

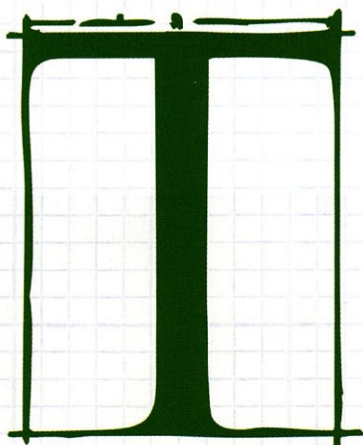
The Cottages at
SPRINGHOUSE FARM

The luxury cottages are equipped with a hot tub — a perfect place from which to enjoy the natural setting.

GREEN RETREAT

As the first U.S. member of EcoClub, an international eco-tourism organization, The Cottages at Springhouse Farm in western North Carolina promotes solitude and sustainability.

Written by *Jay Ahuja*



I tucked away in the woods of McDowell County, The Cottages at Springhouse Farm attracts couples for myriad reasons: anniversaries, honeymoons, birthdays, retreats from the kids, and, perhaps most often, a chance to simply “get away from it all.” Whatever the reason, once you’re here, a sense of solitude can wash over you in almost no time.

Settling in to your private bungalow, you realize that you’ve completely left behind the pace of your workaday lifestyle. Perhaps while flipping through the pages of a 1940s issue of *Life* magazine conveniently left on the coffee table for guests to peruse; or waking from a nap in the comfortable double-sheeted bed; or merely lounging with a book on the tall, hand-hewn rope bed set beside the wall-length living room windows, you come to fully understand it. There’s no TV blaring, not a hint of yard work going on, no traffic whizzing by, and nary a phone, computer, or PDA to connect you to the office.

Out on the back deck, soaking in the comfortable two-person hot tub without a soul around, stars vividly displayed overhead, you have no concern or idea what time it might be (For those who might enjoy a smoke on the deck or even in

the hot tub, a modest collection of fine cigars is available in each cottage). Chilling out after dinner, stoking a fire in the wood-burning stove, and discovering a favorite station on the cottage’s handy satellite radio, guests can easily get lost in their environs, utterly enjoying the company and conversation. An optional couples’ massage takes your “total immersion weekend” to another level, as two licensed massage therapists, Sherry and Carey, appear at a prearranged time with a pair of massage tables and deftly set up a veritable spa experience in the cottage (or, if you prefer, they’ll use the back deck). Moments after your massage, they’re gone, and you could very well not see another human being until checkout time.

SECLUDED LUXURY

With just six cottages spread out over 92 acres, Springhouse Farm may be the very definition of a singular destination. Greeted by Arthur and Zee Anne Campbell as we pull onto the property, Arthur hands us a loaf of fresh-baked bread, hops on his four-wheeler, and leads the way up a winding dirt road as we follow in our sedan. When my wife, Karen, and I planned our weekend, we had every intention of checking out some local attractions and enjoying a restaurant or two in nearby Lake Lure. Shortly after arriving at our nicely appointed cottage, that plan was quickly ditched, as we decide instead to leave the car parked, soak in our surroundings, and just unwind.

We brought along a cooler with beverages and snacks, but

Eco Smart: *The Cottages at*
SPRINGHOUSE FARM



No need to leave for breakfast: Each cabin stocks a supply of brown eggs, local honey, and fresh-baked bread.

also enjoy the fresh-baked bread, as well as the local honey and farm fresh brown eggs waiting in our cottage. Our first night, we opt to grill up some tasty, vacuum-packed, frozen steaks and stuffed potatoes that our hosts conveniently keep in their office. The cottage's Weber propane grill comes in handy. You may want to bring your own foil/plastic wrap for leftovers, but just about everything else is provided and the well-equipped kitchen is more than functional enough to prepare our traditional weekend breakfast of omelets and mimosas.

Given another day or two here, our borrowed fishing gear might have eventually left the trunk of the car, or we may have even pulled out the blanket and picnic basket to explore the view from the top of the property. Aside from a short walk to tour the circa-1826 farmhouse, its grounds and three ponds, we weren't particularly compelled to leave our cottage. Boredom never once rears its head and, if time and budget allow, we could easily spend an entire week here. If this sounds like a little slice of heaven to you, The Cottages at Springhouse Farm may be just what the doctor ordered. □



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ECO FRIENDLY — AND YOU CAN BRING YOUR DOG

The Cottages at Springhouse Farm have earned designation as the first United States member of EcoClub and is also an affiliate of the International Ecotourism Society. As such, they have restored two historic homes on the property, recycled downed trees to build furniture, floors, and cabinets in the cottages, and cut down no live hardwoods to clear the roads or make room for the cottages. The entire farm is a wildlife sanctuary (you may see deer, wild turkeys, and all sorts of small mammals and birds), but the owners do not allow hunting on the property and all fishing is catch-and-

release. Compact fluorescent light bulbs are used throughout the cottages and every effort has been taken to minimize the impact of tourism on the property (power lines are underground and a single well supplies fresh spring water to all the cottages).

Each cottage has central air, heat, ceiling fans, a hot tub, propane grill, fireplace or wood-burning stove, plenty of stacked firewood, and its own charm, so I won't presume to suggest one over the others. Your choice boils down to this: do you want a queen- or king-size bed? The Outrigger and Compleat

Angler units offer king-size beds, up-to-date furnishings, and slightly larger bathrooms. As you might expect, they cost a bit more.

If you are traveling with your dog, the Appalachian cottage is dog-friendly and can accommodate two couples, the only unit with that advantage. Two-day rentals are required on the weekends and a discount is offered for weeklong

rentals. Holidays and summertime generally tend to book early with weeklong rentals. □



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