

A LEISURE-TIME BOUNTY RIGHT IN YOUR BACKYARD

By Stephanie C. Dyke

The summer months are right around the corner and, if you're like many Americans, a relaxing vacation might be on your agenda. Perhaps an exciting cross country excursion... or maybe a leisurely trip to an island resort... unfortunately, gas prices and airline hassles might put a halt to your plans. But have you considered destinations right in your own backyard?

Marylanders are lucky to have the bountiful treasures of the East Coast and the mid-Atlantic all around us. With road trip mileage of less than 300 miles, a traveler can depart from the sunny coast of the Atlantic Ocean and end up enjoying the scenic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains in a little over four hours. We may be a relatively small state but we sure pack a punch when it comes to our wealth of attractions. In fact, Maryland boasts a selection that is sure to give just about any vacation destination a run for its money!

Are you drawing a blank? Wrinkling your nose at the thought of Ocean City's overcrowded beaches? Wondering if I consider the beltway a scenic drive? Not at all. Take a look at these possibilities:

SIDELING HILL Located about six miles west of Hancock in Washington County, Sidling Hill is considered one of the most dramatic geologic formations on the East Coast. Interstate 68 cuts through the hill affording a breath taking view of over 800 feet of rock face. Sideling Hill and its Exhibit Center are considered "do not miss" on a trip to Maryland's western region.

POINT LOOKOUT Part of Maryland's vast state park system, Point Lookout is a peninsula at the juncture of the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. Located at the southernmost point of St. Mary's County, Point Lookout boasts outdoor activities including camping, fishing, boating, and swimming. The area also features museum devoted to its fascinating history as a Civil War prison camp.

SOLOMON'S ISLAND A quaint little town in Calvert County located at the intersection of the Patuxent River and the Chesapeake. Solomon's features a Riverwalk, marinas, charming Victorian style architecture, antique stores and a great marine museum. And if you're looking for a bit of "big city" nightlife, summertime on the island brings entertainment possibilities such as the Tikki Bar.

ROCKS STATE PARK Located in Harford County, Rocks boasts The King and Queen Seat - A rock cliff affording a stunning view of the surrounding forest and farmland. Perfect for hikers and outdoors enthusiasts, the park also features a good bit of Native American