself and cruise past the lighthouses which dot the coastline. You could also rent a Jet Ski, kayak, or reel in "the big one" on a charter fishing trip. For landlubbers, other options include a scenic off-road sand dunes ride or just relax and dig your toes into one of the many miles of sandy beaches. From Grand Rapids, 42 miles northwest is Muskegon, the home of "Michigan's Adventure" an amusement and water park with over 50 rides and water slides. These



The Frederik Meijer Gardens

quaint coastal communities have an abundance of restaurants and art galleries for your enjoyment. Finally, there could be no better way to cap off your day on the west coast than to watch a beautiful Michigan sunset on the water, truly a sight to behold.

Michigan, being a peninsula, has a "microclimate" which is ideal for growing grapes. The coastal areas are dotted with many local wineries, from South Haven to Traverse City, which have free wine tasting rooms for an enjoyable day filled with tasting excursions. Several national and international award-winning wines have been made here in Michigan.

Traveling to the east, you will find a multitude of attractions to choose from, including a memorable visit to the historical Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, the excitement of cheering on the Detroit Tigers, or visiting the local casinos.

No trip to Michigan would be complete without a visit to the northern part of the state. In the upper part of the Lower Peninsula, known as a vacationer's paradise, you'll find miles of beaches where the water is a crystal clear Caribbean blue. I would suggest a visit to my hometown of



Golf

Traverse City and the Leelanau peninsula, voted by *Travel* magazine as one of the best travel destinations in the world. You will find sand dunes, wineries and gently rolling landscapes nestled in this magnificent natural setting. *Golf* magazine also ranked it 12 out of its top 50 golf destinations. The beauty continues as you continue north to the cities of Charlevoix and Petoskey.

A most unique destination would be Mackinaw Island, the setting of the movie "Somewhere in Time." After a speedy boat ride to the island, it will seem like you have traveled back in time to a Victorian village where motorized transportation is not allowed. You could visit historic Fort Mackinac, take a horse and buggy tour or bike around the island.

As you can tell, I could go on and on, but space does not allow. The National Bottle show promises to be very exciting and will alone be worth the trip. Many people are hard at work planning a memorable event. Speaking from personal experience, with John's attention to detail, the show will run like a finely tuned machine. Don't miss it! I hope to see you here!



Fishing at Grand Havens