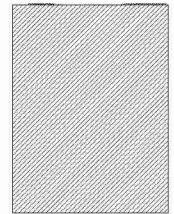


TEXT BY TRAVIS NEIGHBOR WARD PRODUCED BY DEBORAH SANDERS AND JILL AUSTIN

The view outside is always foremost on buyers' minds when shopping for a vacation home, but these days there's more to the choice than what meets the eye. Purchase in the wrong spot and you may find there's no water to boat on. Build beside a rezoned stretch of sand and you might find your perfect seascape blocked by a neighboring home. And then, of course, there's the risk of future overcrowding, always an annoyance. Today's savvy house hunters are

scrutinizing the lay of the land when evaluating luxury real estate developments and often calling for a healthy dose of eco-friendly idealism to boot.

For a truly private tract of land, where residents can avoid seeing neighbors altogether if they wish, there is Frederica on the north end of Georgia's St. Simons Island, located along the Frederica River and near the new Sea Island Equestrian Center. Frederica takes up 3,000 gated acres.





OPENING PAGE: Alys Beach's Moroccan-influenced Caliza Pool surrounded by colonnades shading banquettes and other seating. ABOVE LEFT: Tranquility prevails in Palmetto Bluff where kayakers enjoy the Water Trail running through the community near Wilson Village. ABOVE RIGHT: The Cliffs at Keowee Springs' 13th hole at the Tom Fazio-designed golf course. In 2009, the International Institute of Golf opens here.

and there are 400 single-family homesites of one-to-five acres, each ranging from \$1.25 million to \$3.6 million—175 are sold. The yearly membership fee is \$18,000.

"Nature plays a big role in the appeal of Frederica," says Al Brown, senior vice president of real estate at the Sea Island Company, which also owns and operates The Cloister at Sea Island and The Lodge at Sea Island Golf Club. Brown cites the low density, 2.5 miles of marsh exposure, a 400-acre freshwater lake stocked with trophy bass, and 774 protected acres surrounding an endangered wood stork rookery. Another big draw is the championship 18-hole Tom Fazio and Sir Michael Bonallack golf course, open to members only, which promises to be as stellar a course as Sea Island's, named "top golf community" in the U.S. for the past two years by *Travel & Leisure Golf*. Other amenities at Frederica include a pool and pool house, tennis courts, a clubhouse and a boathouse—with silent electric motorboats, mind you. After all, what's the point of being in nature if you can't get a bit of peace and quiet?

If being near the action is more important, The Cloister Ocean Residences, located near the Sea Island Beach Club offer quarter ownerships of 22 condominium units, ranging in size from 1,170 to 3,271 square feet and priced from

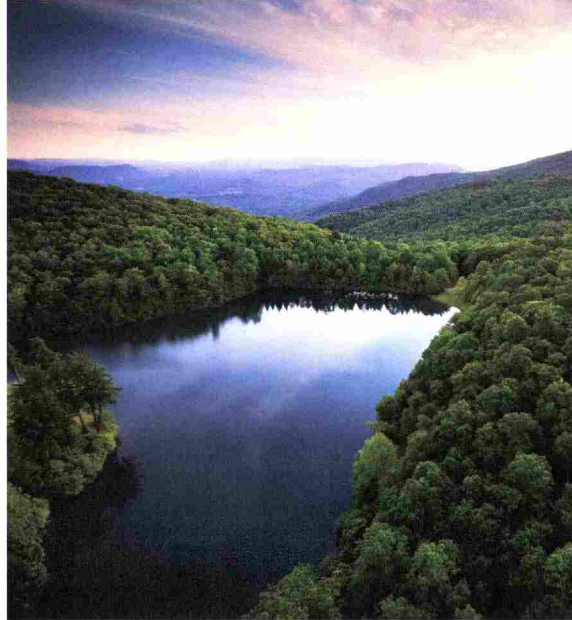
\$575,000 to \$1.475 million. The one- to three-bedroom units, designed by Peter Capone with interiors by Pamela Temples, include membership to Sea Island Beach Club.

