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SADDLING UP

Resort living melds with stable surroundings *By Kim Fredericks*

CHAD BEDELL spent most of his life wrestling steer; now he helps people wrestle their anxiety. "Our owners come from high-stress jobs," says Bedell, who serves as ranch manager at Marabou, a development in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, that will place just 65 homes on its 1,700 acres. "Horseback riding teaches them to calm down and relax." The former world champion steer wrestler and full-fledged cowboy helps owners, many of whom hail from urban and corporate environments, transition from sitting behind a desk to sitting on a horse for such activities as trail riding, barrel racing, and even overnight cattle drives. "The owners here have a genuine interest in horses," says Bedell. "They want to learn about and interact with them."

Marabou started selling in 2006, and, although no homes have been completed, the community is already

boarding six owners' horses—along with 12 others that belong to the ranch and are available to the homeowners for guided trail rides, cattle drives, and lessons—in its newly built barn. An outdoor riding arena and 12 miles of riding trails are also in place. While Marabou features fly-fishing, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and downhill skiing at the nearby Steamboat Ski Resort, it is the ranch lifestyle paired with the beauty of wide-open spaces, which are free of golf courses, that has captured buyers' attention at this development.

Glenda Hachenberger, a semiretired real estate executive, left her Florida home of 25 years to move to Steamboat. She purchased a Marabou homesite—which overlooks a horse barn, where a registered quarter horse named Jax resides—and though she has yet to start building a house, she enjoys the community's amenities. "I like



The demand for real estate communities that combine equestrian facilities with luxury resort-style amenities has caused developers to turn their attention from golf to horses. One such community, Frederica, located on St. Simons Island, Georgia, has combined the best of both worlds, offering stables and a golf course. **CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:** The Sea Island Stables can house 64 horses in its four barns. Frederica's beaches provide scenic riding trails. The stables are available only to the community's owners, Sea Island Club members, and Sea Island Resorts' guests. The 3,000-acre community also includes guesthouses.

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that you can go out and ride the trails, get dirty, and then go inside a beautiful lodge and drink a hot toddy," she says. An avid outdoorswoman, she skis three times a week during the winter and casts her line on the Elk River, which runs through the property. And when entertaining at her home in the town of Steamboat, she sometimes summons Marabou's chef to cook private dinners. "Marabou and Steamboat are my social centers. I've met people from all over the world here," says Hachenberger.

The demand for communities that meld the horse life with luxury resort-style living and amenities is driving developers to venture into the equestrian world. "At last look we were up to 300 and growing so quickly that we can't keep our database current," says Jennifer Donovan, cofounder of Equestrian Services, a company that plans, designs, and manages equestrian amenities for resorts and communities. "Horses are the new golf," she says.

For Mary Alice Heape, a seasoned dressage rider from Dallas, a community that combines golf and equestrian facilities was the perfect solution for her family. "I have three boys and a husband who play golf," she says. When her friends told her about Cornerstone, a development located outside of Montrose, Colorado, Heape was skeptical. "But then I heard about the dual golf and equestrian offerings, and my ears perked up."

The 6,000-acre Cornerstone community allows owners of ranch homesteads to build their own homes, guest-houses, and five-acre paddock complexes with barns. The Heapes purchased a 22-acre lot and have plans to eventually build a horse barn. "We are surrounded by aspens and have 360-degree views of Mount Sneffels and the Grand Mesa," says Heape. "We can see all the way to Crested Butte, but we don't see any other homes."

While owning a vacation home on a ranch in the middle of nowhere appeals to some, others prefer to be near community centers and the action of horse shows. Griffin Ranch in La Quinta, California, is located on 239 acres in the center of one of the most sought-after vacation home destinations, known primarily for its golf. The development, which encompasses the land around the estate of the late entertainer Merv Griffin, offers a mix of nearly 400 homesites and custom and semi-custom homes available in various styles—Andalusian, Spanish Colonial, contemporary Mexican, and Italian farmhouse. Horses will be pampered with automatic misting systems and spacious stalls and runs, while riders receive private tack lockers and the assistance of a 24-hour staff.

In Langley, British Columbia, High Point Equestrian Estates puts riders close to the Thunderbird Equestrian Show Park, one of the premiere horse show stadiums in

BELOW: Located just outside of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, Marabou not only offers equestrian facilities, but also fly-fishing, skiing, and mountain biking excursions led by the community's guides, some of whom are former Olympians.



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North America. "Langley is the horse capital of Canada," says Hani Lammann, vice president of Cressey Development Group, the developer of High Point. The 287-acre community features 164 homesites arranged around riding paddocks, trails, and wetlands. A five-mile network of trails will wind through the community's 86-acre park, connecting to the 1,400-acre Campbell Valley Park, which harbors an additional 18 miles of riding trails.

"Langley is a really rural suburb of Vancouver, made up of farmlands and pastures," says Lammann. Yet Langley is also within easy reach of 12 golf courses, the beaches of White Rock, and the wineries of the Fraser Valley. "Many of the people building so far are, or plan to be, horse owners," says Lammann. "But there are many others who don't plan to own horses—they just love the land."

