



Mesmerised ... Arthur takes in the magnificent Lego display of a ski village in Munich's Riem Arcaden, far left, and the 'magic tap' in a supermarket in Inzell, left.

**T**HE idea was that five-year-old Arthur would experience the enchantment of the toy museum in Munich. How well I remembered it myself! Climbing a winding staircase in a fairy-tale tower by the Marienplatz, exploring old rooms crammed with delightful toys and sweet teddies and, afterwards, admiring the town hall carillon, with a jousting scene and metal figures dancing to German folk tunes. How beautiful it would be in the falling snow...

But it wasn't like that at all. Admittedly, Arthur loved the snow, he chortled over the scantily clad snowy lady statues in the Marienplatz fountains and he was intrigued by a nearby sausage shop. He also thoroughly enjoyed our tram ride back to the Prinzregent Hotel: "My first ever ride in a tram!" he cried. He was also a glad recipient of the free gifts and sweets which this welcoming city hotel provides for younger guests.

But he'd have swapped the ingenious carillon, the quaint rooms and teddies for the Lego winter landscape spread out in the modern, unpicturesque Riem mall. This huge, elaborate creation included a cable car, skiers, a model village and, best of all, a double-decker train, a type of train that Arthur had never seen before. Imagine the thrill when we actually caught a double-decker train the next day. (That was even more exciting than the previous day's first-class trip on the Gatwick Express.)

Munich was a stopover on the way to the Chiemgau Alps, in the part of Germany which borders onto Austria. We all enjoyed being upstairs as the train sped through countryside of dazzling whiteness. In fact, it was like entering a Christmas calendar, with every

# A very modern treat

Jenny Woolf thought it would be the fairy-tale aspects of Bavaria that would appeal to her son Arthur – but in the end it was the trendy malls, hi-tech transport and sports facilities which captured his attention



Plenty to do ... Arthur in the ball pit at the Inzell town hall playroom, left, and, above, the Pension Staufenhof, where Jenny and her family stayed.

twig of every tree outlined in glittering ice.

We were heading for the holiday village of Inzell, which focuses on outdoor family fun. It's attractive, with many large, newish, chalet-style pensions adorned with traditional mountain-style carved gables and wall paintings.

And we were all ready to visit one of its pleasant cafes for lunch on the first day, when we discovered a problem. It seems that in many rural parts of Bavaria – like this one – local businesses don't welcome credit cards. Our hoped-for leisurely lunch-hour became instead a hungry search for cash.

Our Inzell pension, the chalet-style Staufenhof, was a nice place. In its corridors, old photos of our hosts' ancestors smile from the walls, clutching hoes and pitchforks in a Heidi-like idyll.

Something of the old simple atmosphere still lingers, but the ancestors would have been amazed to see how the village has come on.

With major events taking place locally, all the sports facilities seem modern and well-kept and the Inzell rink is Germany's national speed-skating training centre. The pool's outdoor Jacuzzi and hot tub was a big success. I sat in the bubbling water and Arthur laughing madly, pranced

around in his swimsuit and pelted me with snowballs, apparently impervious to the sub-zero temperatures.

I'd been specially interested in Inzell's snow park. It's really unusual, with a roundabout which drags you round and round on your skis, a child-scaled tobogganing slope and ski-training area with a little escalator-style ski lift. Sadly, it was only open during the weekends and school holidays although there are all kinds of exciting events organised when it is open. But we got a chance to try it when Arthur had a downhill ski lesson and they cleared the children's training slope and started up the mini ski

lift specially for him.

The ski school has English-speaking, child-friendly instructors and well-maintained modern gear in all sizes, reflecting the fact that the area's moderate slopes and scenic cross-country routes make it specially popular with families. We all loved striking out across the pristine fields while huge flakes tumbled thickly from the iron-grey sky.

The well-equipped free playroom in the town hall (for younger children) offered Arthur some downtime when he needed it and the swimming pool's restaurant was family-friendly, with a children's menu, a view of the swimmers and traditional

German food at decent prices.

Many visitors do self-cater, though, and the village's sizeable supermarkets include one with child-sized trolleys and a "magic" giant tap which kept Arthur puzzling for ages.

On our last day, the sun shone brightly and everything looked even prettier than before: mountains, skiers, houses, forests. It was the Snow Queen, the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and the Ice Follies all in one.

Having by now got the hang of the place, we decided we'd like to return, with a rucksack of paper money and without VISA cards, of course. Meanwhile, there was the return trip on the Gatwick Express to look forward to – so the excitement wasn't over yet, for Arthur, at least.

## FACTFILE

- For more information about Munich and Bavaria, contact the German National Tourist Office, 020-73 17 0904 or go to [www.germany.travel.co.uk](http://www.germany.travel.co.uk).
- Gatwick Express is the fastest way between central London and Gatwick Airport. Trains depart every 15 minutes throughout the day and take 15 minutes. [www.gatwickexpress.com](http://www.gatwickexpress.com).
- Pension Staufenhof: [www.staufenhof-inzell.de](http://www.staufenhof-inzell.de).

## THE WALL New End Theatre Hampstead ★★★★☆

**T**HE setting is Israel – a burial ground that contains the remains of British soldiers who were killed by militant Zionists in 1947. One was 25-year-old Ralph whose middle-aged son David is on a visit to Israel and casually decides to look at the grave of the father he hardly knew.

Much to his amazement, he finds himself racked with

# A call for end to West Bank conflict

sobs and realises that he has a vast store of buried emotion, showing that the tragedy of war and paternal deprivation can infiltrate the subconsciousness of the smallest infant.

As he fights to compose himself, his father arises from his grave and confronts his son. First of all, he relates comic reminiscences of his fellow soldiers and boastful stories of his own heroism.

Ralph then goes on to discuss the problems of Mahmud, the Palestinian keeper of the cemetery and his rough treatment by the Israeli checkpoint officials who are guarding the wall, the edifice of steel and concrete that separates the two nations.

On his daily visit to the cemetery, Mahmud is invariably stopped, occasionally stripped, and held for hours at the checkpoint.

Ralph pleads with his son to write to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu begging him to have the wall removed. Gradually, David becomes involved in the troubles and becomes the father in the relationship, taking over from Ralph in his determination to help end the conflict.

This play is beautifully written with totally believable dialogue and much humour

and the two actors – Eric Carte as David and Duncan-Clyde Watkinson as Ralph – make the most of the drama and comedy of the situation.

The fascinating scenic design is by Katie Blumenblatt who has created the atmosphere of the soldiers' graveyard with stumps of trees representing the gravestones and great splashes of colour on the walls with pictures of young soldiers incorporated

into the design.

This brilliant but controversial play, sympathetically directed by resident director Olivia Rowe, is not the customary fare of the New End, which is famous for its pro-Jewish productions. This is a brave choice and the theatre's directors should be congratulated on their courage. *Until June 6.*

ALINE WAITES