

Teddy Bear Museum, Jeju Island, South Korea

BY LUCY CORNE

If you're searching for an unusual vacation spot that indulges your teddy bear passion, South Korea has you covered. Located on the idyllic island of Jeju off the south coast of the Asian nation, the Teddy Bear Museum might not be imaginatively named, but it offers an excellent and exhaustive look at all things teddy. And you don't have to be a soft toy fanatic to enjoy a visit—the museum also appeals to art buffs, culture vultures, kids young and old, and those who enjoy a little tongue-in-cheek humor.

The tour begins in the History Hall, but you won't just learn about teddies through the ages here. You can also witness great events in world history, each given the teddy treatment: Ford's first automobile, the moon landing, the birth of rock and roll, there's even a Gandhi bear clad in the great man's trademark white robes. Of course, teddy bear history also gets more than a fleeting mention, and the well-worn and much-loved bears dating back to the turn of the 20th century will have you yearning for your favorite childhood bear. You know, the one whose eye and fur gradually got worn away by over cuddling.

Speaking of childhood memories, they'll come rushing back in the Art Hall, where glass cases contain familiar faces like *Paddington*, the Care Bears and a whole range of *Winnies*. The real focus of the art room, though, is the collection of great paintings and sculptures that are given new protagonists—the Mona Lisa with

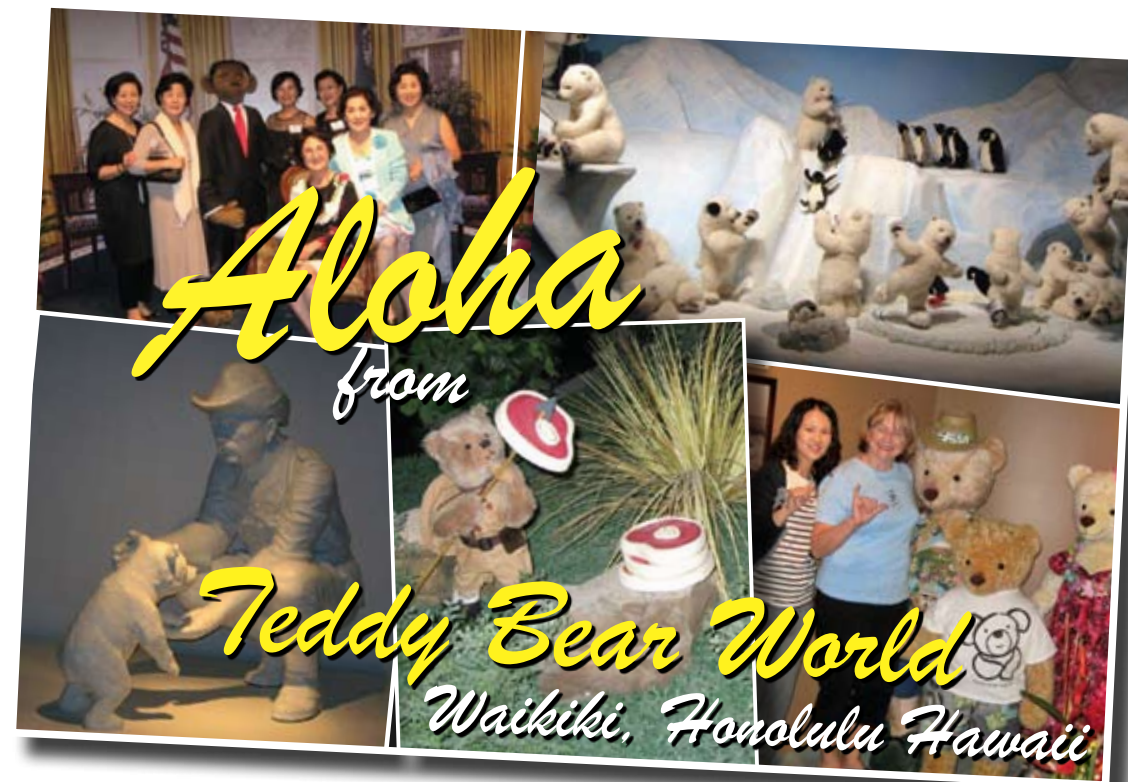
adorable ears; Rodin's buff-bodied Thinker with a teddy bear head. Even the great religious works of art are given a quirky makeover, with a dozen cuddly disciples enjoying Da Vinci's Last Supper with a teddy bear Jesus or a grey-furred God bear giving life in a 3D adaptation of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam.

