



The Serenbe Community is located just 32 miles south of Atlanta.



Blue-Eyed Daisy Bakeshop



A room at the Inn at Serenbe

## IF YOU GO

### The Inn at Serenbe

10950 Hutcheson Ferry Road

Palmetto, GA 30268

770-463-2622

www.serenbe.com

Rates start at \$140 per night.

### SUMMER EVENTS AT SERENBE

**Farmers' Markets** are held each Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon.

**Movie Night** starts at 9 p.m. in the Selborne Courtyard:

Sunday, July 22—"To Catch a Thief"

Bring a chair or blanket and pack a picnic.

**The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra** performs a free concert at Hutcheson Ferry Park on August 10 at 7:30 p.m. (gates open at 5 p.m.).

# THE ROAD TO SERENBE

Becoming a summer escape artist



A guest house on the 900-acre property, which includes two restaurants and a bakery

PHOTOS/COURTESY OF SERENBE

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

**H**ave you ever gone on vacation and imagined what it would be like to live there? Do real obstacles, like your need to earn a living, thwart the fantasy? Great news: If after spending time at the Inn at Serenbe you happen to fall in love with the area, you can purchase a place to live in the Community at Serenbe—and since it's located just 32 miles south of downtown Atlanta, odds are that you can keep the job you've already got.

The need to get away from a hectic Atlanta lifestyle is something Serenbe's founders, Marie and Steve Nygren, can relate to. When they discovered the property years ago, Nygren was running the Peasant restaurant group, Marie was managing the Women's Commerce Club and the couple was raising three young daughters in the Ansley Park neighborhood. "When your children are small you don't really want to take long trips," says Nygren. So they took short jaunts into the Georgia countryside. Upon discovering an old plantation near Palmetto that was for sale, Nygren recalls thinking, "Can you believe there's still open land this close to Atlanta?" The couple had no intention of buying it, but "three

months later, my wife gets back from a trip to Arizona and she's still thinking about that farm." In 1991, the Nygrens purchased the first 60 acres, along with the existing buildings.

"We started coming out on weekends," says Nygren. "That was all there was to it—we thought." But after listening to a friend bemoan the fact that he'd missed out on watching his children grow up, and then noticing the smog that hung over Atlanta as he was driving into the city, Nygren decided to make a drastic change: He sold his company and the house and moved to Palmetto. The couple began renovating the buildings, creating guest rooms and then, "We had more friends than we knew what to do with," he says. In time, they designated Serenbe as a bed-and-breakfast and later, with the addition of the Farmhouse at Serenbe restaurant, an inn. Nygren says the business grew as a natural evolution and not part of an overall business plan. Today, the Inn at Serenbe is "open every day of the year," says Nygren, with 18 guest rooms spread throughout five buildings. That's great news for any Atlantan in need of a quick restorative trip.

The main house is a restored 1905 farmhouse. It has seven guest rooms and a common sitting room. The room in which I stayed was decorated in a relaxing cream

color palate. The bed invited sleep with luxurious linens, plush pillows, fluffy blankets and a peaceful canopy—and was so comfy I overslept. Rooms are equipped with modern conveniences like a TV's with satellite and an Internet connection. Bathrooms have dual sinks and double showers.

Other accommodation options include a restored 1930s horse barn that has been converted into a three-bedroom, four-bath guest house with private screened porches. The two-bedroom Dogwood Cottage boasts a fireplace on the screen porch overlooking the small lake. The two-bedroom Magnolia Cottage has a fireplace in the living room. The four-bedroom Lake House has a large wraparound porch that overlooks the lake and pastures.

My ideal escape is the chance to curl up with a book next to the pool; maybe you prefer to hike several miles in search of waterfalls. Either way, Serenbe has us covered. Other recreational amenities include extensive gardens, a hot tub, a basketball court, croquet lawn, trampoline, fishing poles and canoes for the lake, three streams, and an on-site barn that houses more than 100 farm animals like goats, pigs, horses, calves, llamas and bunnies, all eager to be hand-fed. You can also schedule a hayride or a campfire for a marshmallow roast.

A Thursday through Sunday stay offers the chance to savor a meal at the Farmhouse at Serenbe—not to mention the Blue-Eyed Daisy Bakeshop and newly opened restaurant the Hil. The Farmhouse menu changes daily and is brief: There's a starter course, two meat entrée options (a vegetarian option can be requested when making a reservation) and dessert. The simple, elegant meals are the creations of Chef Tony Seichrist, who uses local, organic ingredients. "He's one of the finest young talents emerging," says Nygren. "He has such a natural sense of flavors, unencumbered. So many chefs at that age try doing a couple of steps too much and they complicate flavors. He has a pure sense. He's going to be one of the great chefs."

Well-rested and well-fed, why would you want to leave? Living here is now an option, thanks to the 900-acre live/work/play Community at Serenbe, which features three distinct neighborhoods within the rolling Chattahoochee Hill countryside. Environmental responsibility is among the core values of construction and so 70 percent of the property is protected as green space. And in such restful environs, with convenient access to parks, trails and amenities, where else would you go to escape the concrete jungle? **SP**