



The Good Old Days: Go Back in Time with Nostalgia Tourism in Butler County, Ohio

(June 4, 2026) – Summer vacation time is finally upon us, which might bring back memories of how you spent your youth. Let's face it: Adulthood is hard. If all the stress and strain of the big-kid life makes you long for the good old days, we have the perfect summer destination for you ... and Throwback Thursday (#TBT) feels like a great time to talk about it.

The destination is [Butler County, Ohio](#), located just northwest of Cincinnati. This charming mix of suburban, urban and rural destinations is home to some incredible retro businesses. Here's the rundown:

EXPERIENCES

Holiday Auto Theatre: If you were lucky enough to grow up near a drive-in movie theater, you know how much fun this can be. The Holiday Auto Theatre, which has been around for 60 years in Hanover Township, shows double features of first-run movies. There's a snack bar on site, but you can also buy a food pass that allows you to bring in your own snacks so you never even have to leave the comfort of your car. Fun fact: June 6 is National Drive-In Movie Day!



Pinball Garage: No matter which generation you're from, you probably remember whiling away hours in front of pinball machines or video games. This fun spot combines all that under one roof ... with a bar! It's grown-up good times at their finest. Whether you're itching to see if you can top your high score on Ms. Pac Man or want to try your hands at a more modern game, you can find it in downtown Hamilton.

Barn-N-Bunk Farm Market: Depending on where you grew up, you might be familiar with the concept of a "barn dance." The Theobald family keeps that tradition alive at their farm market complex in Trenton, which opened in 1992 and has expanded to encompass a produce stand, craft shop, deli and ice cream store, pottery school, and event spaces. Every other Friday night, the farm hosts old-time country music and a dinner in one of its historic barns. On the first Monday of the month, the farm offers Country Cruise-Ins, encouraging visitors to arrive in their classic cars.

Salty Dog Car Museum: Speaking of cars ... this museum in Shandon offers an incredible collection of historic automobiles and fire engines. Most of the cars are historic Fords, since those parts are available and the museum owners specialize in rebuilding antique engines. Nearly every vehicle is drivable, with the oldest in the collection dating to 1902 and models going through the 1930s. Here's the local twist: The fire trucks were mainly built by Ahrens-Fox, a Cincinnati-based company.

SHOPS

The Toy Department: Proving that you're never too old for toys, this Fairfield-based specialty shop – one of the largest in the Midwest – buys, sells and trades popular toys, action figures and gaming systems from years gone by. Whether Strawberry Shortcake was your jam or you're looking for that perfect Star Wars piece to be the force in your collection, chances are that the guys who run this place can find it for you. Pro tip: This part of Ohio is where Kenner toys were dreamed up and produced until 2000, which means this shop knows the creators of favorite toys and got its hands on countless prototypes.



Three Feather Records: If you're among the music enthusiasts who believe that vinyl is the best way to listen to favorite albums, you'll be in good company here. This Fairfield shop is owned by a dad and his two sons, and it specializes in all genres, from pop and country to metal and rap. The space also serves as a local music venue, with the mission to give local musicians and artists a boost. If you're really lucky, you may get a meet-and-greet with their unofficial manager, Dio the corgi.

FOODS

Drive-in Dining: Before drive-thrus, there were drive-ins ... as in, you pull up, shout your order into a microphone, and then someone arrives with a contraption to strap to your car window so you can convert your dashboard into a dining table. Butler County has four such remaining restaurants, two locations of [Jolly's](#) in Hamilton (on the east and west sides of the city), plus [The Jug](#) in Middletown and [J&E Rootbeer Stand](#) in Madison. All four establishments specialize in burgers and onion rings ... and the drink of choice at all is root beer (plain or as the base of a float).

The Cone: The only thing better than ice cream is if the shop that's serving it is shaped like a cone. This one in West Chester totally is, so ... perfection! The classic order here is an orange and vanilla twist, but this soft-serve shop knows that in Ohio, you must also offer a buckeye sundae that's the ideal combination of chocolate and peanut butter. And yes, there's a full array of sprinkles and dip-top flavors.



Central Pastry Shop: This old-fashioned bakery claims to "make memories" and that's not just a tagline. The shop has been around for more than 75 years and under its current ownership for about 40 ... so it's very much a part of the community of Middletown. This is one of 14 stops on the [Butler County Donut Trail](#), and you can pick up a passport and begin your journey right here. Insider tip: Order an "ugly" donut. You're welcome.

Jungle Jim's International Market: Bringing this sweet-tooth roundup to an end, the candy collection of this gigantic grocery store in Fairfield is a sticky walk down memory lane. The array of Pez dispensers alone will send you rocketing back to your youth ... but whatever candy you remember most fondly from childhood, you're likely to find it here. Even if you didn't grow up in the U.S., there's a strong chance that your favorite foods from wherever you call home (sweet or salty, in a can or a bag) can be found on a shelf at this market.

What a flashback, right? So this summer, if you're seeking a destination that lets you recapture those carefree feelings of days gone by – no matter what era you're from – check out [Travel Butler County's](#) website to start planning your personal version of time travel.

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