Many gems hidden in hills of Greenville and upstate South Carolina

Gazing toward the mountain sunset from the porch at the Red Horse Inn I was mesmerized by the picturesque beauty and serenity of the rolling landscape. This was my first visit to this exact part of South Carolina, and its breathtaking scenery was simply a prelude to what I would see and experience during my few days in the area.

My home away from home was the secluded Huntbox Cottage which is located nearly a quarter mile from the main lodge at the Red Horse Inn. It has the look and feel of an old English countryside estate with inside decor like that of a British library. It is warm, cozy, and a perfect place for a couple to enjoy a romantic getaway.

Hidden on the southern edge of the Appalachian Mountains near the North Carolina state line, this gorgeous property is ideally located close to Greenville, S.C., Asheville, N.C., and many matchless wonders of the past and present. Among these are a few nearby historical bridges that I found to be quite photographic, extremely interesting, and just minutes from the Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Byway.

Closest to the Red Horse Inn is the oldest bridge in South Carolina, and one of three stone bridges built along Old State Road, which was a toll road from Charleston, S.C. to Asheville, N.C. The Poinsett Bridge was built in 1820 and is named for Joel R. Poinsett who laid out the northern end of the road and designed the three bridges. The Poinsett Bridge is the lone surviv-

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ing structure and the only one that possessed a Gothic Arch.

The Ballenger's Mill and adjacent covered bridge that spans the Middle Tyger River was originally built during the 1820s. Both of these historic structures have been completely restored on private property in a very scenic area and are open to the public.

The most visited covered bridge in this part of Upstate South Carolina is the Campbell's Covered Bridge built in 1909 over Beaverdam Creek. Along with a grist mill that has since been torn down, this old bridge was constructed by Charles Irwin Willis and named after Alexander Campbell who owned and operated the mill. The historic site has been made into a public park.

For those who love the outdoors, I would suggest a drive to Ceasar's Head for a fantastic view and a side trip for some excellent fly fishing with the experienced guides and instructors at Davidson River Outfitters. These guys are great teachers, have a complete tackle store, provide exciting guide services, and have

PHOTOS BY BILL VANDERFORD

The Red Horse Inn (above). Looking toward the mountains and cottages at the Red Horse Inn.
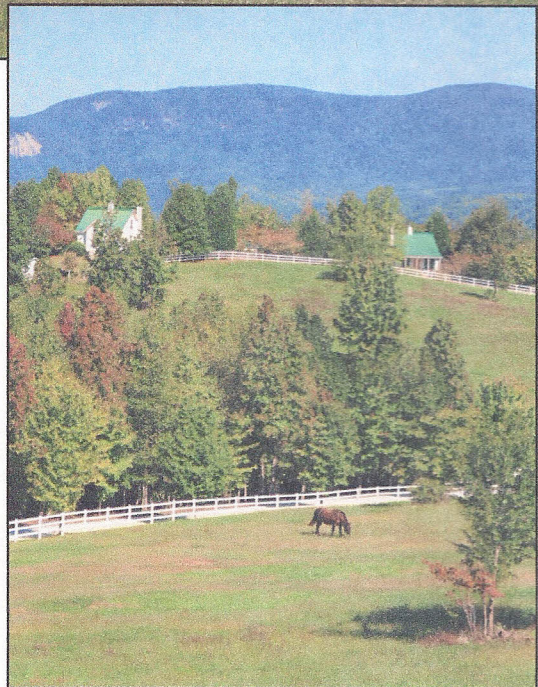

access to many private waters that are teeming with Brook, Brown, and Rainbow Trout!

If walking, running, or moderate biking is your thing, nothing can beat the Swamp Rabbit Tram Trail which is about 13 miles in length and runs along the Reedy River from downtown Greenville to the busy little town of Travelers Rest.

One of the highlights along this path and an unforgettable place to eat is the Cafe at Williams Hardware. Sisters, Joyce and Nancy McCarrell carry on a tradition begun by their great, great grandfather G.W. McCarrell in the 1760s. This old store has become a meeting and eating place featuring wonderful homemade delicacies that the McCarrell girls call, "simple foods ... simply prepared."

