



## BREWERY GULCH INN- A MEMORABLE VISIT

**MENDOCINO, CA — (March 26, 2022) —** San Francisco Splash Magazine journalist Bette Kiernan and her friend Bart Anderson recently visited Mendocino, California’s Brewery Gulch Inn. It was such a special visit that each of them felt compelled to share their stories.

### Her Story:

As a practicing psychotherapist I have a special interest in the healing potential of environments. When I go into a new setting, I’m attentive to colors, textures and sound. Is healing promoted through soothing and comfort? Or is stress produced through irritating noises, strong lighting and crowded spaces? During my stay at Brewery Gulch Inn I was sensitive to these issues.

I concluded that Proprietor GUY PACURAR and his team created and offer an extraordinary setting for connecting with the natural world. I am not alone. The Inn has garnered several Travel and Leisure World’s awards for best hotels in the world.

At Brewery Gulch Inn we were brought into the restorative web of natural systems – redwood trees, birds, ponds, meadows, flowers, woods and stillness. They called us to come into closer contact with our inner world of dreams, imagination and creativity.

Located atop a knoll, Brewery Gulch Inn looks out towards Smuggler’s Cove and the Pacific Ocean. For me, the Inn embodies the Danish concept of Hygge (pronounced “hue-guh”), where a mood of coziness and comfort was created, encouraging contentment and conviviality.

Entering the grounds, I sensed that someone had thought deeply about the impact of design on guests. A charming old wheelbarrow filled with blue Lobelia and red Geraniums makes for a happy Hello. One enters the Inn through majestic reclaimed redwood doors flanked by large lapis colored pots. Going through these doors is like an entry into a sacred space.

The owner, Guy Pacurar, went on a 12 months hero’s journey to discover the right place for a lodge. His search took him to 27 properties across the country. He found the site he had long sought at Brewery Gulch with grounds surrounded by lush forests, expansive meadows and rolling hills. The location on a bluff overlooking Smuggler’s Cove emanated the special energetic qualities he sought.

I was struck an uncanny resemblance I saw between Brewery Gulch and the Nacadia Therapy Garden at the University of Copenhagen. (For views of the garden, search Google Images for “Nacadia Therapy Garden”.)

A Danish study of the garden described the positive effect of Nature Based Therapy concluding: “The nature-like environment soon gave the participants peace of mind and allowed them to wind down” (*International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Health and Well-being*, 2017).

It is fascinating that two sites thousands of miles apart, in Mendocino and Copenhagen, possess similar healing properties.

Brewery Gulch Inn has many little touches that add to the healing experience that include: The warm greetings of staff which are accompanied by curative small treats. The desk has a jar of candied ginger. (Ginger is known for its myriad medicinal properties ranging from anti-inflammatory to soothing stomach distress.) Dark chocolate is offered too and has health benefits such as antioxidants and bioactive compounds which may improve blood flow and decrease blood pressure.

A magnificent fireplace graces the center of Brewery Gulch's Great Room. As the spiritual and psychological center of a dwelling, a fireplace makes us feel safe and protected while in the close comfort of loved ones. It's associated with warmth, comfort, and happy conversation.

Above the Great Room is a two-level skylight. It draws one's gaze upward toward the higher spiritual realms of being and perceiving. Beams and built-in furnishings are constructed of handsome reclaimed redwood. It adds deep warmth and a sense of substance.

Glass windows surround the Great Room, offering glorious views of the woodlands and Smuggler's Cove. I found that it was in my room that Brewery Gulch's Hygge power most fully emerges. Everything one touches, experiences and sees acts as balm to the spirit. The comfortable leather chairs with chenille throws invite one to linger in front of the fireplace. Fabric on the throw pillows feature symbols of centering and wholeness – embedded circles and squares.

The large bed is supportive and thereby makes good medicine for bad backs. The down comforters add coziness and extra warmth.

Special care has been given to the room fireplace. Even though it is not an actual wood fire, by some magic it has been made to smell like one. Through the windows, one sees woodland trees, shrubs and flowers. Night sounds of owls and frogs make the best lullabies.

I was especially impressed by the ways I was exposed to natural patterns in the Inn. The bathroom has a lovely jar filled with shells. The dining plates too are decorated with the forms such as a feather or fern. The muted brown and green colors in the room echo those of the woodland outside.

I felt the special healing properties most in the land surrounding the Inn, just as Guy Pacurar must have realized when he first saw the property. A lovely wooded trail leading from the Inn to the ponds displays the richness of the trees, wildflowers and shrubs indigenous to the Mendocino region. One senses something very special in the air going down this lovely trail. (Recent research demonstrated that trees emit substances with a positive physical effect upon those who pass by them.)

