

Resort-inspired communities create a vacation frame of mind for residents

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In Southwest Florida, the resort lifestyle is in high demand — and not just by visiting tourists. Full- and part-time residents are discovering that master-planned communities offer a resort lifestyle, complete with golf courses, day spas and tropically inspired pools that put them in a vacation-state-of-mind — even if they have to punch a timecard the next day.

Residents of communities created by Bonita Bay Group can indulge in a deep-tissue massage or facial, savor a gourmet feast or light lunch at the clubhouse or relax by the pool in a tiki hut while island music provides the soundtrack — without checking into a five-star resort or traveling too far from home.

“Living in Florida is all about the lifestyle,” said Joey Garon, who, as the company’s vice president of operations, oversees facilities and services at each of Bonita Bay Group’s seven Southwest Florida communities. “Residents want more than great golf. They want full-service health clubs and spas, a choice of fine or casual dining and the chance to workout or wind down.”

Golf, once Florida’s star attraction, is now joined by full-service day spas, fitness centers and health clubs, as well as parks, pools and services.

Residents of Bonita Bay, Mediterra and The Brooks also enjoy private beach clubs along the Gulf of Mexico.

At times, Sandoval, Bonita Bay Group’s newest community, seems more a destination club than a home for a number of working Cape Coral families, retirees, empty nesters and second-home buyers. Many residents describe a sense of calm and relaxation that comes over them whenever they pass through Sandoval’s gates. That long day at the office is soon forgotten as they join their families on a bike ride or walk along The Esplanade, a two-mile linear park that connects Sandoval’s neighborhoods to its main amenities area, the Community Center, as well as the 4.5-acre Calypso Park and commercial areas outside the community.

Many Sandoval residents indulge their resort-seeking quests at the Community Center, which offers something to do for any age, whether it’s a workout in the fitness center, playtime at the Shipwreck Cove tot lot or leisure time at the 7,500-square-foot Lagoon Pool. The free-form pool has a zero-edge entry, a colorful footbridge and water features that spray, squirt and splash tots playing in the children’s splash area.

Then, there’s The Chute, a 100-foot water slide that guarantees a great splashdown. Tropical landscaping complements the island theme and six chickee huts provide a shady venue. One 24-foot wide hut can easily accommodate a steel-drum band (and has) and features a roof made of woven palm fronds. The structures are built much the same as huts that date back to the beginnings of the Seminole Indian tribe.

For even more heart-pumping activity, residents can work out at the fitness center inside the Club Sandoval Community Center, as well as play sand volleyball, tennis at one of four lighted courts, basketball, bocce and football or soccer on a large, multi-purpose field. Classes at the center cater to a number of interests — from body toning or fitness boot camp to watercolor, and children’s karate and kids cardio water aerobics.

Tikes can indulge their own “Pirates of the Caribbean” at the nearby Shipwreck Cove. A large pirate ship offers http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/apr/21/resortinspired_communities_create_vacation_fram... 5/31/2007

traditional jungle gym-type activities.

Even the family pooch gets some downtime, finding fellow furry playmates at Barkley Park, a one-acre dog park within Calypso Park, which also offers chickee huts, grills, picnic areas and a fishing pier that extends into the 22-acre Calypso Lake.

Water and boating activities are popular pastimes for Southwest Florida visitors and tourists including Bonita Bay Group residents. Bonita Bay, the company's flagship Bonita Springs' community, offers a full-service marina with access to Estero Bay, and storage for 420 boats, waterfront dining, a ship's store with bait, and social, educational and travel activities. Residents of Verandah and the new Murphy's Landing are just minutes from Sweetwater Landing, a full-service marina along the Caloosahatchee River.

Kayaks and canoes are available to residents of Verandah, Bonita Bay and Shadow Wood Preserve to explore local waterways — the Orange River, Spring Creek and Mullock Creek, respectively. Residents with their own boats can depart from Riverwalk Park in Bonita Bay along the Imperial River. Verandah offers several venues for residents to enjoy the surrounding Orange River. Its Boat House has a community grill and multiple levels of terraces; the River House features a restaurant, lounge and River Terrace, an al fresco dining spot overlooking the river.

