

Welcome to Leavenworth, Washington's faux-Bavarian village

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Raymond Chen

The dying logging town of Leavenworth, Washington reinvented itself in the 1960's as a faux-Bavarian village. Today, over a million tourists visit annually to enjoy the scenic mountain views, soak in the fake Bavarian atmosphere, and revel in events like the Leavenworth International Accordion Celebration which starts tomorrow, or the three-weekend-long Leavenworth Oktoberfest every October. (Mind you, the Leavenworth Oktoberfest doesn't actually start until the Munich Oktoberfest is nearly over, because Oktoberfest starts in *September*.)

I found during a brief visit to Leavenworth that the people there may dress like they're from Bavaria, but they don't actually speak German.

But at least I was there undercover.

Some years ago, a colleague of mine was on assignment in Redmond from his home country of Austria. One weekend, he decided to pay a visit to our fake Bavarian village, and when he returned, we asked him what he thought of the town.

“Well, for a fake Bavarian village, it's not too bad. I mean, nobody would for a moment think it was the real thing, but I appreciate the effort they went to, and it was quite a pleasant little town. But the weird thing was what happened whenever I opened my mouth to speak: People recognized that I spoke with a German accent and a flash of panic crossed their faces, as if I was going to blow the cover off their little ruse and reveal it to be a fraud.”

[Update 8:00AM: Various typos fixed.]

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