While High Point emphasizes the equine roots of its surroundings, other communities tout their affiliations with resort developments. At Frederica, a 3,000-acre community of approximately 500 homes near Sea Island, Georgia, homeowners will have access to the newly built Sea Island Stables, which are across a lake on the property and are reachable by boat. The facility is only available to Sea Island Resorts' guests, Sea Island Club members, and Frederica Golf Club members. The stables consist of four barns to accommodate 64 horses and are set on a secluded 60-acre parcel with riding trails that weave through forests of pines, palmettos, and 100-year-old oaks garlanded with Spanish moss. Frederica residents can board their horses at the stables and then partake in programs run by the resort, such as naturalist-guided beach tours that take



RIGHT: Cornerstone's 6,000 acres offer wide-open trails for horseback riding, but the project also caters to golfers with a private, Greg Norman-designed course.

BELOW: The equestrian facilities at High Point Equestrian Estates in Langley, British Columbia, the horse capital of Canada, will include a 20,000-square-foot indoor riding area and a 31,000-square-foot clubhouse and viewing area.

riders through sand dunes and into the surf to allow the horses to swim.

No matter where horse and rider settle in, Donovan says the most important point to consider is the care of the horses. "Buyers want to be reassured that quality and consistent care are in place. They want well-designed facilities, access to trails that are looped and interesting, good-quality riding arenas with dust-free footing, and pasture that is lush and well-managed." The opportunity to try new activities and to have the same level of service that they are used to receiving at their country clubs or spas are also important, she explains. And some horse enthusiasts are happy never to step foot in a stirrup. "Some people love the open space that's associated with equestrian communities—they just want to see horses grazing or galloping across a field."





[DEVELOPMENTS & RESOURCES]

Cornerstone

LOCATION: On 6,000 acres in south-western Colorado
RESIDENCES: A total of 412 offerings planned. Homesites range from less than one acre to 20 acres, and ranches range from 20 to 130 acres. Five four-bedroom golf cabins range from 3,785 to 4,370 square feet
AMENITIES: A Greg Norman–designed private golf course, a golf clubhouse, stables, a children’s activity camp, a Mountain Club for skiers located in Telluride’s Mountain Village, and a fly-fishing cabin located 16 miles away on the Uncompahgre River
TIMELINE: Broke ground in 2004. The Mountain Club, welcome center, and phase one of the stables are complete. The golf cabins, the golf clubhouse, the golf course, 20-plus miles of on-site trails, and phase two of the stables—which includes the paddocks for outside boarding of horses—will be ready this summer
PRICING: Homesites priced from \$300K to \$685K; ranches from \$725K to \$1.98M; fully furnished golf cabins from \$2.6M to \$2.8M. Club membership, which includes golf, is \$95K 877.855.7273, www.cornerstonecolorado.com

Frederica

LOCATION: On 3,000 acres on St. Simons Island, Georgia
RESIDENCES: 500 homesites ranging in size from one to four acres
AMENITIES: A golf course designed by

Sir Michael Bonallack and Tom Fazio; a golf clubhouse; a 400-acre lake; a boathouse with kayaks, canoes, and electric boats for use on the lake and more than 100 acres of interconnected waterways; a fitness center; stables; a cultural arts center; a restaurant; a 600-acre rookery dedicated to the shelter and study of the indigenous wood stork; and access to Sea Island Resorts’ amenities
TIMELINE: Broke ground in 2003. The clubhouse and fitness center are scheduled to open during the third quarter of 2008. Five homes completed; seven under construction
PRICING: From \$1.43M to \$3.58M 912.291.2185, <http://frederica.seaisland.com>

Griffin Ranch (shown above and right)

LOCATION: On 239 acres in La Quinta, California. The compound was previously owned by horse enthusiast Merv Griffin, who decided to develop the property into a residential community in 2005
RESIDENCES: 393 homes set on lots ranging in size from 10,000 square feet to a half-acre. Twenty one-acre lots also are available
AMENITIES: The Saddle Club equestrian facility will offer a covered arena, an open arena, two dressage arenas, a clubhouse, boarding for up to 80 horses, and turn-out areas and pastures. The 22,000-square-foot Griffin Club will include a restaurant and a fitness center and spa

TIMELINE: Sales began in 2005; home construction began in January 2007. The Saddle Club is currently under development, and construction of the Griffin Club will start in late 2008
PRICING: Homes from \$750K to \$1.7M. One-acre lots from \$900,000 877.222.3858, www.griffinranchlaquinta.com

High Point Equestrian Estates

LOCATION: On 287 acres in Langley, British Columbia, 45 minutes from downtown Vancouver and 10 minutes from the U.S. border
RESIDENCES: 164 homesites ranging in size from a half-acre to 4.24 acres
AMENITIES: Club High Point equestrian center with paddocks for 80 horses, 20,000-square-foot indoor and large outdoor riding rings, and



a 31,000-square-foot clubhouse with viewing lounges and a fitness center
TIMELINE: Broke ground in 2004. Currently, there are 14 homes under way. Construction on the equestrian center began this spring
PRICING: From \$585K to \$977K 604.514.2222, www.highpointestates.ca

Marabou

LOCATION: On 1,700 acres in western Colorado, three miles west of Steamboat Springs
RESIDENCES: 65 homesites ranging in size from five to seven acres
AMENITIES: Six owners’ cabins, an owners’ lodge, an outfitters’ center, a wellness center, a barn and round pen, and a children’s activity center. It also offers private fly-fishing, horseback riding, skiing, snowboarding, and mountain biking—all led by Marabou’s mountain guides, some of whom are former Olympians or forerunners in their sport
TIMELINE: Broke ground in 2004. The first phase of homesites was released in 2006 with the second phase released last December. All community structures were finished last year
PRICING: From \$2.9M 877.879.7519, www.marabou ranch.com

Resources

Equestrian Services, 434-872.0368, www.equestrianservicesllc.com