

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

Cottaging with a twist

Condo development at Sandbanks offers lakeside living, without the hassles



TRACY HANES PHOTO

Sandbanks Summer Village, which may be the first full ownership cottage condo in Canada, is just a few kilometres from Sandbanks Provincial Park.

TRACY HANES
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

PICTON—It's summertime and the living is easy at Sandbanks Summer Village, where the long tradition of cottaging has been given a contemporary condo twist.

The development on East Lake in Prince Edward County, minutes from the famous golden sand beaches and dunes of Sandbanks Provincial Park, offers sole cottage ownership without the hassles. Seasonal opening and closing, security and common-area landscaping, repairs and maintenance, even the logistics of renting out a property are covered by a monthly condo fee.

Summer Village (www.summer-village.ca) includes \$4 million in amenities, such as a general store, swimming pool, state-of-the-art saltwater pool, sports courts, bocce ball, a putting green, dog park and an open-air pavilion with a 7.5-metre high-definition projection

screen. Its developers, Cottage Advisors of Canada, claim it is the first cottage condominium in Canada; it is a different concept than time share or fractional ownership.

Models opened on Canada Day and the first owners were to move in by the end of July. The three-season resort will include 237 units on a 32-hectare site on East Lake, formerly occupied by a golf range and, prior to that, a trailer park. Prices start at \$179,900.

The project is a Canadian first for Cottage Advisors, which has built three similar resorts in the United States. Jim Lawley of Halifax is a partner with Americans Howard Hall Sr. and his son Howard "Chip" Hall Jr.

"James and my father have been fishing buddies for 20 years," says Hall. "Jim is a very successful entrepreneur in Nova Scotia and built the Marriott Hotel in downtown Halifax.

Howard suggested he come and see what we're building in the U.S. Jim fell in love with the concept but said, 'You Americans don't know anything about cottaging. If you want to do a real cottage project, you have to come to Canada.'

"We believe cottaging is ingrained in Canadian soil. In the States, we have beach homes, cottages, cabins — a lot of different descriptions — but in Canada, there is one term and the fact an industry is built around makes it different," says Hall.

The partners looked at various areas before deciding Prince Edward County was ideal.

"Our clients like to shop, eat out, go on day trips," says Hall. "Prince Edward County has wineries, cheese factories, snorkeling, windsurfing, biking, kayaking — all the activities you want to do.

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‘The boat builders of cottaging’

SANDBANKS from HI

“And it has music and art festivals and wine tastings, so it has a cultural element, too.”

The project initially encountered opposition from a citizens’ group, Friends of East Lake, but a compromise was reached last summer and construction started in October.

The resort has 495 metres of waterfront, but much of that is separated from the land by an esker (a winding ridge of sand and gravel formed by glaciers). The site has a small beach, good for children, canoeing and kayaking, and the resort will provide a shuttle to the Sandbanks beach, eight kilometres away.

Phase II is selling now. Cottages are all about 800 square feet, but there are five floor plans.

“We are the boat builders of cottaging,” says Hall. “We are very efficient in our floor plans, so there is no wasted space. Units come with nine-foot ceilings so they feel voluminous, very open and airy.

“The cottages focus on people who are used to entertaining. They have large great rooms. Our company has sold more than 500 cottages and we spent a lot of time pondering the design of units. This is our fourth project and we have made more than 200 modifications to the

designs since we started in 2005.”

“People do have different visions of the cottaging experience,” says Hall. “We believe in the beehive approach. Our owners like action. If you want to sit in the wilderness and hear a loon, that’s not our clients.”

A full-time recreation director will coordinate the resort’s recreational program and arrange on-site and off-site events and activities.

Hall says the majority of buyers are from Toronto and Ottawa.

The development has its own water treatment system, using GE waste-water treatment technology, which utilizes infrared light and micro-organisms to break down bacteria and a membrane system to separate materials from water.

“It’s the cleanest waste-water equipment available and the third time our company has used the technology,” says Hall.

Condo fees are \$253 a month, including HST. They cover sewer, water, cable, Internet, local phone bill and maintenance and support.

“The only thing you are responsible for is taxes and hydro, which is \$2,000 per unit per year,” says Hall.

Owners are free to rent out their units if they wish to offset costs; they can make their own arrangements or let the resort manage it.



TRACY HANES PHOTOS

At the three-season Sandbanks Summer Village, prices start at \$179,900.