Green development is a high priority in some luxury communities. "Over the last several years interest in green building practices has increased significantly," says Steve Schram, managing partner of the **DPS** Sporting Club Development Company, which is developing the Green Homes at The Greenbrier in West Virginia. "Our buyers have always had an authentic regard for conservation efforts, but now more than ever buyers are incredibly knowledgeable about green products and practices. . . . With modern offerings you can live well and take care of the environment." Charles W. Pigg, vice president of Greenwood Communities and Resorts, which owns more than seven properties throughout the Southeast, has also witnessed this growth. "We have seen a surge in awareness for not only nature conservation but also an overall environmental stewardship over the past three to five years," he says.

One of Greenwood's properties under development is The Reserve at Lake Keowee, located at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern South Carolina, between Atlanta and Charlotte. At Lake Keowee, buyers are

OPENING PAGE PHOTOGRAPH BY RICH MICHELS; PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF RESORT COMMUNITIES

LUXURY RESIDENTIAL RESORT COMMUNITIES



LEFT: Mountain estate in The Greenbrier's Sugar Creek Hollow is similar in style to the new eco-friendly Green Houses to be built in this West Virginia community. RIGHT: Straus Lake in the Blue Ridge Mountains at the site of The Cliffs at High Carolina near Asheville, North Carolina.

attracted to the 300 miles of shoreline and consistently high water levels (depth can exceed 150 feet), a big plus for powerboating and fishing. Says Atlanta resident Mike Elrod, whose vacation home is on the north end of the lake, "It's one of the cleanest, greenest lakes I've ever seen, and there's deep water everywhere on it, no matter how far up the channel you go." Offering 18,500 acres of water, it's one of the two cleanest lakes in the state thanks to watershed from the Jocassee Valley and the Sumter National Forest.

Greenwood began selling property at the 4,000-acre, gated Reserve in 2001. It is less than half built out. The remaining construction will take place over the next 12 to 15 years. It includes 1,600 feet of waterfront, mountain views, a golf course, estate and conservation homesites all with lake access from \$200,000 to \$1.5 million—about 600 sites have been sold—as well as custom-built houses resembling chic-but-rustic chalets, ranging from \$750,000 to \$4.5 million. Residents pay a one-time membership fee of \$60,000 as well as a \$415 monthly club fee. More than 550 acres have been placed in a perpetual conservation easement. All Reserve offices partake in a green program to enhance its eco-friendly strategies.

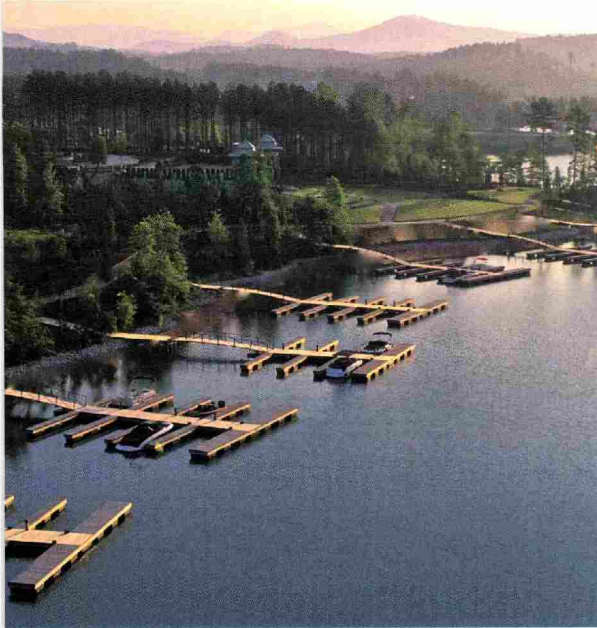
But half-built doesn't mean half-served: Reserve residents already enjoy \$100 million worth of amenities, including a

new 200-slip marina, a 20,000-square-foot clubhouse, a lakeside pool pavilion and marine walk, an abundance of fitness and sports facilities from a racquet club and soccer fields to hiking trails; and, looking ahead, a massive water park. For golf enthusiasts, the crown jewel is the 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature Course with practice facilities, recently ranked by *Travel & Leisure Golf* among "America's Top 100 Golf Communities." A 27-hole Arnold Palmer Premier Golf Complex and training facility is slated to be built.

