

**Rudy Maxa on Women and Their Hairdressers
Prize-Winning Homes ■ Growing Old Gracefully**

WASHINGTONIAN

JUNE 1990 \$1.95

52 Great Getaways

**A Year's Worth of Wonderful Weekends: Romantic Hideaways, Private Islands,
Country Inns, Mountain Retreats, and More**

.....



**St. Michaels on
Maryland's Eastern Shore**



Call of the Wild

Schuss Down a Mountain Slope, Shoot Some Rapids, or Saddle Up and See the Land as the Settlers Did

Fly-Fishing

The Lure of Harpers Ferry: It's Teeming With Bass

Harpers Ferry marks the convergence of three states (Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia) and two rivers (the Potomac and the Shenandoah). The rugged beauty of its steep ridges of quartzite and shale has quickened the imaginations of visitors for two centuries—among them Thomas Jefferson, who wrote that “the passage of the Potomac through the Blue Ridge is perhaps one of the most stupendous scenes in nature.”

Today history buffs, hikers, and picnickers fill the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park on weekends. But there is another group even more drawn to the place than these: fishermen. Specifically, anglers who seek out the smallmouth bass.

Smallmouth fishermen dream of two things. One is a cool, clear river that flows over a rocky bottom and is studded with oxygen-rich rapids; the other is that same river with no one else around. These dreams converge in an eight-mile stretch of the Potomac that runs through Harpers Ferry.

This is world-class smallmouth water—one of the most productive and least-fished parts of the Potomac. The river here is

too shallow for any boat with a propeller and has too much white water for all but accomplished canoeists. About the only people who fish it are those who wade to selected areas and Mark Kovach, who has been guiding trips on this stretch for eight years.

A former K Street professional turned fishing guide, Kovach devised an answer to the challenges of the river: a specially designed fourteen-foot rubber raft that blows through rapids like a beach ball yet is stable enough for anglers to cast from swivel seats.

Kovach's practiced eye reads the river the way a general studies a battlefield. He calls out targets even while negotiating Class II and III rapids. “Cast just upstream of that little rock at eleven o'clock. Yeah. Okay, good. Now, the eddy behind that boulder. Just drop it in there easy. Twitch it a couple times before you bring it in. Yeah!”

Bingo. There is a faint swirl on the surface and the nine-foot fly rod comes alive in your hands. The fish dives deep, cuts left, then rockets straight up and out of the water in one of the acrobatic leaps for which smallmouth are famous. Thirty seconds after setting the hook, you bring the fish up to the edge of the boat, gently disengage the hook, and admire the greenish-bronze back and mottled lateral markings.

“Nice fish, maybe thirteen inches,” says your guide approvingly.

Though the fish aren't huge, they are plentiful. Catches of more than 150 smallmouth in one day are not uncommon. Kovach allows clients to keep two smallmouth bass but prefers that you release everything. (He's considering an outright no-kill policy.)

Kovach sports the bushiest handlebar moustache this side of the nineteenth century, a straw hat festooned with an assortment of flies—nymphs, streamers, and popping bugs among them—and

Polaroid glasses to see beneath the water better. If you want pointers on your roll cast or rod position, he is a born teacher and will gladly oblige. (He also offers fly-fishing classes.) If you don't, he won't.

Kovach runs the river April through November. His rate is \$250 per day for a party of two and includes a shore lunch of overstuffed sandwiches, fruit, juices, and soft drinks. (His insurance does not permit him to bring beer, but you may.) He carries fly rods, spinning rods, and a mind-boggling supply of lures.

On the trip I took, we were having so much fun that evening caught up with us two miles from the take-out. “You all in a hurry to get back to DC?” he asked. My companion and I assured him we were not. Minutes after we watched the sun set behind the mountains, a full moon rose over the tips of the trees. The murmur of the river, the rhythm of the oars, and the moon reflecting off the water were hypnotic. Harpers Ferry had seduced another traveler.

