



Little House *on the* FAIRWAY

*Not every buyer wants
a sprawling estate home.
For some, a hassle-free
cottage or bungalow
is just the thing.*

LET'S SAY YOU HAPPEN TO OWN A SECOND HOME—a beautiful and expansive residence, a shining monument to hard work and perseverance. You've been enjoying it for the past month and now you're preparing to pack up and head back to your primary residence when you catch a glimpse of fairway through a back window. You had hoped for one final round before leaving, but there are other priorities: securing two dozen doors and windows, closing all the shades, reprogramming your five-zone climate-control system, turning off the water, replacing hand towels in the six bathrooms and locating the missing cat—who could be anywhere in your 10,000 square feet of carefully tended interior space.

Maintenance chores are never foremost in one's vacation-home dreams, which may be one reason why savvy golf-community developers these days are offering an alternative: downsized homes that are easy to live in, easy to care for and easy to "lock and leave." They go by many

BY JAMES Y. BARTLETT



While the natural surroundings (top) are vast, the homes (above) are decidedly intimate at Southern California's aptly named Hideaway. Previous page: Averaging some 2,500 square feet, casitas at Superstition Mountain's First Water Village are the community's only golf-adjacent or lakefront residences.

different names—cottages, cabins, lodges, bungalows—but the concept is the same: less space for easier living.

"The buyer's perception is that 'small' equates to 'easy to maintain,'" says Taber Anderson of the Anderson Company, developer of such successful communities as Desert Mountain, Las Campanas and Superstition Mountain. "Buyers believe they can come and go as they please, without fuss, in a smaller home."

Understand, the homes in question—such as the villas in Superstition Mountain's Golden Eagle village or the Southwestern-style casitas in its First Water neighborhood—are neither small (up to 3,000 square feet of living space) nor inexpensive, with prices starting around \$500,000. But neither are they mega-mansions with cavernous dens and living rooms, game rooms, multi-car garages and a half-dozen bedrooms and baths. Some buyers, especially those who are into their retirement years, appreciate a smaller home's easier upkeep and lower cost to furnish and operate.

"It's a delicate balance to downsize by cutting out some rooms and still give the buyer in this price range the space and comfort they're used to," Anderson says. "It's hard to have a 20-by-40 master suite and a dining room that can seat 16 in a 2,000-square-foot home."

Steve Adelson, an executive with Discovery Land Com-



At North Scottsdale's luxurious Mirabel community, buyers of smaller residences enjoy lavish detail, both inside and out

pany, another major builder of luxury golf communities, says market research indicates today's buyers don't want the hassle of high maintenance, and as long as a vacation home has easy access to the community's amenities (e.g., golf course and dining facilities), they are willing to sacrifice some "legroom." Another benefit of going smaller is reduced construction time. A typical estate-size home can take 14 months or more to construct, according to Adelson. But a smaller bungalow or cottage-size home can be ready for occupancy in eight months or less.

Discovery has received high marks for its bungalows at The Hideaway, a 36-hole golf community in La Quinta, Calif. While the community offers several hundred custom home-sites, the bungalows—which average around 3,000 square feet and are priced from \$1.5 to \$2 million—are triplex homes grouped around a central courtyard within walking distance of the elaborate, Spanish Revival-style clubhouse and its fitness center, health spa, pool and dining facilities. These intimate homes, which Adelson calls "little jewel boxes," are loaded with interior amenities such as Viking kitchens and Waterworks baths. What they don't have is a requirement for extensive homeowner maintenance, either inside or out.

Discovery's less-is-more offerings are available nationwide. At the company's Mirabel community in North Scottsdale, the El Corazon homes, on half-acre lots, measure between 3,000 and 4,000 square feet. At the new Mountaintop Golf & Lake Club under construction in Cashiers, N.C.,



Berkeley Hall's Carolina Lifestyle cottages prove smaller is sometimes better.



the development's master plan calls for 35 cabins (up to 2,500 square feet) and 35 lodges (3,000 to 4,000 square feet) to complement some 250 estate-size homes. Again, these more intimate dwellings may not offer extra bedrooms, but there will be no skimp-

ing on the amenities. Adelson says the cabins and lodges will go on the market at \$1.1 million to \$2.2 million.

In Bluffton, S.C., near Hilton Head Island, Berkeley Hall offers plenty of expansive estate homes overlooking its two Tom Fazio-designed golf courses. But on the very day it began taking orders on an initial offering of 20 smaller homes, called Carolina Lifestyle cottages, buyers snapped up 18 of them. The cottages, which range from 2,000 to 2,800 square feet, are available in four different floor plans and are priced from the low \$500,000s. The exteriors of these cluster homes reflect the stately taste of the community's larger dwellings, with arched windows and steeply pitched, cedar-shake roofs. Inside, rooms are open, with a central great room and kitchen-dining area. The homes can be customized with a large screened-in atrium space, thus incorporating the feel of the breezy Lowcountry outdoors.

Does all this movement toward smaller space mean the days of the custom-built mansion are numbered? Hardly. Yet developers are being reminded, in conversations with buyers and focus groups, that the market is ever-changing. Anderson says his company's research indicates that the previous model of a family owning one "big house up north" and a vacation home elsewhere is changing.

"I see a trend toward what I call 'multiple primaries,'" Anderson says. "When you ask someone these days where they live, they may reel off two or three places. I've talked to buyers who have decided to sell their big mansion and invest in two, or even three, smaller homes located in resort settings. It's where they want to be, at different times of the year, and they like the atmosphere and service they get at resort communities."

But conventional wisdom has maintained that second-home buyers—especially those who buy into an amenity-filled golf development in a resort or vacation area—act in part because they want to provide a place for their children and grandchildren to gather.

"Maybe so," Anderson says, "but I've heard from buyers who say their kids are too busy to come visit most of the time, so they look for something smaller and more manageable. And if the kids do come, they put them up at a nearby hotel or break out the air mattresses."

Even so, in these luxury "cottages," bunking on an air mattress is as close as one will come to roughing it.