Also at Lake Keowee is The Cliffs at Keowee Springs, a 1,600-acre community under development by The Cliffs Communities. As a company, The Cliffs explores environmentally sound building practices through its center for environmental golf research and by encouraging property owners to follow green design guidelines. At Keowee Springs, the main focus is wellness for the entire family. "Three years ago, most buyers were only interested in 'green' if it didn't cost them any of their 'green,'" says Lucas Anthony, vice president of development at The Cliffs Communities. "Today that attitude has changed. People are much more conscious about the environment."

Amenities include the 53,000-square-foot Springs International Wellness Retreat with a spa, pools and fitness rooms and a 7,100-yard, par 72 Tom Fazio golf course that

LUXURY RESIDENTIAL RESORT COMMUNITIES



LEFT: The Reserve at Lake Keowee's 200-slip Marina park and boardwalk. RIGHT: Frederica's 11th hole with views of the marsh, designed by Tom Fazio and Sir Michael Bonallack with a hilly terrain, contoured from a dredged lake that accommodates fishing and boating.

may be played in three 6-hole tracks with tees for any experience level. Australian golf coach Steve Bann is on site to oversee the exclusive North American location of the International Institute of Golf, opening January, which offers computer, video and motion analysis, as well as an indoor training area. A new beach club opens spring 2009. In 2010, the Keowee Springs Lodge and Spa resort expects to open a full-service spa, as well as a 40-acre Camp Springs for kids, with a marina to follow.

There are 458 Keowee Springs waterfront, water view and golf course homesites costing from \$250,000 to \$5 million—220 have been sold—plus rustic custom-built lake residences, lodge cottages and golf condos in the \$700,000 to \$5 million-plus range. (Think paneled walls, tumbled stone or hardwood flooring and timber beams.) All eight of The Cliffs Communities are located no more than a 75 minute drive from one another and a single membership provides unlimited access to all. One-time membership fees range from \$25,000 to \$150,000, and club membership fees range from \$250 to \$650 per month.

And then there is the beach. In the Florida northwest panhandle, buyers with a taste for urban sophistication and nature are heading to Alys Beach, a New Urbanist community on the Gulf of Mexico between Seaside and Rosemary

Beach. Set amidst turkey oaks and sand pines, Alys Beach has its own nature preserve with 25,000 acres of protected habitats and is set to build a luxury resort town centered around shops, offices, recreational areas and restaurants. "Families have always gravitated to these beaches for their incredible natural beauty," says town founder Jason Comer. "But they've become much more aware of the need to protect and nourish that beauty."

Overall, the community's look is Mediterranean-meets-Bermuda—stone piazzas, wooden shutters, white stucco walls and roofs are common. All homes must be certified by the Florida Green Building Coalition, and it is the first hurricane-fortified town in the world. Five percent of the community is developed with 20 more years to go. There will be 600 homesites starting at \$415,000—25 were sold at press time. Of the 199 multifamily residences, rowhouses range from \$1.178 million to \$1.679 million, and single-family resort homes cost from \$1.9 million to \$3.5 million and up. There's a one-time capital contribution fee of \$900 and \$300 per month dues. As for amenities, there is a new lake, stunning swimming pool complexes with al fresco dining, fitness and beach clubs; live music at the bookstore-café or in the 30,000-square-foot outdoor grass amphitheater; and strolls across the beach green to watch the sun set. In order

to golf, one must head off site—a small trade-off for residents who can enjoy these amenities.

Another coastal development with a strong focus on environmental stewardship is Palmetto Bluff in Bluffton, South Carolina, situated along the May River between Hilton Head and Savannah. Spread over 20,000 acres—6,500 are managed forest and the rest is limited to 3,000 homes—Palmetto Bluff is a residential community, resort and nature preserve. On the one hand it offers a small-town atmosphere mixed with an upscale resort: The town square in Wilson Village includes gas lamps, houses with wrap-around porches, a café, shops, post office, and the Inn at Palmetto Bluff, the only Auberge-managed resort in the Southeast; there is a full-service spa and pool complex. On the other hand, it harkens to the sensibility of a country estate with an equestrian center and horse farms, “family compound” lots, salt and freshwater fishing, plus a three-day celebration with celebrity Chef Tyler Florence.