For more information on **fly-fishing trips**, contact Mark Kovach Fishing Services, 737 Thayer Avenue, Silver Spring, 20910; 588-8742. —BILL HEAVEY

Canaan Valley

Weekend Adventures Both Above Ground and Below

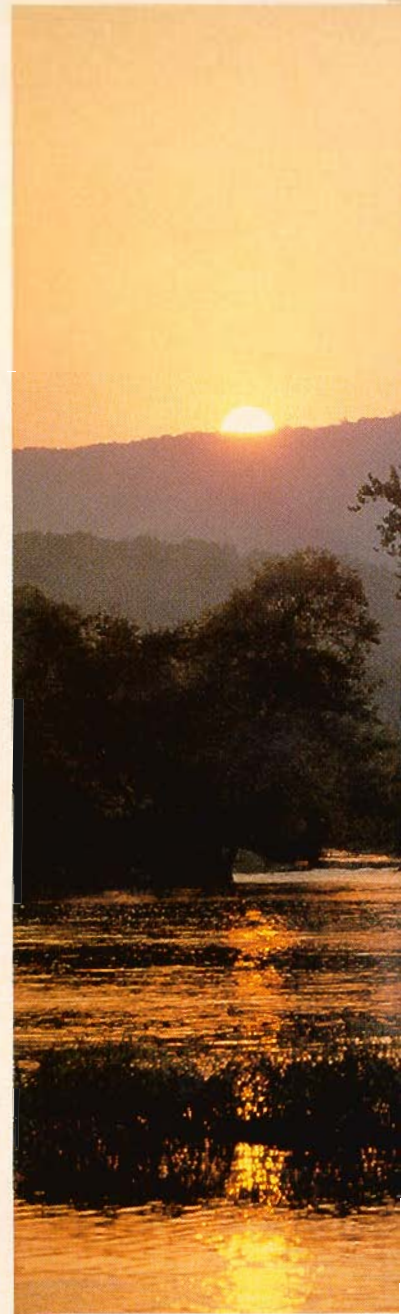
Roughing it in West Virginia's Canaan Valley can mean caving, skiing, backpacking, or mountain biking all day; but tenderfoots also can find first-class dining and accommodations and Jacuzzis to bathe their sore muscles in. The hardest part is choosing among the wide array of activities the valley offers.

A good place to start is underground. The Mountain State is honeycombed with 2,000 wild, or undeveloped, caves, about 250 of them in the valley. Spectacular

rock formations, stalactites and stalagmites, and the inevitable clusters of bats await those bold enough to tackle damp, cold, and dark caves with nothing more than a helmet and lamp. You'll get muddier than your mother ever thought possible.

The Blackwater Outdoor Center (BOC) in Davis, which outfits and leads visitors on a variety of adventures, offers half-day, full-day, and weekend caving trips. The one to Bowden Cave includes overnight camping in the Laurel Fork Wilderness.

If you prefer wide-open spaces, BOC can have you rappelling down 175-foot cliffs in two days. Also on the wild side of the center's offerings are various ways to tackle white water—with



