



Living Wellness at The Cliffs

At The Cliffs, a collection of seven luxury communities in the rolling Western Carolina mountains, a philosophy of “designing with nature” inspires members to live active, engaged lives.

By Richard Bradley

Jeff Moser, cofounder of the Charlotte, N.C.-based investment firm Golden Capital Management, first heard about The Cliffs in 2007, when a colleague handed him a magazine ad showcasing the collection of seven private club communities in the nearby Blue Ridge Mountains. The advertisement spotlighted some of the health and fitness activities available at The Cliffs—tennis, golf, hiking, biking, fishing.

“This is so you,” his colleague said. Jeff, who had loved the outdoors since he was a boy, had to agree.

The exchange led to a tour of The Cliffs at Keowee Falls, one of the seven communities, and in short order Jeff and his wife DeeAnn purchased a lot overlooking the 26-mile Lake Keowee and built a home. They found themselves energized by the time they spent there—the beauty of the woods and the water, the warmth of their fellow residents, the ability to be outdoors and active four seasons a year. Jeff played tennis, cycled, hiked and fly-fished. DeeAnn, who had been a casual tennis player, grew more immersed in the sport. “Now,” jokes Jeff, “she plays tennis nine days a week.”

In 2017, they built another home, this one at The Cliffs at Mountain Park near Greenville, S.C., and moved there full-time. The combination of natural beauty and abundant health and wellness amenities invigorates both the Mosers. “As soon as I pull out my driveway, there are pastures, cattle, old barns, waterfalls,” says Jeff. The natural environ-

ment provides an inspiring backdrop for Jeff’s tennis, yoga, and golf—he loves to walk the golf course at Mountain Park rather than use a cart in order to reflect upon his shots and get some additional exercise.

“I’m out there on the course for four hours,” he says, “I don’t want to go four hours without exercise.”

Though The Cliffs attracts people from all over the United States and overseas as well, these seven communities, totaling about 20,000 acres threaded through the Blue Ridge Mountains of North and South Carolina, remain something of a secret. Originally master-planned as residential golf communities by a local developer in the 1990s, The Cliffs were, from the beginning, designed with health and fitness in mind. Today each community features a clubhouse, a wellness center with massage rooms, yoga, and other fitness options, and a golf course designed by legendary golf names such as Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player and Tom Fazio. Other outdoor sports include racquet sports—tennis, pickleball, and the increasingly popular Padel—swimming, boating and watersports, hiking, and road- and mountain-biking. The location helps: the region offers four distinct seasons and is considerably more temperate than that experienced by residential communities in places like Florida, Texas and elsewhere in the Southeast. The inclusive organization of the community also promotes wellness: Members can access the amenities at any of the seven communities, which increases the breadth of

available activities as well as the chance to spend time with nearby neighbors.

That culture of health and fitness can have a dramatic impact on members who come to The Cliffs after many years devoted to their professional lives. “I have seen this multiple times,” Jeff Moser says. “Men and women whose job causes them to have to travel, to entertain.... When they come here, they’re not in the shape they would like to be. At The Cliffs, they see people looking fit and healthy, and they get to know the instructors and personal trainers who work here—I have seen people just transform their bodies.”

That culture of health has always been central to the ethos of living at The Cliffs, but it was raised to another level after 2019, when real estate investment firm South Street Partners bought The Cliffs. South Street, which is based in Charleston, S.C., and Charlotte, N.C., is known for their practice of “designing with nature,” the concept of developing the built environment in harmony with the natural one, elevating the financial value of its properties while enhancing the spiritual pleasures of living in them. The firm has gained a reputation for making great places even better, in part by recognizing and reinforcing what was already great about them. At earlier acquisitions Kiawah Island and Palmetto Bluff, two iconic South Carolina luxury conservation communities, South Street brought a thoughtful, long-term perspective to their development, a purposeful intent to embrace nature and create environments that would be appreciated by generations to come.

“Over time, I’ve noticed that South Street spends more time on the site than typical developers do,” says Mark Permar, an accomplished architect and land planner who has worked with South Street at properties across their portfolio. “That’s about going to see the place in all its moments—different times of the day, different times of the year.” Why does such attention to detail matter? Because, Permar says, truly excellent designers really commit to experiencing land in all its hours, seasons, and vantage points. That way they’ll notice subtle but important nuances, elements to design around, aspects to preserve and highlight, that they might otherwise overlook.

“What’s so interesting about The Cliffs is that all its communities share different attributes of the natural environment, but the micro-environments have special qualities to them,” Permar says.

“The remarkable landscapes which unfold across The Cliffs’ seven communities are a constant source of inspiration and present endless opportunities to weave buildings into these spectacular natural settings,” says Chris Randolph, Managing Partner at South Street. “We believe creating a built environment that enhances and preserves quality of life is foundational to the pursuit of health and wellness.”

At The Cliffs, South Street has partnered with like-minded brands to build new amenities which continue elevating their exceptional wellness offerings. Summerour Architects,

a firm known for helping to create and update some of the country’s most renowned luxury properties—places like Blackberry Farm in Tennessee, Cataloochee Ranch in North Carolina, and Sea Island in Georgia— are nearing completion on a stunning new Sports Pavilion at The Cliffs at Mountain Park.

