



Southern Comfort

The lavish, leisurely life at The Cliffs, in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and at bucolic Hampton Island Preserve, off the coast of Georgia

A photograph of a seaplane on a lake at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, orange and pink clouds, and the water reflects the light. The seaplane is in the foreground, moving across the water, leaving a wake. In the background, there is a line of trees on the shore. The overall mood is serene and peaceful.

In every issue, *The Modern Estate* spotlights a few alluring residential resort communities that we consider particularly well suited for the establishment of an estate-away-from-home. They are selected by senior contributing editor RUTH J. KATZ, whose beats at luxury interior-design and travel magazines have given her a discerning eye. Even the most determined and discriminating buyer is hardly likely to cast a research net as wide as Ruth can—inundated as she is with press packets and marketing materials from resorts, time shares, fractional-ownership developments, golf communities, and beach communities the world over.

Looking for the just-right community to visit and evaluate, she scrutinizes these materials with the zeal others reserve for comparing cookbooks. On behalf of our readers she homes in on vacation-home communities, in desirable places, that go beyond ordinary luxury—that offer something that other residential resorts don't have. In short, the best of breed.

*A seaplane gets ready for takeoff at
Hampton Island Preserve.*

The Other Hampton

Winding limestone roadways meander over Hampton Island Preserve's 4,000 acres, dotted with lakes, salt marshes, maritime forest, and pastureland



On a nippy January morning, Cheryl Rafferty of New Milford carefully extracted the contents of a hefty “iced” carton shipped via overnight courier. Out came cornucopian mounds of farm-fresh produce: turnips, carrots, kale, collard greens, cabbage, lettuces, Brussels sprouts, fragrant rosemary, oregano, and cilantro. No, it wasn’t an order from Stew Leonard’s; it was a very special delivery from the organic farm at Hampton Island Preserve, Georgia, the private second-home community where Cheryl and her husband, Kevin, own land—which they actually bought, sight unseen, over the phone a few years ago—and where they have yet to build their dream vacation home.

House or no house, they are very much a part of the social fabric of Hampton Island, and their farm-fresh delivery was yet another way the staffers on the island keep in touch with far-flung members (some from California and even the Netherlands, but many from nearby states, like Tennessee). The fresh produce, with a note from “Farmer D” Joffe, under whose hoe and rake the organic gardens are lovingly tended,



ABOVE: The communal gathering point, the firepit at “the shed.” ABOVE RIGHT: Farmer D in the organic garden. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: The screened-in Treehouse Spa is built one flight up, elevated so that guests feel as if they are in a treehouse, surrounded by nature; the communal dining and living space at Settler’s Rest serves as home for members while they wait until their own residences are built; the seaplane “hangar” for the community’s smaller plane.

is sometimes accompanied (for the culinarily challenged) by recipes from executive chef Paul A. Paskins.

A series of bucolic salt-marsh islands, with a mixture of maritime forest (think towering oak, pine, and gum trees among the dense plant life) and pastureland splashed onto the terrain, Hampton Island Preserve is dotted with lakes and intersected by winding limestone roadways that meander over the 4,000-acre property. And although the Raffertys, like all but one of the 60-some other community families, have yet to break ground to build their residences, they are very much “regulars” at Hampton Island, and go there whenever possible. (A Hollywood power couple bought the only home on the island.) “When we drove away the last time, our 9-year-old, Kelly, was actually crying, she was so sad to leave,” Rafferty says. “With all the

activities there and the fun they have working in the organic farm, they think it's better than Disney World."

Indeed, there is plenty to do at Hampton Island for kids and grownups alike—and there are gracious places to stay for "domicile-less" members. Two cozy, well-equipped guest "cottages"—Settler's Rest and Butterfly Cottage—are as welcoming as the finest boutique hotel, with every amenity you could want; a third, Hampton House, with eight suites, will be complete next spring.

When the entire enclave is built out, perhaps in 2025, there will be approximately 370 home sites; according to managing member/developer Ronald S. Leventhal, president of Atlanta-based Tivoli Communities, Inc., ultimately "the density of homes will be less than one residence per eight acres." He is quick to point out that the lots vary in size, and Tivoli, as the developer, allowed the land to determine the sizes of the plots; the smallest sites, where turnkey "cottages" will be built around Turtle Lake, will be about an acre each, and the grandest will be a few farms, of more than 100 acres each. Most of the island land will be kept pristine and undeveloped.

At present, owners can participate in water sports (watch out for the playful porpoises who may want to join you) and fishing (two sea captains, Roger Burge and Mark Covington, each skilled in various types of fishing, will help you bring back something tasty that chef Paskins can turn into dinner at the "shed" where members congregate and the culinary team cooks); there is a Davis Love III–designed golf course, built around 20 acres of a fully restored 200-year-old rice field that Farmer D is grooming; two spas, both with low-key, screened-in buildings (more to come), with herbs from Farmer D that can be crushed into potions for massage

And there is a brand-new, \$2.2 million, 6,600-square-foot equestrian center; an "interpretive" center for children (it's got a veritable menagerie of pets); and, for the equine-challenged, a 10-seater, Canadian-made surrey (with a fringe on top), that horse trainer Jeff Nowicki will squire around the grounds, ably driving a pair of exquisite, newly acquired Percheron horses. There's also Priscilla, the 14-year-old mule who roams about and who gets hitched up once a year, at a big hoedown for members, to help crank the machinery that will turn the sugar cane into syrup. Want a faster mode of transportation, not a four-legged one? The island also has two sea planes, a Piper Super Cruiser (ideal for surveying the property from the air and for short hops around the terrain) and a Cessna Caravan Amphibian that can actually be dispatched to pick residents up from airports near their hometowns and which can land right at your Hampton Island front door (well, more or less).

As easily as the staff members can bottle the sugar syrup from its annual distillation they have managed to catch the intangible here. In the two days TME spent on the island, we can only echo the words of Hugh Coffee—formerly of Old Lyme—whose wife, Heike hails from Greenwich. The couple bought at Hampton Island three years ago: "This is an extraordinary piece of land, with an extraordinary feeling to it. It left its mark on us the first time we visited, and if it's possible to bottle a feeling, then they have done that here." >>

