

Balsam Mountain Preserve

WHILE MANY GOLF COURSE COMMUNITIES EVOKE A SENSE OF NATURE, Balsam Mountain Preserve in Western North Carolina is nature itself. This private community from Chaffin/Light Associates not only incorporates an Arnold Palmer golf course, beautiful home sites and great recreational opportunities, it does so in a wonderfully responsible manner. In fact, 3,000 of Balsam Mountain Preserve's 4,400 acres are protected by conservation easements, reinforcing Jim Chaffin's belief that "Life is more than where the first tee is located" and adding to the firm's already substantial list of conservation-minded developments.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Located in Sylva, NC, in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, Balsam Mountain Preserve will eventually hold 354 homesteads, an Arnold Palmer Signature golf course, an equestrian compound, tennis center and plenty of nature. Nature is at the core of Chaffin/Light communities, and it certainly shows in this one, which the developers say was always intended "to exist as a community within a park." Before anything was done to the property, Chaffin/Light brought in a host of forestry professionals, wildlife biologists, botanists, ornithologists and others to help plan the most responsible development route. After careful study, nearly 68 percent of the property was set up to be protected from development and to be dutifully maintained with real estate transfer fees, donations and grants. Travel throughout the property and access to home sites is facilitated by use of some 70 miles of existing roads, created when the Champion Paper Company used the property back in the 1930s and '40s. As important as human travel, wildlife corridors were left unmolested, ensuring uninhibited movement for the property's animal kingdom. Dave Sparks, a Balsam Mountain Preserve member, says that it's this kind of effort that makes the community a special place. "We are so pleased we made the decision to build here," he says. "This is a place that is so wide open, we can see the Blue Ridge Parkway

and watch the wild turkeys." An onsite Nature Center and naturalists, provided for by the same Balsam Mountain Trust that preserves the land, will help families appreciate their community. Here, residents can learn about the local wildlife, go on guided hikes, mountain bike rides and bird watching walks, explore the local forest, streams and waterfalls and gain a greater sense of interaction with the wild. Why all the focus on nature? As Jim Chaffin put it in an article that appeared in *Western North Carolina Builder/Architect*: "If you are going to have a human settlement in a contextual relationship with open space, you have to ask, 'What do we want this community to be like 50 years from now?' Because every act that you take in the evolution of a human settlement and the management of the open space will either enhance or detract from the species' habitat."

In real life terms, the goals are being met.

THE GOOD LIFE

One thing that will definitely enhance the human species' habitat is the Arnold Palmer Signature golf course at Balsam Mountain. Remarkable and sweeping views, deep valley drives and challenging elevation changes make the course a new standard in mountain golf. Eighteen holes of stunning play offer golfers of all levels a chance to get out and enjoy a round — and to enjoy some of the best course scenery ever. Palmer himself has said that the views from the par-5 No. 14 are absolutely spectacular. In addition to the main course, Balsam Mountain Preserve will feature a large practice complex. Approximately 30,000 square feet of bentgrass teeing area spread over three levels of tees will face a target fairway and three different target greens. A short game complex will offer a chipping/pitching green, practice bunkers and a fairway approach area for wedge work, while a 6,000 square-foot putting green will help golfers tighten up their final shots.

For those who prefer riding horses over green hills to driving a ball over them, more than 50 miles of scenic trails will be open for equestrian pursuits. Climb through forests up to 5,500 feet in elevation, or head down old logging roads into quiet meadows. Top-notch stables and a full-time stable manager ensure all horse-related activities are available and maintained at all times. Riding lessons, trail rides and a riding arena all add to the enjoyment.

While Balsam Mountain Preserve's large trail system connects to the Nantahala National Forest, you don't have to leave the community to enjoy a bit of sleeping under the stars. The Dark Ridge Creek campsite includes a pavilion, bunkhouse, four tent pads, hiking trails, hot showers and flush toilets to keep things just this side of civil while allowing families to enjoy a night in the wild together. For a deep woods experience, remote log cabins with incredible views are available for family adventures.

There's nothing like catching your dinner, and with Balsam Mountain Preserve's 38 miles of streams anglers shouldn't have too much trouble keeping fed. Not only are the streams full of Southern brook trout and other fish, but they're also some of the purest you'll find anywhere — and that's a scientific fact. Due to careful work of the Balsam Mountain Trust and the on-site naturalists, the streams at Balsam Mountain Preserve



The Boarding House at twilight

have earned high marks in terms of water quality. Excellent news for fishermen (and women). Take a guided trip with a Nature Center guide or strike out on your own. Either way, there are 38 miles of excuses to get out of mowing the lawn on a sunny weekend afternoon.

General fitness at Balsam Mountain Preserve is a way of life, what with the golf, hiking trails and endless outdoor activities. But there are more conventional ways to stay active in the community as well. Games of tennis (or tennis lessons), swimming in a lovely pool or just working out in a fitness center are all possible at The Ruby Valley Sports Camp, which provides a place for families and friends to gather together in recreation. With all of this, golf, horseback riding and so many miles to explore, Balsam Mountain Preserve is as much a lifestyle as it is a community.

At the end of the day, with all of the nature and all the ways to enjoy the outdoors, it's the people that make Balsam Mountain Preserve such a special place to live. "I was familiar with Chaffin/Light's track record of developing understated, environmentally sensitive, family-oriented communities where the 'mine is bigger than yours' mentality simply doesn't exist," says Balsam Mountain Preserve member, Rod Hanlon. "Seeing the quality of the early amenities all made us fall in love with Balsam Mountain Preserve."

HOME SWEET HOME

In fact, the amenities are incredible. And with all of this activity it's easy to forget that Balsam Mountain Preserve is, at its core, a place to live. Only 354 homes will ever be built here, so everyone gets to enjoy the surrounding nature. Chaffin/Light has assembled a portfolio of homes in partnership

with Platt Architecture and other high quality designers and builders, so choosing a place to hang your hat is easy. Aesthetically appropriate, beautiful and amenity-laden, they offer a great way to move into the neighborhood. For ground-up construction, one- and two-acre homesites are available for those wishing to move in, and of course you can show up with custom house plans.

Everyone at Balsam Mountain will benefit from The Boarding House. Ten individual cabins and a Dining Hall Lodge comprise this structure, which sits on top of a ridge at 3,700 feet. The Dining Hall Lodge is a 6,600 square-foot gathering spot for Balsam Mountain Preserve members. Top-notch dining, a bar, library and porches with an outdoor fireplace offer a great place to get together and discuss the day's activities. The ten cabins at The Boarding House are built of antique wood and dry stacked stone and offer accommodation for Balsam Mountain Preserve guests, residents waiting for their homes to be completed or partners in the Boarding House Partners Program, a fractional ownership program that allows access to all that Balsam Mountain Preserve has to offer without the responsibility of maintaining a home.

Whether you pick up your golf clubs or a fishing pole, mount a horse or a mountain bike, or just go for a casual stroll along any of the beautiful trails, there's no question that a day in Balsam Mountain Preserve is a testament to how beautiful life in this world can be. For outdoor lovers and golfers everywhere, we feel this community is well worth consideration as a place to call home. ■

Find out more at www.balsammountain.com or call (866) 452-3456.



Stunning scenery is par for the course at Balsam Mountain Preserve