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ON LOCATION SPRING ISLAND



Nestled within an almost mystically beautiful setting surrounded by forests of 150-year-old oaks in South Carolina's Lowcountry is a 3,000-acre community that has been bucking the trends for two decades. Using terms like "wise growth" and "preservation" back in the early 1990s, at a time when green wasn't very hip, helped set a new bar for sustainable development and set this community apart, ultimately, making it into the success it is today.

According to Jim Chaffin, a resident and one of the people behind the creation of Spring Island, when an opportunity came along to develop what was then a pristine and fairly untouched 3,000-acre island, Chaffin's team decided to scrap the previous developer's plans for 5,500 homes and two golf courses and listen to some strong counsel. "My wife was green before green was cool and it was her idea to set aside a third of the island as a nature preserve." Chaffin recalls that they also reduced the number of homes to 500, opted for one golf course and set 1,200 acres aside for a nature preserve. Eventually, the housing number was reduced further to just 400 thoughtfully designed homes (which have current values from \$600,000 to \$6.7 million), bringing us to the Spring Island of today.

Since then, Spring Island has grown into what Chaffin calls a "community within park," with residents out walking, waving to each other and simply "enjoying life," be it at the nature center, at any of the 30-plus fishing lakes, on 36 miles of walking trails or at the 30-acre equestrian center. While it may be best known because of its highly ranked Arnold Palmer-designed golf course—it was just rated the 17th best golf community in the nation by Travel + Leisure Golf—those attached to Spring Island prefer a different view of their home. "Spring Island is not a golf community so much as it is a 'whole' community that happens to have a spectacular golf course," says Chaffin, adding that here, amenities are blended with the environment. "We used nature to amplify things...with no compromise to quality."

Other amenities set it apart, including having four full-time naturalists on staff and offering an array of activities—such as a visiting artists program—that complement the surrounding nature. "The quality of people's lives has less to do with the ranking of a golf course than it does with the friends, the [level of] service and the activities people make, receive and participate in," adds Chaffin, noting these things are what make Spring Island truly unique.

—Kathleen Carlin-Russell

The Spring Island Nature Center offers guided nature walks and other educational programs for residents and visitors alike. With 600 floral types, 700 kinds of fauna and lots of indigenous wildlife, there is much to see.

Spring Island prides itself on its activities and programs, and its connection to nature. And so it should, with a pool, fitness center, tennis, boating and plans for a sports complex. For more, visit springisland-sc.com