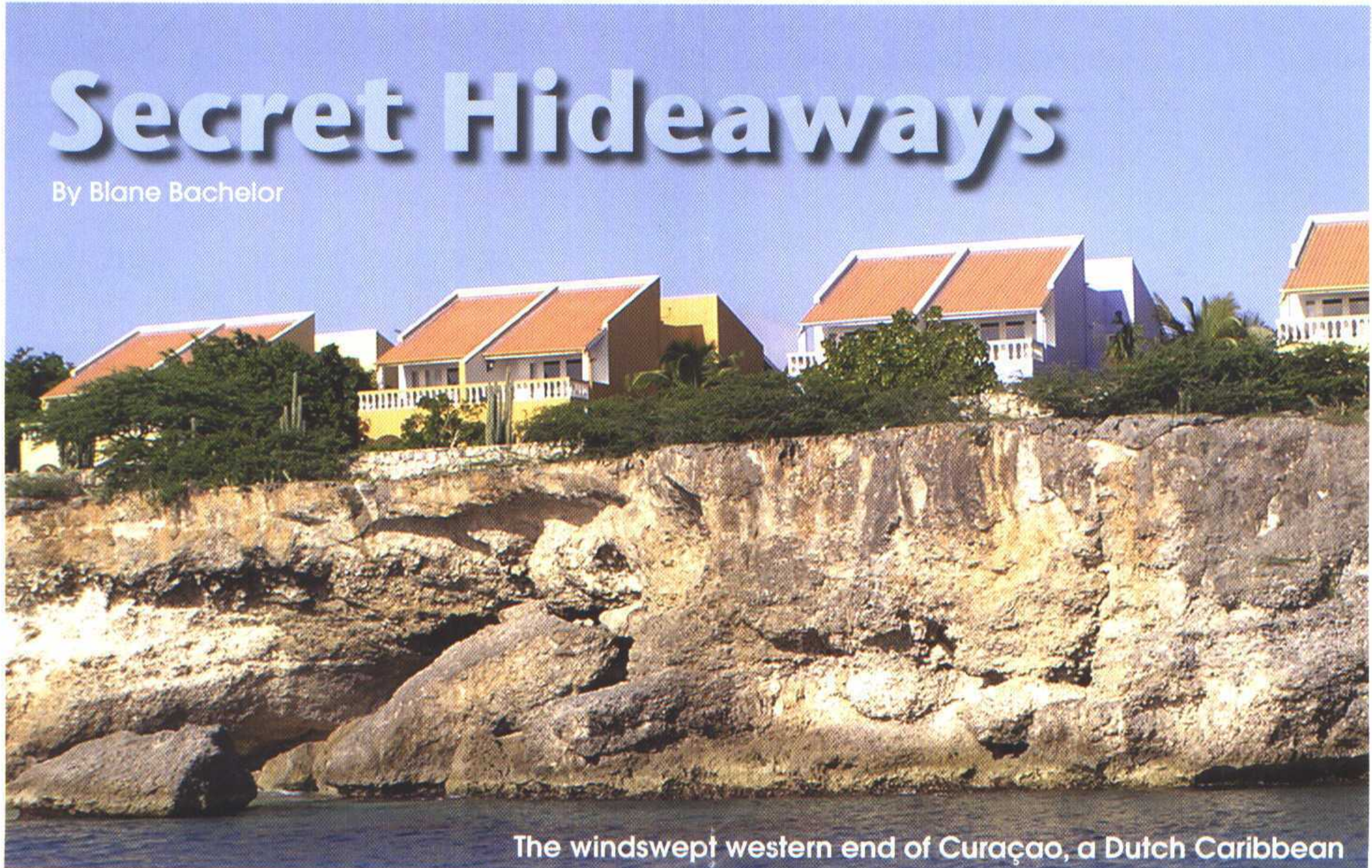


escapes



Secret Hideaways

By Blane Bachelor



The windswept western end of Curaçao, a Dutch Caribbean island just 60 miles from the coast of Venezuela, boasts secluded beaches, breathtaking natural geography and relatively few tourists. But until recently, the area also had relatively few options for top-notch accommodations, keeping many visitors to Curaçao planted near the capital city of Willemstad, about a 40-minute car ride away.