Palmetto Bluff is about 20 percent complete with another 10 to 15 years of construction remaining. Homesites go from \$250,000 to \$3.65 million and custom-built single-family homes cost from \$1.15 million to \$3.8 million. Golf is already a major attraction. At the May River Golf Club members pay a \$75,000 initiation fee, plus yearly dues of \$4,975 to enjoy the 7,100-yard par 72, 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature course. At the Palmetto Bluff Club there’s no initiation fee but annual dues are \$2,800 per year. Amenities include a lawn and racquet club, canoe club, hiking trails and nature programs. In 2009, houses and homesites with marsh, river and freshwater views will become available in the Moreland area, and in the next couple of years The Anson Marina Village will be ready with a yacht club and lake. Also in the future: a new marina, organic farm and gun club.

Two very new developments just getting under way include the Green Homes at The Greenbrier and The Cliffs at High Carolina. The Greenbrier Sporting Club’s newest real estate neighborhood (DPS is also developing the private island of Ambergris Cay in Turks & Caicos), Green Homes at The Greenbrier is located in Summit Village at the

3,300-foot-high peak of Greenbrier Mountain in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. The houses will be constructed following the National Association of Home Builders’ strict National Green Building Standards and will include features such as wood harvested from sustainable forests. There are only 56 lots in the 213-acre neighborhood amidst 6,500 acres, with prices ranging from \$500,000 to \$1.1 million. At press time, a release of 10 lots was available for purchase. Buyers can also choose from four- and five-bedroom timber frame post-and-beam home designs costing from \$1.45 million to \$1.95 million and crafted by architect Campion Platt. Named a top architect by *Architectural Digest*, he co-designed the Mercer Hotel in New York and has come up with a palette of eco-friendly furniture and interior finishes to complement elements such as game rooms and large covered porches on dual levels. Views include the Allegheny Mountains and Greenbrier Valley. Amenities include 20 miles of hiking trails and the Snead Golf Course, a 7,025-yard, par 71, Tom Fazio-designed course, rated number three in *Golf Digest’s* “Top 10 New Private Courses in America.” The course is also one of only six in the state to have the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary designation. Other attractions include a spa, fly-fishing, clay shooting, naturalist programs and an equestrian center. At Green Homes, the planning is focused on the natural environment and how to preserve it. Residents pay a one-time 80 percent equitable homeowner association fee of \$140,000 for club membership and access to The Greenbrier resort, plus annual dues of \$11,000.

Another Cliffs community grabbing golfers’ attention is The Cliffs at High Carolina near Asheville, North Carolina, which had its first sales release in November 2008. There are approximately 50 homesites from \$500,000 to over \$3 million, and in 2009 buyers can begin placing dibs on un-built cottages and condominiums. The amenity making headlines is the Tiger Woods golf course, the first he’s designed in the U.S., scheduled to open next year. Now that’s sure to make neighbors green with envy. □

Pricing and figures are subject to change.

NOTABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOUTHEAST

Alys Beach
 Alys Beach, FL
 866-732-1760
alysbeach.com

Hampton Island Preserve
 Hampton Island, GA
 888-276-0064
hamptonisland.com

The Cliffs at Keowee Springs
 Six Mile, SC
 866-435-5127
discoverkeoweesprings.com

Frederica at Sea Island
 St. Simons, GA
 866-411-6749
fredericaliving.com

Palmetto Bluff
 Bluffton, SC
 843-757-3333
palmetto-bluff.com

The Ramble Biltmore Forest
 Biltmore Forest, NC
 888-271-1336
ramblebiltmoreforest.com

Green Homes at The Greenbrier
 White Sulphur Springs, WV
 888-741-8989
greenbriergreenhomes.com

The Cliffs at High Carolina
 Asheville, NC
 888-884-5801
discoverhighcarolina.com/veranda

The Reserve at Lake Keowee
 Sunset, SC
 877-922-LAKE
reserveallakekeowee.com