

Denver Magazine

Magazine

Run Date: June 1, 2008

Frequency: Monthly

Circulation: 30,000

Coverage: Denver, Denver County; DMA: Denver, CO

Profile: Written for residents and visitors of Denver and offers news and information on all things cultural, contemporary and current in the region including business, politics, sports, health, fashion, dining, automotive, real estate and architecture.



A luxury resort for recreational users? Apparently, today's RV enthusiasts seek more than simple campgrounds or a slab of concrete with an electric hookup.

Denver-based Sagebrush Realty Development is opening a two-phase, 176-lot luxury motor home facility, Bella Terra Resort, in late August or early September near Gulf Shores, Ala. Just minutes from the white sand beaches of the Florida panhandle towns along the Intracoastal Waterway, Bella Terra will provide its RV lot owners resort style luxury. Instead of raggedy nine-hole miniature golf layouts and soda machines, Bella Terra offers poolside barbecues, Jacuzzis, a fitness center, well-appointed clubhouses and lavish amenities.

"There are many things that distinguish our luxury RV resort from that of another RV park, says Executive Vice President of Business Development Tripp Keber via e-mail. "Start with a hotel-resort platform reservation system and front desk check-in in a private gated community all managed by a full-time General Manager and Concierge. You have not Grand Clubhouse with a resort style pool, but two. Add to this, a consistent and predictable level of service like you would find at a major upscale hotel chain. Now you have the platform on which the Bella Terra resorts will successfully expand."

Sounds like a Ritz-Carlton for the free-wheeling (or high roller) set. Lots at Bella Terra are designed for Class A RV owners, the top-of-the-line vehicles that sell for as much as \$2 million (that's no misprint, folks!)

"We believe the market to be completely untapped," says Keber. "There is no consistency and quality of service even between the handful of high end, motor coach resorts that exist today. With tens of thousands of high-end motor coaches rolling down American's roads, this is probably the most underserved market segment of affluent travelers in American."

Grace Johnson and her husband, Gary, of Baton Rouge, La., "stumbled upon" Bella Terra after looking at other sites. "We wanted to buy a lot actually for a year now that was a resort style, luxury place," Grace says. "I didn't understand why Louisiana didn't have something like that. We've looked at several places that we thought were luxury resorts but when we saw them it was nothing more than a concrete slab. We are both anxious to be a part of a great outdoor resort."

Plus, the Johnsons, who have been RV fanatics for about four years, only have a 240-mile drive. "We didn't have the drive 1,000 miles and the security and all of that sealed it for us," says Grace Johnson, who admits her reluctance about becoming an RVer ("I fought it for a couple of years...but now I love it."). "I don't like going by plane anymore, I like to stop and go when I want to. If we're delayed it's because I want to be delayed and not because we're sitting on tarmac somewhere."

Chuck Smith, President of Sagebrush Realty Development, got the inspiration for the resort from his parents, who have been longtime motor coach enthusiasts.

"Having heard all of the stories and from time to time visited at several resorts, Chuck saw an opportunity for a market niche that was completely underserved," says Keber. "That is creating a family of lifestyle resorts catering to the high end, Class A motor coach owner."

As of early May, more than 60 percent of the phase 1 lots had been sold. The lots range from 2,876 square feet to 5,027 square feet and prices are from \$100,000 to \$225,000.

What distinguishes Bella Terra from other RV resorts, says Kelly Moore Robertson of Kidd Public Relations, is "most importantly, attention to detail and a high level of service. For those that travel — Bella Terra is the Ritz Carlton of RV resorts. For example, say a motor coach owner is arriving late on an empty stomach. A simple call to the concierge desk and dinner will be awaiting their arrival. Need laundry taken to the cleaners? A tee time booked? All this is available through the Bella Terra concierge team."

The Johnsons of Baton Rouge are champing at the bit to make the drive across Louisiana to southern Alabama. "We'll be using that a great deal," says Grace Johnson, "I cannot wait for that to open. Even if you're not far from home, it's got everything enjoy the luxury lifestyle and still be able to do work. I don't have to work from home. I've got mypc.com, so I get on the Internet and work from (Bella Terra)."

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Bella Terra

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