Photo by Blane Bachelor

The Lodge at Kura Hulanda, West Punt, Curaçao

All that changed with the recent opening of the Lodge Kura Hulanda, the 350-acre sister property of the award-winning Hotel Kura Hulanda in Willemstad, and the first luxury hotel on the western part of the island. Perched atop the craggy coastline, the Lodge has just 80 suites and villas, housed in two-story buildings awash in cheerful Caribbean pastels, and its own private beach, all of which create a distinct “private island” feel. Accommodations feature first-class amenities: 300-thread-count sheets, CD/DVD players and outdoor showers.

But don't get too comfortable in your room – the Lodge's proximity to a spectacular natural reef located off its beach makes for some prime snorkeling and diving (an on-site dive

shop provides daily excursions to Curaçao's top dive sites). You can also charter a boat to explore the untamed beauty of the nearby coastline. Landlubbers can take advantage of the free transportation to Willemstad, which boasts an enticing array of shopping and museum destinations.

Also within a short drive of the lodge are Christoffel National Park, where the 1,239-foot Mt. Christoffel rewards hardy hikers with gorgeous views of Curaçao and sometimes Venezuela, and the Boca Tabla Caves, where the sea crashes in spectacular fashion against the cliffs. Still, you don't have to climb Mt. Christoffel for some of the most spectacular sunset views on the island, which are there for the taking every day at the lodge's sweeping outdoor bar and restaurant area.

www.kurahulanda.com

Reservations: 1-877-264-3106

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Photography Courtesy of Paws Up Resort.

The Resort at Paws Up, Greenough, Mont.

Love the outdoors, but hate the thought of sleeping in a tent every night of your vacation? Looking to get close to nature without having to get close to an outhouse? You're not alone: a growing number of travelers, especially women, are after getaways that combine two seemingly unrelated elements: the outdoors and luxury. Outfitters and lodgings have tailored their offerings accordingly, and one that's continued to set the standard is The Resort at Paws Up, located about a half an hour from the college town of Missoula, Mont.

Opened last June, the resort is built on 37,000 breathtaking acres zigzagged by seven miles of the Blackfoot River, made famous by a fly-fishing Brad Pitt in "A River Runs Through It." The resort amply delivers on its tagline, "Roughing It Redefined," with spacious timber cabins that pamper guests with rustic sophistication: heated granite floors in the bathrooms, massive wooden beds and flat-screen TVs. At Tent City, you'll get a back-to-nature experience polished with every comfort of home. The six tents feature feather beds, electricity and works of art; each evening, a butler arrives to build your fire, make s'mores and tell tall tales.

This summer, the resort is taking its pampering to another level with the opening of its "Spa Town," a cluster of 11 oversized luxury tents that offer such treatments as "Sacagawea's Dream Therapy" and "A River Runs Through It Wellness Massage." Guests at Tent City also can take advantage of a spa tent available exclusively for them; guests at the cabins can book in-suite treatments. All are an ideal antidote to the endless outdoor offerings that await you in the surrounding wilderness, including fly fishing, hiking and horseback riding.

