

Robb Report

# Vacation Homes

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## Spring Island, South Carolina



When developers Jim Chaffin Jr. and James Light started developing Spring Island 15 years ago, the project was applauded for being one of the country's first conservation-based master-planned communities. While low-density eco-developments now number in the dozens, Spring Island is still one of the purest examples of sound, environmentally sensitive progress.

Located on 3,000 acres in South Carolina's Lowcountry, between the

coastal villages of Beaufort and Hilton Head Island, the community is more of a nature park than a residential development. Only 410 homes are planned for the property, and 1,300 acres are being preserved and managed as open space by Spring Island Trust, a nonprofit entity established by Chaffin and Light.

"Our concept was to develop a community within a park, rather than a park within a community," explains Chaffin. "We wanted to create an informal, first-class club where ecological and educational activities were as important as recreational ones."

The existing 220 residences—maximum size allowed is 4,500 square feet—are planned as architectural extensions of the Lowcountry. Large screened-in decks and porches, dormered roofs and breezeways that lead to buildings in a family-compound setting are prevalent in the residences, which run from \$1 million to \$6 million. Most homes are

hidden from view due to the island's requisite 100-foot setbacks from any road—the first 50 feet of which have to be completely undisturbed thicket habitat, forming what the developers refer to as a "nature curtain."

"Oftentimes you hear the phrase 'rustic elegance.' What that usually means is mediocrity," says Chaffin. "We're putting people in a contextual environment without compromising facilities or service."

Among the island's amenities are the private Old Tabby Links golf course designed by Arnold Palmer and Ed Seay (membership is \$125,000), a 25-acre equestrian center and 35 miles of riding trails. "The real heart and soul of the island, though, is Mother Nature," says Chaffin. "She was in a wonderful mood when she worked on Spring Island." SCOTT KAUFFMAN

### Spring Island

866.740.0400, [www.springisland.com](http://www.springisland.com)

Founded 15 years ago, Spring Island was one of the first green communities in the U.S. Above: The outdoor sitting areas of the River House clubhouse overlook the community dock.

Right: The golf course's 17th hole is guarded by the Night Heron Pond on the left and the Chechessee River on the right.

