A pizza picnic

BY SHARON PELFREY
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Happy spring, everyone! Hasn't it been beautiful?

Sure, it has been a little rainy, but the grass is so green. The flowers and trees are blooming. Birds, squirrels and bunnies are everywhere. It looks like a scene taken right out of a Disney movie on my lawn!

This week, J and I decided to slow our pace a little and enjoy this lovely spring season. So, we headed west toward Georgia. We found some captivating scenery, awesome food and relaxing atmosphere that we thoroughly enjoyed. We think you will too.

First, J and I called ahead to order a picnic lunch from Humble Pie Pizza located in Long Creek. The fantastic pizza, hot sandwiches, salads, folk music and relaxed atmosphere made this establishment a pleasure to visit. The locals love the Cuban sandwich. The chicken philly is also a favorite. For those who get an earlier start, breakfast is also served at Humble Pie, which is open from 7 a.m.-9 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and Sunday 7 a.m.-8 p.m. Call them at (864) 647-9083 to reserve a meal for your day of adventure.

If you are looking for some fun right here, visit the Chattooga Whitewater Outfitters shop next door. You can rent a "duckie" — an inflatable kayak — all day for less than $50 per person. Depending on your experience and comfort level, the CWO staff will take you to a section of the river that is just right for you. While away the hours on the river alone or with friends.

The CWO team will pick you up at a designated area and bring you back to your vehicle. Be sure and call them at (864) 647-9083 ahead of time to plan your day, or visit chattoogawhitewatershop.com for more information.

J and I took our southwest chicken pizza — which was absolutely fabulous, by the way — and continued on through the beautiful Sumter National Forest and over the Chattooga River, the crown jewel of Southern whitewater. As we drove along Highway 76, we were elated to see mile after mile of gorgeous mountain views and free-flowing rivers.

I truly believe that we are blessed with some of the most magnificent scenery in the United States. We just have to get out there and discover it!

We traveled on to Clayton, Ga., and into the Rabun Gap area. One of our favorite places to visit here is 12 Spies Vineyards and Farm. It is located in a secluded area at the end of a winding country road.

At this point you may be thinking you have taken a wrong turn, but do not despair. Before long you will take a curve, cross over a small creek and there a scenic vista will appear.

Owners Lisa Romanello and Mike Brown have turned this 9-acre property into a charming getaway made for relaxing. J and I walked through the gardens full of budding flowers and sprouting vegetables. Grape vines are beginning to show their tiny new leaves. And all of this with the northeast Georgia mountains as a backdrop for breathtaking views!

Brown and Romanello love for people to bring a picnic lunch and a blanket to spend the day. There are plenty of ways to enjoy this little spot of "heaven on earth." There is a covered deck, called the Vino Veranda, with tables and chairs and a comfortable kudzu swing for unwinding. There are also gardens with benches for more privacy, a gazebo and a huge, open grassy area perfect for picnics.

They also have two dogs who love to play Frisbee. Gus loves to fetch the Frisbee and Samson loves to watch!

The winery and gift shop are located inside the main building together, and you can enjoy free wine tasting of their very own fine Georgia wines. Twelve Spies, located at 550 Black Branch Road in Rabun Gap, Ga., is open from 1-5 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Sunday, and opens at 11 a.m. Saturdays. To keep up with events, go to 12spiesvineyards.com.

Reluctantly, J and I began to make our way home. We made a quick stop at the Kudzu Factory. Owners Cleve Phillips



Chattooga Whitewater Outfitters offers a variety of rentals for the water, as well as a shuttle service.



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

There are many waterfalls located just off Highway 76 that offer great views for a short hike. Reedy Branch Falls, above, and Chau Ram Falls in the background are just two.

and Joleen Oh can make just about anything from kudzu. You just need to stop in and see what "King Kudzu" and "Mother Vine" can create for you, or check them out at kudzufactory.com.

As a matter of fact, I loved the kudzu swing so much at 12 Spies. I had Cleve and Joleen make one for me! The Kudzu Factory is in Mountain City, Ga., on U.S. Highway 441. It is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Monday, and Thursday through Saturday and Sundays from 1-5 p.m.

We had some extra time on the return trip, so we decided to see a few waterfalls. We saw Reedy Branch Falls, Brasstown Falls and Chau Ram Falls. These falls are all easy to find and very easy hikes just off Highway 76.

Don't forget to stop by Blue Haven Orchards while you are in the Long Creek area. They have dried and fresh fruit, relishes, jams, jellies, preserves, butters and an assortment of ciders. They also have muscadine slushies. These are perfect on a warm day — but watch out for brain freeze!

J AND Shay Pelfrey are a mother-daughter team of adventurers and occasional writers for The Journal. Join them and experience the unique people, places and flavor this area has to offer. Follow them on Facebook at facebook.com/SCLocalColor.