Multiple golf courses built by some of the greatest names in course design – Jack Nicklaus, Jack Nicklaus II, Tom Fazio, Gary Player, Bob Cupp and Arthur Hills – mean avid golfers can play a different course each day. Bonita Bay, home to several new luxury high-rises, offers five courses and two clubhouses. Recently opened courses at Verandah and TwinEagles give each community 36 holes of golf.

Bonita Bay Group has elevated the golf experience in its communities by offering top-notch instruction. Golfers at Bonita Bay Group's communities have been treated to clinics featuring 33-year PGA Tour veteran Lanny Wadkins; receptions and demonstrations by Jack Nicklaus, Jack Nicklaus II and Gary Player; and have access to instruction by Dr. Jim Suttie, a Golf Digest Top 100 instructor whose academy is at The Club at TwinEagles. Learning centers and practice facilities are also part of the instruction equation and help members hone their skills and improve their game. Complementing the instruction are fitness programs geared specifically to help golfers improve their flexibility and evaluate posture.

Each of the luxury high-rises built by The Lutgert Companies in Bonita Bay offers resort-inspired amenities, including massage facilities, fitness centers and large clubrooms with bars, card areas and billiards.

The 26-story Azure, Lutgert's newest high-rise, also offers a rooftop sunset terrace, the first in Bonita Bay, and an 11-seat theater, which residents reserve to screen movies or watch their favorite sports teams. Outdoor amenities include grills, a wet bar and tropically landscaped pool and spa.

Esperia South, the fifth Lutgert tower, will offer a lagoon-style pool with a lap lane, an oversized whirlpool, barbecue grills and an outdoor bar with screened cabanas and fireplace. The 119-home, 27-story building, scheduled for completion in late-2007, will also offer a large clubroom with bar and catering kitchen, a mini-theater, game room and health club with a fitness center, and steam and massage rooms. Designer-furnished guest suites will provide residents' visitors with resort-style accommodations.

Some of Bonita Bay Group's community fitness centers now boast more than 10,000 square feet and offer equipment and popular classes, including yoga, Pilates and stability-ball workouts. Facilities at several clubs also offer massage and spa treatment rooms and a full range of services such as body wraps, facials, aromatherapy, microdermabrasion and waxing. "Our residents recognize that spa services aren't self indulgent but an important part of promoting well-being and taking time for themselves," said Garon. "Our on-site spas allow them to enjoy a stress-reducing massage or facial and be home in minutes to continue their relaxation."

Each Bonita Bay Group community offers a "lifestyle director," a staff member dedicated to providing classes,

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events, programs and activities that cater to a variety of interests. Some of the programs offered at The Club at TwinEagles include shopping excursions, concerts and performances at the Naples Philharmonic Center for the Arts and sunset and shelling cruises.

Garon said today's lifestyle also centers around great food and wine, and Bonita Bay Group employs some of the area's most renowned chefs. "We've really elevated clubhouse fare to a gourmet level," he said. "While members can still find casual food like burgers and sandwiches, they also enjoy fine dining that rivals the area's best restaurants. Food is a very important component of our clubhouse experience, and our residents don't have to fight traffic or worry about getting in-season reservations to enjoy five-star dining."

Enhancing the dining experience is the perfect pairing of those menus with wine. Bonita Bay Group employs a corporate wine director who has matched menus at each club with a variety of wines, said Garon. That addition has proven so popular with residents the company launched the Bonita Bay Group Wine Club for all its communities, giving residents the opportunity to explore new vintages, attend exclusive wine tastings, meet other oenophiles and purchase new discoveries at wine club prices. Wine Director Hans Holzmann also has scheduled the club's first excursions: Nine-day trips to his native Austria with visits to wineries, castles and centuries-old wine cellars. Each travel group will be limited to 22 wine club members.

The pursuit of a resort-style lifestyle has compelled some residents to extend that feeling to their homes, with landscaped rocked pools, spas, wet bars, game rooms and home theaters. Ray Fino, a resident of Mediterra in Naples, grew up watching his father and uncles play bocce and now has a court in his backyard. It was a Christmas present from his wife three years ago, and is lighted for nighttime play. "We invite several couples from Mediterra over for dinner, we drink wine, listen to the stereo and play," Fino said. "It's almost like a little league. The losers have to buy the winners and their spouses dinner."

Since the debut of his court, Fino said several other Mediterra residents are in the process of building facilities in their backyards. "We're thinking that the winners of our group can play those two guys," he said. "It's a great way to get neighbors together."

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