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PHOTOS COURTESY OF STABLEWOOD SPRINGS

LEFT: Stablewood Springs is offering three floor plans for its 70 villas. RIGHT: Many of the windows at Stablewood open up to panoramic views of the Hill Country.



Not only are the villas luxurious, but so are the amenities. The pool area offers an "outstanding" setting for watching sunsets.

## Stablewood Springs Resort: The perfect adventure

The 'future' of Texas Hill Country mixes luxurious relaxation with outdoor activities.

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**H**UNT — Stablewood Springs Resort seems to offer a little bit of everything, or at least it soon will.

Panoramic Hill Country views from your bedroom window? Check. Lap pool and an infinity edge pool aligned for a perfect sunset? Check. Luxurious villas for an investment or a weekend retreat? Check. Stocked fishing pond for the kids? Check.

The resort, on a hilly 140 acres, is close as well. It's a mere 75 miles north of San Antonio and just past Kerrville.

"If you're the type of family where some like to be adventurous and some like to relax, this is the perfect place," said Herb Lipsman, president and COO of the resort. "It's going to be a place to die for."

When the development's complete, there will be 70 villas and 10 estates.



At Stablewood Springs, the exterior living space is as important as the interior space. Each villa comes with at least two outdoor spaces.

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Currently, there are six completed villas; two more will be finished this month, and 24 will pop up in the

for about \$750 per night.

Aside from their views and amenities, the villas stand out because they're built using compressed earth bricks, essentially dirt that has been smashed into 18-inch-thick blocks.

There are also four estate homes already built. The lots range from 1.5 acres to 2.5 acres and are in a secondary, gated portion of the resort. The smallest of the four homes built so far is about 3,000 square feet.

Stablewood Springs came about when the project's devel-

next year.

Pre-sales of the villas started at the end of 2006, with prices in the high \$400,000s. Now, the villas are closing at \$725,000. You can live in Stablewood Springs or simply use it as a vacation home. But owners can rent them out, and guests can stay at the resort for a vacation,

See STABLEWOOD/5D

# Stablewood Springs offers touch of luxury and Hill Country recreation

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oper decided to invite people on to his personal ranch. Houston resident Tom Fatjo, who founded the BFI waste company and built the Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa, owns 543 acres along the Guadalupe River and opened up part of his land for the development.

"I've been coming here since 1945," Fatjo said. "Every time I see the area, I have the inclination to do outdoor activities, but there haven't been many opportunities to do everything."

Construction is under way on a spa and fitness center, which should be complete in October. The center will offer classes such as yoga and spinning. A nutritionist also will be on site to provide advice and help.

"I hope people can get an introduction, or maybe a continuation, of health and fitness with an emphasis on relaxation," Fatjo said.

To fuel both your relaxation and exercise fix, next to the fitness center is a lap pool and a leisure pool, built by San Antonio's River Oaks Pools.

"It's a fun thing," Fatjo said during a recent ribbon-cutting ceremony. "As you look at this pool and this setting, I think it's one of the most outstanding anywhere."

Of course, a main draw for the Hill Country is your view from almost any angle, helped by the elevation that changes from 1,200 feet to 2,200 feet above sea level. Family ranches also surround the resort, so there isn't likely to be a lot of nearby development.

From the pool area, you can relax on the lounge chairs and watch the sun set. And you'll soon be able to order some snacks and drinks from a poolside restaurant and bar.

Not sold yet on the amenities? Well, you can rent kayaks, go tubing on the river, fish in stocked ponds or rent a mountain bike to trek off on a five-mile trail designed by Outpost Wilderness Adventure.

For those in search of lost treasure, try geocaching, a type of 21st-century treasure hunt using GPS devices to find hidden objects.

Companies and organizations also will be able to use the resort, which will have meeting and conference space.

So when you come to Stable-



COURTESY OF STABLEWOOD SPRINGS

The plaster adobe walls use a limestone dust to give the villas a Hill Country feel. So does the distressed walnut wood.

wood Springs, what can you expect for your domicile?

With the villas, you have three floor plans to choose from, all with a common design theme.

"We wanted the Hill Country feeling with a European flair," said Pam Pierce of Pierce Designs in Houston. "There's a huge attention to detail."

To achieve the look, the walls are covered in an adobe plaster finish complete with a limestone dust to help bring in some local color.

The walnut floors are distressed, and wood beams are reclaimed. Where there's not wood, there's stained concrete. There are also shutters on the inside, rather than the regular curtains. Countertops are made from nearby limestone.

The bunk beds for the kids let them feel like they're at a camp of their own.

Villas have three bedrooms, but one bedroom has a separate entrance and can be used almost as a separate guesthouse.

There are also Hill Country furniture packages designed by Pierce for \$75,000.

Though there are only three floor plans and the theme is similar, small details set each villa apart, such as cabinets, counter-

tops and uses of rock around the fireplace. The resort was designed by three, a Dallas architecture firm.

Not only are there beautiful views out the windows — imagine waking up each morning to the Hill Country sunrise — but the outdoor space rivals the inside.

"They can see that," Gary Koerner, president of three, said, pointing out to the scenery. "But they can have this. The outdoors should have a major influence on their experience."

"This" is the outdoor living space, complete with outdoor fireplaces, food preparation areas and barbecue pits. Fountains provide some ambient sound for relaxation. Each villa has at least two outdoor living spaces.

The units also have metal roofs, which help reflect heat and are recyclable. The landscaping uses native plants that

don't require as much attention. And many of the materials — such as the limestone counters — came from nearby.

"It's neat to have the green aspect and it's a big plus," Fatjo said. "The cost of energy is less than conventional construction, and it's such a positive movement. Sometimes people get on a bandwagon, but I believe the green movement is here to stay. To have a green resort is keeping with the overall environment here."

Though still in its early stages, local officials are calling the resort the area's future.

"Everybody wants to come here, and they'll add to the tax base, commerce, and quality of life and culture," Harvey Hildebran, state representative for the area, said about the Hill Country area. "Stablewood Springs is really the next chapter of the future of the Texas Hill Country."