



Spanish Oaks resident Paul Laaksonen says the Bobby Weed-designed course compares favorably with any he's played.

Spanish Oaks

BEE CAVE, TEXAS



WHY PEOPLE ARE TALKING... This is luxury, low-density living just 20 minutes west of Austin, one of America's most vibrant cities. Spread over the community's 1,200 acres are just 500 home sites, ranging from spacious estates (one-half acre to more than 4 acres) to luxury villas (2,000-4300 square feet) and finished custom homes that start at \$1.5 million. The buzz centers on the amenities, from a catch-and-release fish camp to wakeboarding behind the community's private ski boat on

Lake Travis. A less tangible amenity is serenity: you can still go for a jog through an ancient pecan grove or walk in a meadow teeming with turkey and deer.

The 6,930-yard golf course was designed by Bobby Weed and has been praised as one of the best in the state.

HOMES: From \$750,000

HOME SITES: From \$275,000

CONTACT: 877-554-4628,

spanish-oaks.com

"There's a real small-town feel like Orange County had 20 years ago"

AND OTHER REASONS WHY WE LIVE HERE

WHY WE LOVE LIVING AT...

Spanish Oaks

PAUL AND SHERRI LAAKSONEN

A couple moves to Texas for business and stays for pleasure



The Laaksonens: Paul, Sherri, Mason and Morgan.



Water hazard: Mason works on his game in the backyard.

PAUL and Sherri Laaksonen arrived in Texas from Orange County, Calif, a year ago with their children. Mason, 8, and Morgan, 9. The couple looked at five properties before finding Spanish Oaks. "It was scary making the move," Sherri admits, "but it's so beautiful here and the people are nice. There's a real small-town feel. It feels like Orange County did 15 to 20 years ago."

HOW WE CHOSE SPANISH OAKS

"We looked at another Discovery Land Company property in Dallas, Vaquero, and I was impressed," says Paul. "I thought, 'My family could live in a community like this.'"

VALUE FOR OUR MONEY

"We got a 4,400-square-foot house with a pool

and landscaping for \$900,000. Now you can't do it for under \$1 million. A comparable home in California would cost \$3 million."

CHALLENGING GOLF

"I've played great courses in Hawaii and Southern California, and Spanish Oaks ranks with any of them," Paul says. "The service is the best thing. At the range, the guys come over and clean your clubs right away."

WHITE-GLOVE SERVICE

"One time there was a ladies' golf tournament and it was running late," Sherri says. "The club didn't want us to have to quit early to pick up our kids from school, so they sent over a fleet



The oak and granite center island is the hub of family activity in the kitchen.



The game room is Paul's favorite part of the house.

of Cadillac Escalades to pick the kids up."

THE LIFESTYLE

"We got a lifestyle we never could have done in California," Sherri says. "There's great schools, lots for the kids to do and we're only 15 minutes from great dining in Austin."

THE PLEASANT SURPRISE

"I was afraid it would be really hot, but it's not bad at all in the summer," Paul says. "I also thought Texas was flat with muddy ponds. It's not. The views are unique and beautiful."



The Laaksonen's 4,400-square-foot home cost just under \$1 million, including landscaping.



Paul relaxes in the double-height living room. He says a comparable home in California would have cost him \$3 million.



Mountaintop Golf and Lake Club

CASHIERS, N.C.

WHY PEOPLE ARE TALKING... This is Mayberry with money. With a postcard setting 4,100 feet up in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, Mountaintop even has a general store that serves up homemade ice cream. Opie and Andy, where are you?

This new community also has pedigree. It is the first project east of the Mississippi for Discovery Land Company, which has



established a track record of successful high-end communities in the West. There will be 251 estate-sized home sites (one-half acre to 5 acres), though buyers can also opt for one of 68 finished cabins close to the clubhouse. The developer's signature Outdoor Pursuits Program is a kid's dream and includes horseback riding and scavenger hunts. Next year the Mountain Lodge opens with a spa and a pool. Play began this past summer on the 7,004-yard, Tom Fazio-designed golf course.

HOMES: From \$1.5 million **HOME SITES:** From \$400,000
CONTACT: 866-743-7353, mountaintopgolfclub.com

WHAT THE NEIGHBORS SAY... "It's rare to find a place with beauty, service and amenities that's so family-friendly. I'm a real estate developer myself, so I know what goes into this. Usually when you have that combination, the place is stodgy and stuffy. At Mountaintop, you can't help but enjoy yourself."
— Charlie Tickle, who lives at Mountaintop with his wife, Barbara