

*Gather around the fire ...*



Patio fire pits at River Dunes Village in eastern North Carolina extend outdoor enjoyment into a cool fall evening.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF RIVER DUNES VILLAGE

## campfire goes modern By Kate Sullivan

**G**one are the days of gathering around the campfire to sit back and relax in the warm glow of flickering flames — except, however, if you're at River Dunes Village near Oriental, where communal fire pits bind the waterfront community together.

Whether you're an overnight guest in one of the rental cottages or a permanent homeowner, River Dunes encourages outdoor living and communal activities.

It's all about feeling comfortable and at home in the

waterfront community, located at a junction of the Neuse River and Pamlico Sound, says Ed Mitchell, River Dunes' president.

"The community itself is just that — it's a community," Mitchell says. "It's built to be inviting 10 of 12 months out of the year." Being a boating community, water is the main draw for most River Dunes owners and visitors, as the area has 14 miles of coastline on the Intracoastal Waterway.

**"Go for the quiet comfort and warm welcome."**

But a little warmth goes a long way in bringing the River Dunes population together. With several outdoor fireplaces strategically placed around the property, visitors and homeowners alike have found cottages are laid out around a shared fire pit, and the community has several outdoor fireplaces around the property, giving people a convenient place to gather.

"We certainly have very nice club facilities, but we'll find that people come in to the Harbor Club, acquire a beverage, and instead of staying inside the Harbor Club they'll go outside to the fire pits." The simple act of congregating has fostered many long conversations, he explains, as neighbors debrief on the day's events or just shoot the breeze with friends, old and new.

"The combination of fire and water for comfort in the outdoors is kind of woven into the theme of the community," he says, noting the integral role the fire pits have played in bringing River Dunes people together.

But truth be told, River Dunes visitors are looking to escape the hectic pace of life a bit and strike a balance between quiet comfort and a warm welcome, which is a concept that has been incorporated into the community from the start.

"River Dunes is a place where you really can go and slow down and savor the moment," Mitchell notes. "It's amazing how the simple things in life are those that people are really comfortable with — it puts them at ease." □



### RENT YOUR OWN COASTAL COTTAGE

The cozy cottages of Boat House Row, as they're dubbed here at River Dunes, are designed for comfort. To get a feel for what it's like to live here, cozy up for the weekend in one of the cottages. One-, two-, or three-bedroom homes overlook Grace Harbor, and amenities include fireplaces, luxury bathrooms, and sunlit morning kitchens. Rates start at \$249 per night.

River Dunes Village • 290 East Harborside Road • Oriental (800) 975-9565

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