

'Czech' Out Moulton

Blink and you'll miss Moulton, a sidetrack town 10 miles north of Shiner on Texas 95. That'd be a mistake. Turn west off 95 onto Moore Avenue, and see what I mean.

Moulton (pronounced MOHL-ton) prospered in the 1880s as the railroad and Czech and German immigrants came to town. Today, the community of some 1,000 people quaintly blends Old World style and Old West flavor.

First stop: **Kloesel's Steakhouse and Bar** (101 E. Moore; 361/596-7323; www.kloesel.com; open Mon 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Tue-Fri 11-10, Sat 11-11, and Sun 11-9). During the past 30 years, Harvey and Diana Kloesel turned a former grocery-cafe (built with lumber from the 1888 Moore Hotel, which occupied this site) into a popular eatery. The Kloesels cut and charbroil choice steaks on site and make sure dressings and sauces follow family recipes. Other fare ranges from fettuccine to blue-plate specials—plus luscious pies and cakes.

Harvey and Diana also run Cowboy Roundup (361/596-7323), located a mile and a half north of town on 95. Year-round, groups and individuals take horseback trail rides, complete with cookout, country band, and campfire. The facility also hosts private parties and weddings for up to 350 ...and the brides can even get their dresses locally.

For 20 years, betrothed from across the region have found bridal bargains at **K&K Bridal Rail** (100-A W. Moore; 361/596-7772 or 800/660-4066;

www.kkbridal.com; open Tue-Wed and Fri 9:30-5, Thu 9:30-7, Sat 9:30-4, and, from Jan.-Mar. on Sun 1-5). Housed in a former train station, K&K specializes in big-city wedding and prom gowns at small-town prices, says owner Melissa Helweg, adding, "We get to know our customers so well, we're often invited to the weddings."

Across the tracks from K&K, antiquers chat with proprietor Anton Machacek while poking through old stuff at **Nana & Pappa's Antiques** (113 N. Main; 361/596-7077; open *[call to confirm; he's closed 'til July]*). Down the street, visitors and locals alike waltz into two "Cheers"-type taverns built in the 1920s: **Pavla's Tavern** (114 S. Main; 361/596-4449; open daily 9-noon and 2-midnight), operated with chutpah since 1959 by George Pavla, and **Main Bar** (111 N. Main, 361/596-4920; open Mon-Fri 1-midnight, Sat 9-1 a.m., and Sun 2-midnight), a hangout for domino players owned by Joe and Linda Pilat.

Another "don't-miss" tavern is the 1889 **Moravia Store** (2164 CR 232; 979/562-2217, open Mon and Wed-Thu 3-10, Fri 3-midnight, and Sat 3-1 a.m.). It's one of Texas' oldest general store-dance halls and specializes in beer, barbecue, and polka. From Moulton, take FM 532 east 10 miles, turn left on FM 957 and go one mile.

Stay the night in Moulton, if you can, at Don and Cindy McIntosh's **Rehmet House Bed and Breakfast** (301 W. Moore; 361/596-4300; www.bnbfinder.com; \$75-89 with full breakfast). They've restored an 1896 Sears and Roebuck catalog home and carriage house into three suites, pampering guests in country style.

Soaring Gothic architectural style enlivens the spirit several blocks away at the 1924 **St. Joseph Catholic Church** (601 N. Pecan; 361/596-4674; open 9-5). It's annual picnic (Sept. 16, 2001) is known for kettle-fried chicken and beef stew—plus fresh-baked rosettes (ice cream cone-type pastries), homemade wine, and dried noodles.

Moulton also hosts an annual Polka Festival (March 17, 2002), but it's largest event remains the annual Town & Country Jamboree—with chili, barbecue, and pie baking contests, as well as domino tournaments, a carnival, and live music.

Contact the Moulton Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, Box 482, Moulton 77975 (361/596-7205; www.moultontexas.com).

--Randy Mallory