The ponds on the property were restored using natural non-chemical means. Topped by water lilies they resemble the ponds in Monet's garden. I am reminded of architect Christopher Alexanders's book "A Pattern Language" wherein he emphasizes the importance to the psyche of having bodies of water within one's living environment.

Chef Stephen Smith has had 35 years cooking experience which enables him to offer exquisite food. He stated that he was primarily influenced by Asian and Mediterranean cooking styles. However, his main focus is on health. He is not afraid of mixing differing elements in his dishes. His bento box, served in the evening, has beautiful presentation with each compartment holding a small work of culinary art. However, his pièce de résistance is breakfast. The wide menu ranges from a full classic breakfast to a more creative Mexican style dish.

The Brewery Gulch Inn is far more than a place of respite and restoration. Wars begin in the minds of disturbed men and women. By giving the peace and calming of nature to guests, a more compassionate world is urged into being. Ripples of peace from each satisfied visitor may enter the wider world to expand the ecological work of this treasured Inn into larger circles of influence.

Bette Kiernan, MFT is a psychotherapist in private practice in Palo Alto, Ca. She also does crisis interventions within Silicon Valley corporations.

His story:

An Ecotopian visits Brewery Gulch Inn

While at Brewery Gulch Inn, I thought of Ernest Callenbach's classic novel, "Ecotopia," (meaning: ecologically ideal place or situation) which envisions the West Coast states breaking away to form an ecology-based society. I asked myself: Where would Ecotopians go for special occasions like a honeymoon or a family reunion?

I think they might go to a place like Brewery Gulch.

An Ecotopian would check the following boxes for the Brewery Gulch Inn:

- Respect for nature
- Local people and traditions
- Hygge (the Danish concept of coziness)

Nature

Brewery Gulch says it "was intended to be an environmentally-responsible steward of this amazing parcel of land."

The inn is located on a knoll overlooking Smuggler's Cove and the Pacific Ocean, just south of Mendocino. The site is only five minutes up from Highway 1 but it could be miles away.

The atmosphere is subtle. Nature experiences are available, but aren't forced on you.

Most of the rooms look toward the ocean. You can sit on patios to soak up the woodland air or look through a telescope on the main deck. Acorn woodpeckers fly back and forth to a dead tree to store their acorns. At night there is a chorus of frogs and an occasional hoot from an owl.

A pleasant trail takes you down the hillside to the ponds (designed with help from permaculturalist Penny Livingston-Stark). Swaths of flowers show evidence of loving gardeners.

If you cross Highway 1 (very carefully!), you can hike along Brewery Gulch Road which hugs the hillside overlooking the ocean. A little farther on is the town of Mendocino.

The whole area offers recreational opportunities in forests, rivers, and the ocean – not to mention the nearby Anderson Valley wine-growing region.

Locale

The site was the location of what might have been the first farm in Mendocino County. The original owner, Homer Barton, established a dairy and a brewery there, hence the name "Brewery Gulch."

Much of the design of the building and grounds was done by local people.

The building itself was constructed from redwood logs recovered from the bottoms of nearby Big River where they had sunk over 150 years ago.

The design and decor reminded me of classic California homes of the early 20th century. For example, the furniture in the Great Room is Mission Style that I remember from my childhood. Doors are thick solid wood. Even the utensils seem to be hand-forged.

## **Food**

That brings me to the subject of food. A stay at the Inn comes with a hearty breakfast and a light dinner. I would call the style “Elegant North Coast,” with Mediterranean and Asian influences. The dishes were imaginative and made from fresh local ingredients. I particularly remember the Millionaire’s Bacon (thick spiced slices) and the best hash browns I’d ever tasted.

A nice touch: the portions were human-sized, not massive like at some chain restaurants nor skimpy as at some fancy places. As Goldilocks would say, “Just right.” Reasonable sized portions = good for the waistline, good for avoiding waste.

## **Hygge**

The third reason Ecotopians might like the Brewery Gulch Inn is its highlighting of Hygge (pronounced “hue-guh”). Brewery Gulch describes it as “the pursuit of cozy contentment and well-being through the enjoyment of the simple things in life.”

Ecotopians would approve of Brewery Gulch’s vision of a happy life that doesn’t require elaborate possessions (and carbon emissions).

## **About Splash Magazines Worldwide**

Splash Magazines Worldwide is an online lifestyle resource covering varied and unusual aspects of life around the globe. The magazine was established by Lawrence Davis in 1999 as a hobby, and then it became an obsession. It has grown to include journalists and readers from around the world.

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