

# SOUTHEAST

**W**hen I went on family vacations as a kid, I'd sit in the back seat and look in an atlas for shortcuts that Dad could take. Once, in the Florida Panhandle, I found a gravel lane that would save us about 17 miles. Dad agreed that it looked good, even though the tiny blue line had a quarter-inch gap above the place where it should have joined Highway 90. And it would have joined the highway, too, if not for that odd tongue of the Oketenokee Swamp. We meandered through a couple of miles of boggy cypress before the road gave out.

Dad turned the camper around, and as we pulled back onto the road, we saw a man galloping toward us on horseback, waving. He was carrying a Winchester in his saddle holster, and two or three dead things, skinned, were hanging from his pommel. Dad rolled down the window when the stranger came alongside us.

"You folks are lost," the man said. Dad allowed maybe we were. The man lowered himself to the ground, and I couldn't help but think of the movie in all the theaters that summer—*Deliverance*. He leaned against the car, and when he smiled I was sure we were done for. "What you folks wannado," he said. "is go back up to Miller's place and take a left, then curve on back to 90." He told us how to do that, and then he gave us an opossum skin.

As Burt Reynolds said in the movie, "Sometimes you have to lose yourself to find yourself." And the Southeast is a good place to do that.



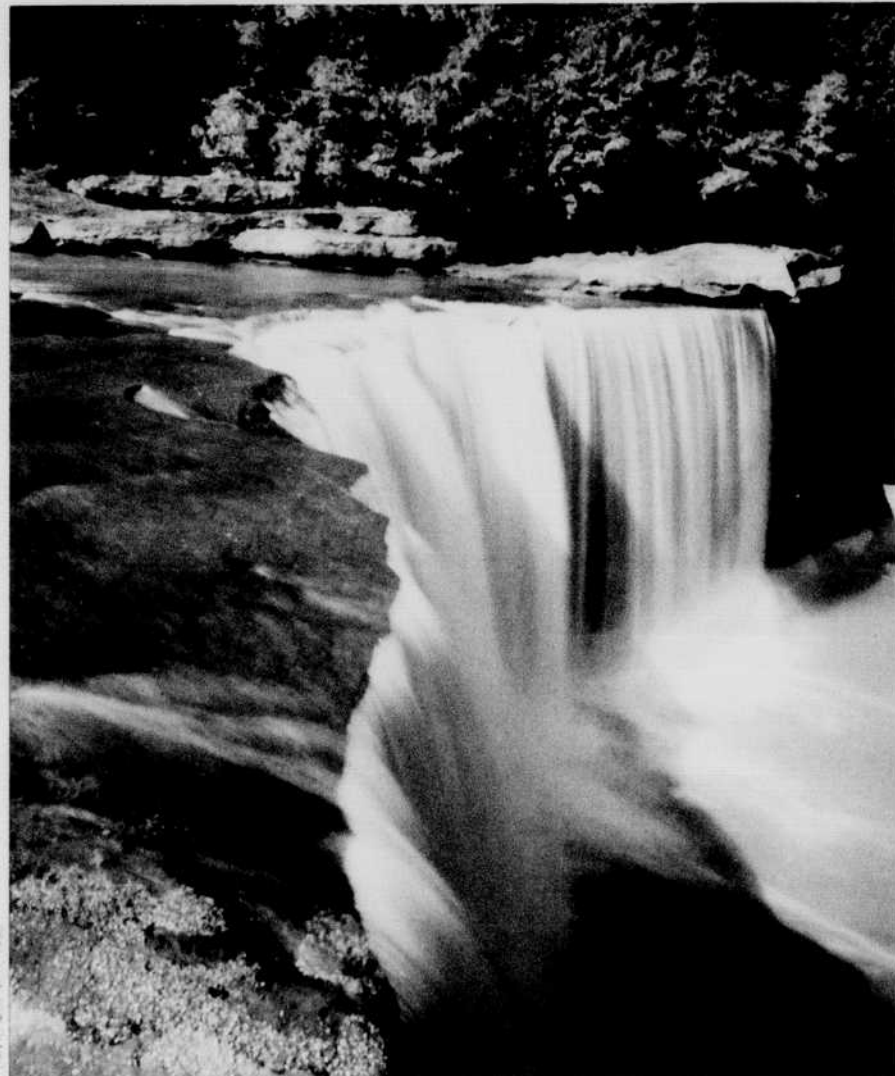
## STARVED FOR COMFORT?

Hungry Mother State Park, on Route 16 near Marion, Virginia, is worth visiting for the name alone—allegedly the first words uttered by a pioneer child who tottered back to a cabin after he and his mother, Molly, had been kidnapped by Indians. They had escaped and lived on berries until his mother collapsed. When a search party finally found Molly, she was beyond hunger. The park, at the southern end of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains—where the perfect-for-a-drive Blue Ridge Parkway begins, too—offers mountain hiking, horse trails, and a lake with boat rentals and a beach for swimming. The 20 two-bedroom cabins, each of which rents for \$140 to \$243 per week, have fireplaces, kitchens, and full baths. Call 804-490-3939 for reservations.



## A SPLASH OF ROMANCE

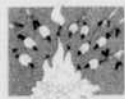
John Penniekamp Coral Reef State Park in the Florida Keys lies mostly underwater. After a day of snorkeling and cavorting among the tropical fish, you and yours can relax in a private cabin beneath the sea. No mere octopus's garden, Jules' Undersea Lodge (305-451-2353) is a two-bedroom habitat 22 feet beneath the surface. For a whopping \$195 each, you'll get a night to remember, including diving gear, a VCR and movies (*The Abyss* might be fun), a microwave, snacks, and drinks. A brief course at the lodge



Visit Cumberland Falls in Kentucky, where, during a full moon, you can look through the falls at the only visible moonbow in the U.S.

teaches those who aren't certified divers everything they need to know to get to their rooms.

If the cost of staying down all night is simply too much, you can rent a regular tree-shaded tent site in the park for just \$25. Call 305-451-1202.



## A PANHANDLE PARTY SPOT

On the outskirts of every college town is at least one chunk of national forest or state preserve that harbors an unofficial outdoor party spot, a place where friends can cook outdoors and camp. My all-time personal favorite is Silver Lake, an Apalachicola National Forest campground off Route 20, a few miles west of Tallahassee, Florida. It's virtually ignored by the tourists who clog most Florida campgrounds, and it has a terrific lake, plenty of grills and tables, and a flat, sandy tent area. Camping is a mere \$5 per night. Call 904-576-7630.