In This Section

A Fly-Fishing Find

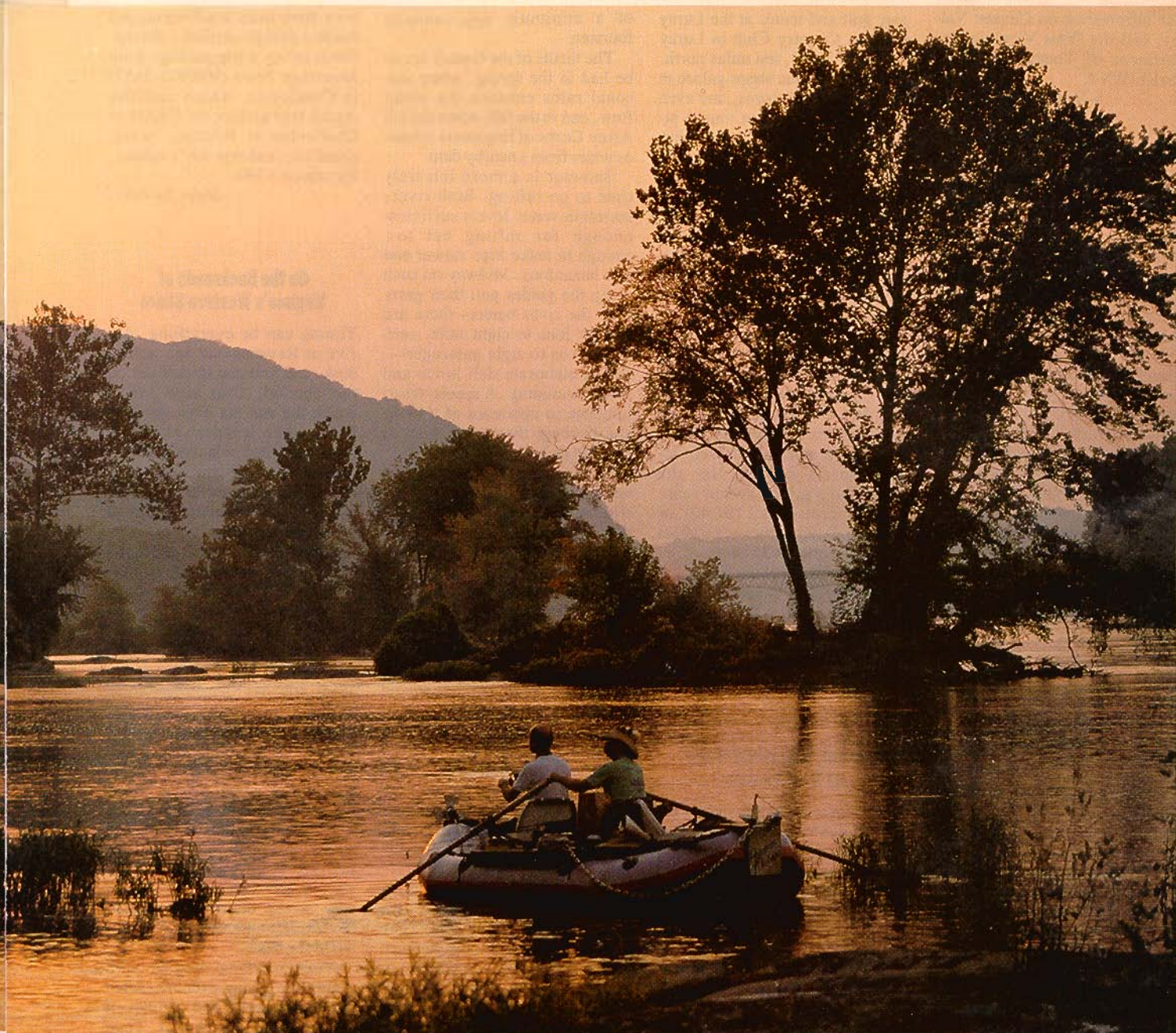
Happy Camping and Caving

Horseback Riding
in a Sleepy Hollow

Raft-and-Ride Adventures

A Leisurely Bike Tour

The Ultimate Ski Weekend



SKIP BROWN

rafts, canoes, kayaks, and one-man rafts called "duckies." On the milder side, BOC guides teach the arts of float fishing, fly-fishing, and orienteering.

Timberline Four Seasons Resort is a nice place to stay on a weekend expedition. There you can arrange mountain biking, horseback riding, scenic plane rides, or a Back Roads Adventure to old homesteads, where you learn about mountain customs, folk medicines, and folklore.

Skiing is Canaan Valley's main attraction—the area gets 150 to 200 inches of snow annually—and BOC is the state's oldest cross-country-skiing outfitter. You can strap on a pair of skis and step out their back door into the 850,000-acre Mononga-

hela National Forest. Or you can rent equipment at Timberline; a \$5 lift ride from the lodge drops you off in the Dolly Sods Wilderness Area. A backwoods guide costs you two bucks. When ski season is over, the trails are wonderful for hiking.

Nordic skiers will enjoy Timberline's 1,000-foot drop and 22 trails, all covered by snow-making equipment when necessary. None of the slopes are too tough for an intermediate skier.

Nearby Canaan Valley State Park offers more skiing—21 slopes serviced by three lifts, as well as an eighteen-hole par-72 golf course, tennis courts, an outdoor pool, a new fitness center with indoor pool, and a number of cabins and lodges. (Lodge

rooms cost \$62 double occupancy during the summer, \$65 during the ski season. Cabins rent by the week for between \$460 for a two-bedroom and \$595 for a four-bedroom. Call 304/866-4121 for more information.)

At Timberline Resort (800/843-1751), luxury slopeside condos that sleep six cost \$414 for three nights in the winter and \$210 in other seasons. The lodge's attractive wood-and-glass restaurant serves fine food with a view of the ski slopes.

Setting a different tone, but equally comfortable, is Bright Morning B&B (304/259-5119), a restored boarding house across the street from Blackwater Outdoor Center. The seven guest rooms and one suite come with

Hooked on Harpers Ferry: Here, in an eight-mile stretch of the Potomac, is the area's best smallmouth-bass fishing. Catches of 150 a day are not uncommon.

modern baths and country antiques. Downstairs is a homey lounge and a simple country dining room serving dinner and lunch (or boxing it for the road). A breakfast buffet is included in the room rates—\$45 for a single, \$55 for a double, and \$65 (double occupancy) to \$80 (three to four guests) for the suite.

The **Canaan Valley** is 185 miles from Washington, about a three-and-a-half-hour drive. For information on Blackwater Outdoor Center, call 304/259-5117.