No trip to this area would be complete without a visit to the ultra modern BMW plant near Spartanburg, S.C. From its beginnings in 1993, this unique automobile manufacturing facility has created more than 5,000 jobs and continues to expand. At present, BMW finishes 1,000 new cars every working day and has plans for even more expansion in the future. The new BMWs are probably more of an American product these days than GM or Chrysler!

Tours of this facility usually begin at the Zentrum where visitors can be checked-in to see the manufacturing plant. While waiting, the history of BMW can be seen through static displays, ac-

tual historic street and racing cars, and audio/visual shows. Afterward, a knowledgeable guide leads visitors through every facet of the complicated but efficient and fascinating world of building BMWs.

Top off your tour to BMW by spending an afternoon at the Performance Driving Center with their great cars and experienced instructors. Though several options are available, I found that driving one of the X-5s over the extremely challenging obstacle course was a revelation of how well these BMWs are engineered. Follow this with some hot laps on the race track with a number of the latest and fastest BMWs ... including the 455 horsepower "M" version. As an experienced racing driver, however, I found that I had

to throw these expensive cars completely sideways through the corners to beat the built-in traction control (a safety device). Nevertheless, the cars are very fast and great to drive.

Before leaving this part of Upstate South Carolina, I had the distinct pleasure of accepting an invitation to dinner at the Lazy Goat Restaurant from a beautiful, young lady who could rival Miss South Carolina. As we dined on mouthwatering Mediterranean cuisine while overlooking the Reedy River, Taryn Scher introduced me to a small portion of the amazingly transformed downtown Greenville.

One taste of the great food, friendly people, gorgeous scenery, and eclectic opportuni-

PHOTOS BY BILL VANDERFORD

The Zentrum at the BMW factory.
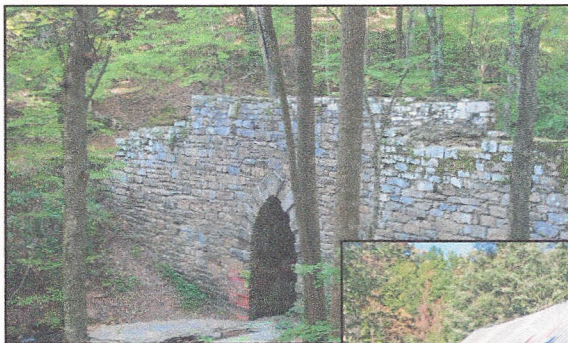
Antique car at the BMW museum.

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ties in this part of South Carolina was definitely not enough for me, so I'll certainly return to experience more!
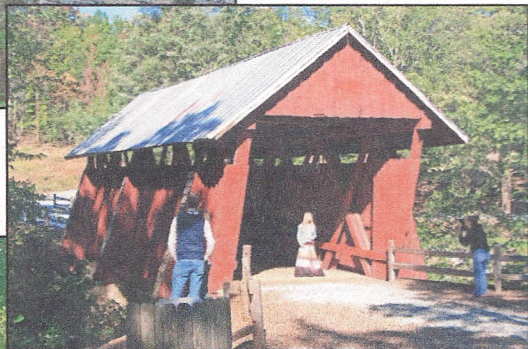
Bill Vanderford has won numerous awards for his writing and photography, and has been inducted into the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Guide.

MORE INFO:
- Red Horse Inn, www.theredhorseinn.com
- Davidson River Outfitters, www.DavidsonFlyFishing.com
- Cafe at Williams Hardware, www.cafeatwilliamshardware.com
- BMW tour reservations, 1 888 Tour-BMW (868-7269)
- Lazy Goat Restaurant, www.thelazygoat.com

1820 Poinsett Bridge, left.

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The Cafe at Williams Hardware.

Campbell's covered bridge, above.

Bill Strickland fishing on the Davidson River.