

Lake Lanier - a new Legacy

Contributed by Eryn Austin

For many Georgians and residents of Gwinnett and Hall Counties, there are countless great memories attached to our very own backyard destination- Lake Lanier Islands Resort. We think back on summer days splashing around at the Beach & WaterPark, or having picnics with the family. We can close our eyes and see the illuminated deer leaping across the road during the Magical Nights of Lights. Some even remember having their first summer job at the Resort working at the Harbor or as a lifeguard at the Beach & WaterPark. Whatever the memory, Lake Lanier Islands Resort holds a special place in our hearts.

A New Day

Today, our favorite lake destination is experiencing a Renaissance. Once you pass through the gates and head on to the Islands, the excitement is buzzing like an electrical current through every amenity and employee. No stone is being left unturned during the renovation of the Resort. While much of the long term planning process for the renovation is already near completion, I would like to paint you a picture of the true scope and magnitude of the changes you will experience on your next visit (which I must recommend to be sooner than later!)

Georgia Island

The name Georgia Island is representative of what is soon to occupy the very first island. Right now, Georgia Island houses Presentation Pointe and the Front Gate. Amenities to come include a family hotel, comparable to a Hampton Inn, alongside the completely new indoor/outdoor Beach & WaterPark. Also in the plans is a flag plaza type roundabout with all of Georgia's past flags flying high in celebration of our rich heritage.

As you leave Georgia Island and pass through the gates, you will pass over the phenomenal Gateway Bridge. Evoking a feeling of being transported to another world, this bridge will boast massive stone columns and thick steel cables. You will probably find that you begin to feel that all-too-familiar anticipation as you cross the waters of Lake Sidney Lanier onto the next island- Legacy Island.

Legacy Island

The most significant differences that you are sure to notice are the widened roads and pedestrian pathways. Because the new Lake Lanier Islands Resort will be a complete resort destination with luxury and comfort in mind, guests will have the freedom to enjoy all parts of the Islands. Via large pedestrian corridors, children and parents can ride their bikes, drive the electric carts, or enjoy a stroll. Even better, you can have peace of mind that you and your family are safe, as there will be no at-grade crossing. Instead, you will cross main roads via small bridges or underpasses meant only for foot traffic. Emerald Pointe Hotel & Conference Center will soon be only a memory. A total renovation of the hotel is almost complete and the hotel will soon be renamed Legacy Lodge & Conference Center. Fashioned after the Great Lodges of America built at the turn of the 20th Century, Legacy Lodge is a luxurious and rustic retreat. With oversized stone columns, heavy timber trusses, and the large copper cupola, the new hotel celebrates the natural beauty of the lake and region. The lobby has been expanded with copper and timber accents, a stacked stone fireplace and plush furnishing that will beg for you to pause and relax. Peaceful guestrooms now contain luxury linens, wood and stone pieces and granite countertops. Even BullFrogs Bar and Grille has been expanded and redesigned with an enlarged indoor dining area, upgraded kitchen facility and a relaxed atmosphere complete with natural stone and timber. However, the modern life has not been ignored, as flat screen televisions and wireless Internet are located throughout the hotel.

Behind the hotel is a peaceful setting for weddings and special events, the Summer House Garden. Located at the water's edge with breathtaking views of the lake, this three-tiered gazebo, constructed of heavy timber and natural stone, accents the beauty of this natural setting.

Adjacent to the hotel are the new luxurious Legacy Villas. Also boasting the natural elements of Legacy Lodge, the Villas reflect the natural sanctuary of the lake while providing all of the comforts of a modern resort. Each beautiful villa contains 4,500 square feet of comfortable space. All six rooms are

separately keyed for privacy allowing guests to rent the entire villa or just one spacious room. Some of the lower level bedrooms include fireplaces and patios. On the top floor, two large executive King suites have common areas with stacked stone fireplaces and patios overlooking the lake.

Not to be forgotten are the rustic LakeHouses at Legacy. These 30 New England style LakeHouses feature two bedrooms each and allow you and your family to gather together with a full kitchen and large common room with a fieldstone fireplace. Outside on the back deck, you'll enjoy a Jacuzzi and a gas grill for a vacation barbecue.

Also on Legacy Island is the Emerald Pointe Golf Club, soon to be known as Legacy Golf Club. The course is being redesigned and renovated by local Atlanta golf course design firm, Billy Fuller Golf Design and Medalist Golf of Atlanta. The redesign of the course will create even more stunning views of Lake Lanier and will return to the Golden Era of golf. Some new features to be included are:

- Completely renovated greens
- Larger tee boxes
- New bunker design- Billy Bunkers
- Additional yardage to lengthen the course
- New concrete cart paths

The Golden Era design of the course will provide new challenges for experienced golfers, as well as providing an exceptional experience for the casual golfer. The course is scheduled to be complete by spring of 2009. Plans for Legacy Island also include new golf side villas, hillside cottages and a scenic chapel.

As you continue to head through the islands, you will recognize the site of the current Beach & WaterPark and Harbor Landing as you cross onto Pine Island.

Pine Island

Soon this island will bustle with energy. From golfers enjoying the newly renovated Pinelsle Golf Club, to guests heading out for all day cruises setting sail from the future yacht club, Pine Island is the place for the adventurers who visit the Resort. Plans for the island also include a beach club with restaurants, swimming pools and nearby accommodations at hillside cottages, golf side villas, and luxury guest villas.

The most significant difference on Pine Island currently is the absence of a well-known beacon on the horizon. More than 30 years after its doors opened, the era of the revered Pinelsle Hotel has come to an end. The long standing hotel was torn down to make way for a new luxury four-star hotel. "We are in final negotiations with potential partners for the hotel. In all of the scenarios, we're looking at an opening in the spring of 2011," Grier Todd, COO Lake Lanier Islands Resort said, "This is going to be an incredible addition...for the entire state of Georgia."

If golfing or sailing isn't your cup of tea, you will find some respite on the next island. For those needing a little peace of mind, Blue Ridge Island will be a piece of heaven.

Blue Ridge Island

Named for its superior view of the foothills of the Blue Ridge mountain range, this island is planned for many harmonious venues.

As far as accommodations go, there will be plenty of serene options from which to choose. A quaint and cozy Bed and Breakfast Inn is in the plans and will be nestled away at the water's edge. There are plans for a luxurious Boutique Hotel with spa and wellness center, sure to dazzle anyone looking for a tranquil getaway. Future plans also include beautiful hillside cottages, guest villas and restful retreat cabins.

Blue Ridge may not be an island for those seeking adventure, but with the upgraded road systems and easy to navigate roundabouts, guests can migrate from island to island taking advantage of all the great experiences to be found.

Destination Summer Fun

With all of the exciting changes currently underway at Lake Lanier Islands Resort, there is still no stopping all of the summer activities that families love to enjoy this time of year. The Beach & WaterPark is bustling with families from across the Southeast. The water's fine and ready for summer boaters to come and rent a ski or pontoon boat from Harbor Landing to bask in the sun. The Equestrian Center's horses are saddled up and ready to take riders on a trail ride around the shoreline and Pinelsle Golf Club's fairways are becoming greener every day.

A Lasting Memory

For all of us Islands lovers, this is a time of great anticipation and curiosity. The great people of Lake Lanier Islands Resort encourage those wanting a closer look to come experience first-hand the progress of the renovations. With much excitement, we all look forward to making more lasting and wonderful memories at the NEW Lake Lanier Islands Resort.