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WORLD GOING ROUND? Thanks to curved walls, round homes are offering a square deal to buyers looking for something different. See page J10.



RECREATION & INVESTMENT PROPERTIES

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Good thing made better at resort

ROB PETKAU
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

When Bellstar Hotels and Resorts officials set out to reinvent the accommodations at Kokanee Springs Golf Resort in Crawford Lake, B.C., they did their homework.

"We travelled to North and South Carolina and studied 12 different top resorts," says Curt Jansen, director of resort real estate for Bellstar.

"We spent a lot of time and a lot of money. We took our architect, landscape architect, our marketing people, our CEO and our chairman of the board and we really studied what makes a good resort in that kind of setting."

But it was time and money well-spent, he says. "We came away with 1,000 notes, 1,000 pictures and some great ideas of how to make Kokanee Springs an ultimate destination resort for the Kootenays."

This level of attention to detail was warranted because Kokanee Springs is already a world-class golf course in a unique natural setting — and it deserves equally world-class accommodations, he says.

"Kokanee is a place that you can't duplicate. There are a lot of successful resorts out there, but there's no place in the Columbia Valley or the Okanagan Valley that comes close."

Designed by the legendary Norman Wood, the Kokanee Spring golf course opened in 1968 and has received awards from Travel + Leisure Magazine and Golf Digest.

"The course is very mature now, given that it's more than 40 years of age. It has three distinct landscapes and beautiful views of the Kokanee Glacier and the mountains," says Ed Romanowski, president and CEO of Bellstar.

"It's almost a ritual for many people to go there. Just a few days ago, a group was celebrating 30 years of going to Kokanee. They've dispersed to all over the world over the years, and they still come back every year to be together and catch up and play golf."

Preserving that tranquil, yet festive, atmosphere of Kokanee Springs — while providing luxurious, homey accommodations — is no easy task, but it is one Bellstar is up to, says Romanowski.

"We're developing a variety of accommodations, and we're trying to capture the character of the area with a longer-term view," he says. "We're not looking to build a project and get out."

The company started pre-selling the first phase of development this summer, with the official launch this month.

It will consist of a 12-unit villa building high on the first tee ridge, and six luxurious cottages set in the woodlands flanking the golf course.

Villas will range from 600 to 900 square feet, with cottages ranging



Courtesy, Bellstar Hotels and Resorts

One of the homes at the resort. Below, left: the floor plan for the unit.

from 986-square foot bungalows to 1,536-square-foot, loft-style homes.

"They'll all have exceptional views, and will be outfitted so they would make a wonderful home, as well as a vacation home. They'll be completely turn-key, with details right down to the wine glasses and knives and forks," says Jansen.

"Even though it's a rustic, Appalachian feel, the interiors are very upscale — granite countertops, stone fireplaces, beautiful fabrics and all the latest in electronics. It's resort comfortable in a cottage-in-the-woods setting."

The cottages will be outfitted with fireplaces that are open to both the living room and screened-in outdoor decks — one of the many ideas gleaned from the Carolina expedition, he notes.

Bellstar is offering full and fractional ownership. All owners will have the option of putting their units in the rental pool.

Three more villa buildings, and about a dozen more cottages, will follow in the next few years, after which the clubhouse — complete with pro shop, pool, fitness centre, hot tub, world-class restaurant, lounge and conference space — will be built.

Construction of the resort will occur in small stages to minimize disruption for golfing guests. The development is

also designed to complement nature, not intrude upon it.

"There's a good division of space between the cottages," says Jansen.

"You'll have to peer through the trees to notice there's a cottage off the fairway. You're not going to have to worry about breaking windows."

Kokanee Springs boasts nearly a kilometre of beach front on Kootenay Lake, which offers some of the best fishing in North America.

"Some of the world-record trout is caught out of Kootenay Lake. We'll have charter fishing as a dimension out there as well," says Jansen.

The resort is in the artisan community of Crawford Bay — home to a world-renowned broom-maker, glass blower and ornamental ironsmith. "I think many places strive to put this kind of artisan atmosphere in place, and in Crawford Bay it's evolved by itself," says Romanowski.

About an hour away — across on the world's largest free ferry — is the town of Nelson, a bustling community of 9,200 with all the amenities and stores city dwellers are used to.

"Kokanee Springs isn't the easiest place in the world to get to, but the drive here is something that's quite spectacular," says Romanowski. "Old-growth forests, the mountains, the lake — it's something you have to experience for yourself."

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ED ROMANOWSKI, BELLSTAR HOTELS AND RESORTS