The art room crescendos with a double whammy of high-priced bears. Steiff made 125 limited-edition bears to celebrate their 125th anniversary—and how better to celebrate than with a 125-carat bear whose mohair fur is trimmed with diamonds, sapphires and gold? But even the precious bear's \$84,000 price tag pales in comparison with that of the snappily dressed Louis Vuitton teddy safely stored in a glass case nearby. The raincoat-clad bear fetched a record \$190,000 when auctioned for charity, its winning bidder later donating it to Jeju's excellent collection.

Out in the garden, somewhat less cuddly fiberglass bears offer a wealth of photo ops, from joining a teddy bear picnic to getting a massage from a grizzly. And after shopping for all things teddy-related in the gift store, you can end your visit on a high note with a hug for the giant plush teddy that even those cynical about soft toys will want to take home.

South Koreans must have a particular penchant for cuddly toys, with two smaller museums further north on the mainland. Seoul's Teddy Bear Museum tells the history of the South Korean capital with the help of an army of teddy bears, while the Teddy Bear Art Gallery north of Seoul in Paju-si replicates more famous art work with teddies taking the place of the original models.

For more information about the museum visit teddybearmuseum.com.



It's a Small World After All

BY FELICIA HYMER

Would you like to go to a place that transports you to other countries and to your childhood dreams all within an hour or two? It's possible at Teddy Bear World Hawaii, a new attraction in Waikiki, Honolulu Hawaii. The creators spared no expense on this 17,000 square-foot, \$5 million complex.

JS&F, a toy manufacturer, resort and theme park operator based in Korea, created this first-of-its-kind museum in the United States. Its other attractions are special in their own right, but it wanted something entirely unique to bring to the U.S.

EVERY SECTION OF TEDDY BEAR WORLD IS A SPECTACLE IN ITSELF

The first floor is the gift shop, which offers visitors a broad spectrum of plush bears and gift items and quickly draws pedestrians into the bear-fest upstairs.

The friendly staff greets everyone and explains that the museum is a

self-guided tour. They are happy to answer questions and even take photos for guests in front of the exhibits.

Ascending the escalator, the backdrop is a breathtaking world map with teddy bears dressed in International costumes.

On the second floor, visitors are greeted by Hawaiian music and a large diorama of lovely, swaying hula bears. A life-sized Biker Bear riding a full-sized Harley invites guests to come along on his journey. Upon closer inspection, they'll spot a tiny version of the biker bear in each exhibit in the 8 Wonders of America section of the museum. The idea is that the bear is cruising through each stop on a cross-country trip and visitors can follow him throughout his journey.

Each destination has a distinct theme and focus where thousands of custom-designed and antique Teddy Bears are showcased in elaborate exhibits. Costumes and set designs depict world-famous historical and current events, people and landmarks.

Great care was put into the planning of the sophisticated audio-animatronics in its exhibits, interactive attractions and retail displays.

Subliminally, these cute, cuddly anthropomorphic teddies quickly convert anyone into a bear lover.

A WORLD LIKE NO OTHER

The robotic dioramas feature Times Square in New York City, a riverboat, Mount Rushmore, the Rocky Mountains, a NASA shuttle launch, San Francisco, Mann's Chinese Theater in Hollywood, monuments in Washington, D.C., and various American sports. Videos playing on monitors hanging over the exhibits give real-life context to visitors unfamiliar with the scenarios.

The self-guided tour continues with Dinosaur Park, where relatively realistic dinosaurs interact with quirky bears, some of whom attempt to feed a Tyrannosaurus while others swing joyfully on the animatronic neck of a brontosaurus. One can't