www.pawsup.com

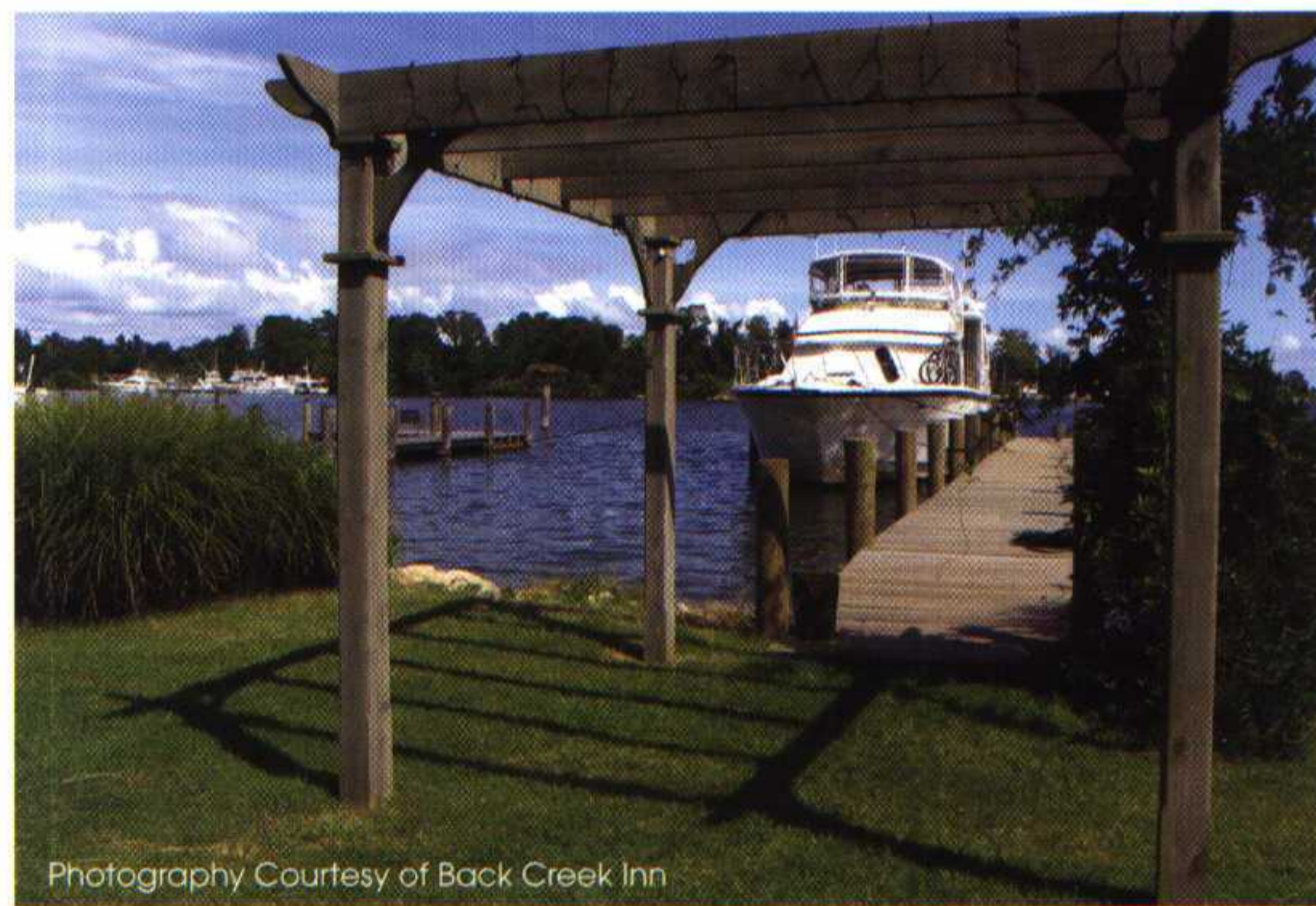
Phone: 1-800-473-0601

Back Creek Inn, Solomons, Md.

Neither Carol Pennock nor Lin Gauchet is a native of Maryland, but for nearly two decades their business has been synonymous with the relaxing setting of Solomons Island in the southern part of the state.

When they heard about a 19th century waterman's home-turned-B&B that was up for sale, Pennock and Gauchet, who met in a Bible study group more than 20 years ago, decided to try their hand as business owners. They bought the home, renovated the rooms and planted lush gardens across the waterfront property. Now, approaching its 20th anniversary, the Back Creek Inn B&B has become one of the most coveted getaway spots in this quiet fishing village in Calvert County, about an hour's drive from Washington, D.C.

Pennock and Gauchet have made relaxation the top priority. Décor is more down-home comfortable than high-end luxury, anchored by delightful details like fresh bouquets from the on-site gardens and Pennock's own artwork, all of which is for sale. The attractions of Solomons, including the impressive Calvert Marine Museum and the quaint Drum Point Lighthouse, plus a number of restaurants that serve up delectable seafood, are all within walking distance. The Inn will also prepare a picnic basket, perfect for a hike to nearby Jefferson Patterson Park or Flag Pond State Park, where you can search for Indian artifacts or shark's teeth.



Photography Courtesy of Back Creek Inn

What's the final near-guarantee for some much-needed relaxation for busy working women? Guests at Back Creek are required to leave the little ones at home, since children under 12 are not permitted. ♀

Website: www.backcreekinnbnb.com

Phone: 410-326-2022