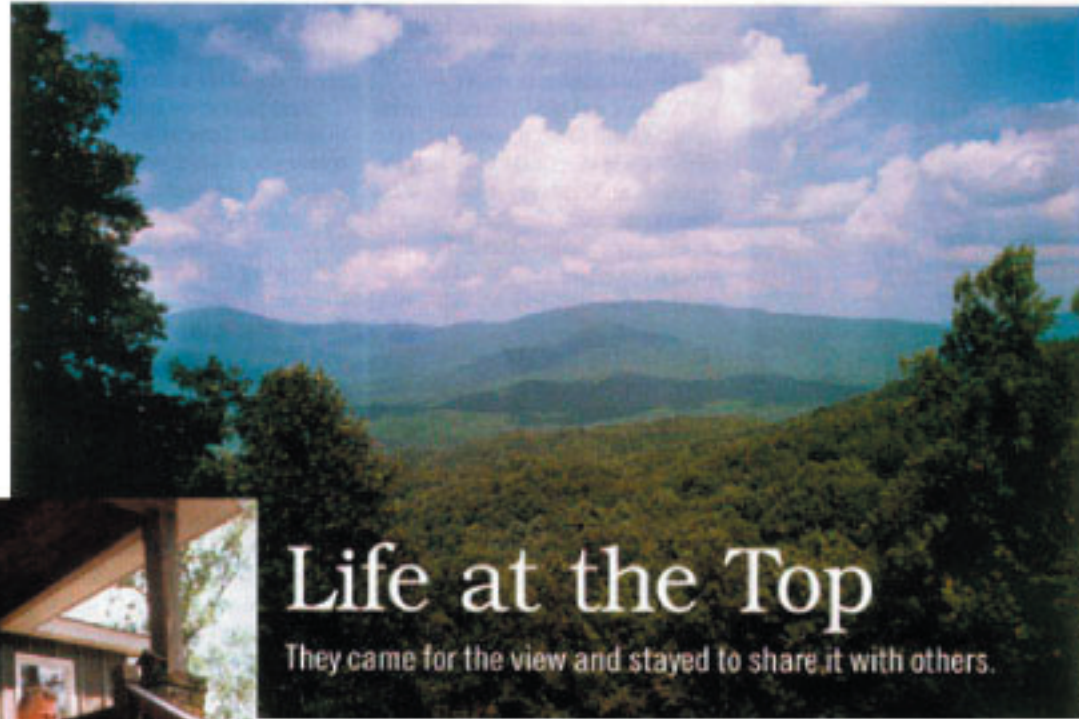


Southern Living Magazine Article



Life at the Top

They came for the view and stayed to share it with others.

above: Now, as always, the main draw at this roadside pull-off between Chatsworth and Ellijay is the incredible view of Chattahoochee National Forest and its Cohutta Wilderness.



Robert and Liz Coleman turned what many Georgians remember as the old rock shop souvenir stand at the Cohutta Overlook into a charming country inn.

Maybe its best to see the Cohutta Wilderness for the first time in a thick autumn fog, standing beside your car at a roadside pull-off atop Fort Mountain. "That way," says Robert Coleman with eyes widening as he recalls his experience, "when the mist rises and the valley below slowly reveals itself, the incredible view just keeps getting better and better."

It worked for him. A decade after finding his favorite place (a spot between Ellijay and Chatsworth known as the Cohutta Overlook) during a weekend drier in northwest Georgia, Robert remains excited about it. He and his wife, Liz, liked the you-can-see-

for-miles setting so much, they bought property there and eventually moved in permanently. Now they enjoy sharing that view with others.

A Cabin for Two

"At first we just built a small cabin—using a *Southern Living* house plan with high ceilings and a stone fireplace—on the side of the mountain as our little getaway," Liz says. "We'd come up for weekends from Atlanta, where I worked at Hewlett-Packard and Robert managed apartment buildings. Before long, we built a second cabin, and a third, and then some more, and started renting out the extra ones."

Robert takes up the story: "Finally we bought that funky old place everyone remembers as The Rock Shop—it sat right at the overlook pull-off and sold local rocks as souvenirs—and turned it into a country inn."

They accumulated 150 ridgetop acres at the edge of Chattahoochee National Forest, quit their Atlanta jobs, and moved to the mountain full-time. The couple now runs the six-guest room Overlook Inn as



above: The inn's living room sports a Western lodge motif. left: Mountain laurel branches cut from the site form an interesting banister in one of the cabins.



a bed-and-breakfast and maintains nine separate hideouts called the Wilderness View Cabins.

"We convinced my mother, Alma, to come be our innkeeper and cook," says Robert, a Bainbridge native, "and we hardly miss city life at all."

Fits Into the Landscape

While Liz runs the business side and manages a small gift shop (which, yes, still sells a few pretty rocks but also gift items and local crafts), Robert nurtures and interest in woodworking.

"I like to build stairways up to lofts, add counters and cabinets, and make wooden tables and benches," he says modestly. In truth, he crafted nearly everything in the rustic cabins and plenty at the lodgelike inn too.

"When we had to clear

such a place. Everyone who steps out of a car or looks out of our windows raves about what they see. In the end, it's all about the view."

Falling for Fall

Robert says autumn is a favorite time for couples, motorcycle riders, bird-watchers, and flatlanders in general to seek out the Colemans' mountaintop getaway. "I think it's the cooler temperatures, the country roads, and the chance of seeing some fall color," he says. "But then a lot of them will end up coming back at other times of the year too. It's basically always nice up here."

The Overlook Inn & Wilderness View Cabins: 864 Wilderness View, Chatsworth, GA 30705; (706) 517-8810, www.theoverlookinn.com, or www.wildernessviewcabins.com.

