

Fire Up
THE
ACCORDION
AND GET YOUR
Oom-Pah-Pah
On

By Heidi Burton

Just as the excitement of the holidays has faded and a dreary gray January looms before the denizens of the Top of Utah, German culture enthusiasts are preparing to have a rip-roaring good time in Ogden.

Get out the lederhosen and the dirndls, because on Jan. 22 and 23, the Golden Spike Event Center will be filled with bouncy accordion tunes, the low sonorous sounds of alpine horns, knee-slapping German dances, and the scent of sizzling bratwurst.

The annual Hof German-Fest runs from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day, featuring three alpine bands, dance numbers, authentic German cuisine, and vendors selling handmade art and crafts.

"We pride ourselves on pretty great entertainment that you can't find anywhere else this time of year," said Jim Harvey, general manager for the event center.

The festival is a tradition in Ogden, which officially became the sister city of Hof, Germany, in 1954.

continued on 54



Walter and Silvia Schwemmer of Germany dance at the Hof German Winterfest at the Golden Spike Events Center in Ogden in 2010.



Traditional German bratwurst with mustard, sauerkraut and red cabbage

Hof GermanFest

11 a.m.-10 p.m.
Jan. 22 and 23
Golden Spike
Event Center,
1000 N. 1200 West, Ogden
www.hofgermanfest.com



Alphorns are played during Hof GermanFest at the Golden Spike Event Center in 2014.

A room in Pia Baird's home is decorated with Austrian and German souvenirs.



Photo by Robby Lloyd
Pia Baird is from Vienna, Austria, and has a room in her home decorated with Austrian and German furniture and souvenirs.



Hof Germanfest 2015



Salzburger Echo played alphorns during the Hof GermanFest in 2015.

This was a direct result of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's People to People program, designed to encourage friendships and cultural understanding between America and other countries.

At the State Department's invitation, a young man from Hof named August Brand came to visit Ogden, according to www.hofgermanfest.com. He stayed at the home of Frank Browning, president of the Bank of Utah, and the two became such good friends that Brand returned to America to stay.

The two friends persuaded the mayor and city council to declare Hof and Ogden as sister cities. Now the annual

Hof GermanFest honors that relationship.

Harvey said the festival is attended by all ages, from grandparents and parents who bring their children, to between 350 and 450 high school and junior high students from Weber, Davis and Box Elder school districts.

Many attendees have some connection or experience with German culture, he said.

"There's a lot of (German) ancestry in Ogden; their ancestors came from Germany, Bavaria or Austria, or one of those countries that speak German," Harvey said. "There are a lot of people

in this area who served (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) missions in that area who speak German."

Pia Baird, who sits on the Hof GermanFest committee, said many people look forward to the festival every January.

"People just love it," Baird said. "Some people from (Hill Air Force) Base come, some have been in the military and have been stationed over there. Some like the culture. Some are descendants of Europeans."

Baird herself is from Vienna, Austria, but married an American from Ogden and lived with him on a military base

and Nutcracker Sweets in Pleasant View. Attendees can dress in German attire, such as the leather shorts known as lederhosen worn by men, or the peasant dress known as a dirndl that women wear with a blouse and apron.

Scheduled performers include Saltzburger Echo, a band that plays modern and old-fashioned alpine music, including alpine horns, yodeling and musical cowbells; The Gruber Family Band from northern California, featuring German songs, original compositions and button box accordion tunes; and dancers who formerly performed with the Weber State LDS Institute Folk Dancers.

"It will be a great, great show," Harvey said. "It's a safe, feel-good family environment that offers a different culture and a different use for the Golden Spike Event Center." ▲

The entertainment at the Hof festival is great, Baird said, but the authentic German food is the highlight. "The food is always excellent," Baird said. "That's what makes the festival. ... People know what good German food is."

Culinary highlights, according to Baird, include bratwurst, potato salad, sauerkraut and schnitzel, which is thin, tenderized meat (usually pork), breaded and fried — as well as German bread and sweets like the Berliner, a doughnut filled with marmalade.

Food vendors include Siegfried's Delicatessen and Vosen's Bread Paradise in Salt Lake City

and Nutcracker Sweets in Pleasant View.

Attendees can dress in German attire, such as the leather shorts known as lederhosen worn by men, or the peasant dress known as a dirndl that women wear with a blouse and apron.

Scheduled performers include Saltzburger Echo, a band that plays modern and old-fashioned alpine music, including alpine horns, yodeling and musical cowbells; The Gruber Family Band from northern California, featuring German songs, original compositions and button box accordion tunes; and dancers who formerly performed with the Weber State LDS Institute Folk Dancers.



Edelweiss shop owners Helmut and Janet Wenzel at Hof GermanFest in 2015.