“We always like to start with the site and the context and work from the ground up,” says Brad Mann, a principal at the firm.

This shared philosophy of designing with nature ensures that this new amenity is much more than a pool, pool house and courts for racquet sports; this is a space that integrates the hills and woods and sky around it while fostering both physical exercise and social interaction. In the lexicon of architects, it blurs the divisions between the natural environment and the built one.

“We’re creating a destination for neighbors to gather outside as a community and enjoy this serenity and scenic surrounding of the mountains, the fresh air, really creating a space that invites people to come and participate,” Mann says.

The Cliffs’ focus on health and community reflects what architect Keith Summerour calls “the maturation of the components of lifestyle.” Americans’ priorities for luxury living have changed, Summerour says. In the past, health was considered a nice side effect of living in luxury, but not the goal of it; the aesthetic experience of luxury was an end in itself. Today, health and fitness are paramount, and we’ve redefined luxury not as the freedom to be unhealthy—to smoke and drink and eat poorly—but as a lifestyle that helps us get healthy and stay that way for as long as possible.

When his firm first started designing luxury properties, what prospective buyers were most interested in was “a comfortable room with some great food and really good service,” Summerour says. Obviously, those things still matter. But “Americans have matured. Now, we focus on hospitality as health.” That means choosing to live a holistic life of family and social engagement, intellectual stimulation, and mental and physical well-being.

“The whole region of the Southeast is experiencing this phenomenon,” Summerour adds. “Grandparents may have moved to The Cliffs, but now their kids are having kids, and they’re all coming here too.”

For member Jeff Moser, that inclusion of family is paramount; he wanted to live in a place that brought generations together, rather than isolating them. “South Street Partners have provided for that in terms of both amenities and membership opportunities,” he points out, noting that club members with full golf memberships can extend “legacy memberships” to their immediate family members one generation above and below them—providing them with full access to The Cliffs’ amenities with no additional dues.



“The Cliffs” says Brad Mann, “is a very conscious attempt to draw people back together—and from a wellness standpoint, the reengaging of generations is critical.”

Members of The Cliffs can enjoy all these health and wellness benefits at many different entrance points and levels of commitment. (They can also take advantage of the proximity to the cultural stimulation of vibrant nearby towns like Asheville, Greenville, and Clemson.) Often, like DeeAnn Moser, they’ll find themselves getting deeper into their pastimes as they grow fitter and more engaged, or as they work out with new friends in cycling groups, tennis tournaments, group hikes, and other communal activities.

The proof of the pudding lies in the story of someone like Alexis Ressler, who moved with her husband from Vermont to join The Cliffs in 2019. A graduate of the University of Vermont in Burlington, she had lived in the state since 1999, building a practice as a psychiatric nurse practitioner, committing to eight years as a captain in the Army Reserve, and becoming a hardcore athlete. A skier, biker, swimmer and runner, Alexis regularly raced in triathlons, and in 2016 she was the women’s champion in the Armed Forces Triathlon.

Eventually, though, the long winters and short, muddy springs of Vermont wore her down—it was hard to train under those conditions. In May 2019, she came to Asheville with her husband Arnie, a psychologist who specializes in Buddhism and mindfulness, for a conference. When she wanted to go for a swim and he wanted to play golf, the staff at their hotel recommended they check out The Cliffs. “They said, ‘You can do it all at this place,’” Alexis remembers.

After a visit to The Cliffs at Walnut Cove, just about 15 minutes from downtown Asheville, she was “really impressed.” When Alexis and Arnie returned to Vermont, there was freezing rain falling—in May. That did it. “We bought a lot within ten days.”

A few months after they moved into their new home, Covid hit. If you had to hunker down during a pandemic, The Cliffs were an ideal place. “We’re tucked down in this little cove, looking up at the Blue Ridge Parkway and mountains all around and the Carolina blue sky,” Alexis says. Socially, the couple found it easy to make new friends. “Everybody who lives here has a great story and life experience,” she adds. “I’ve made so many new friends who are just really good people. If you wanted to, you could have dinner with friends every single night.”

The couple could work from home, and getting outdoors to exercise was easy. “We kind of fell into a cycling group,” Alexis says. Arnie played golf and biked; she swam, ran, and took up mountain biking and golf, neither of which she had done before. She also became a devotee of the community’s wellness center, where she works out and prioritizes getting a massage every other week. In 2022, Alexis began having knee issues and stopped bike racing. Instead, she trained and completed a six-mile open water swim off Charleston, and hiked Mount Kilimanjaro, then won the nine-hole golf championship at Walnut Cove. At the time of this interview, she had just returned from a 50-mile trek in Patagonia, Chile, and was planning a 12-mile swim around Key West and a day-long rim-to-rim hike of the Grand Canyon.

For Alexis, the move to The Cliffs has been physically liberating. In weather that allows her to be outdoors four seasons a year and a social environment where she has felt supported in exploring new sports, she’s managed a transition from committed triathlete to new passions, new challenges, and a holistic sense of well-being in mid-life.

“I love Vermont,” she explains. “But if we hadn’t moved here, life would be so different.”

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