

LOCALS ONLY · REGION NO. 03

Highlands & Cashiers

Four thousand feet of cool summer air, a short building season, and the most concentrated collection of serious private clubs in the Southern mountains.

A field guide to 5 communities, each scored out of 100.
Reported by Damian Hall · Current to June 2026

THE BRIEF

Highlands & Cashiers, at a glance.

The Highlands-Cashiers plateau sits between thirty-five hundred and forty-seven hundred feet, which means summers that run ten degrees cooler than Atlanta and a seasonal-resident culture that empties out in winter. It is mountain country for people who could live anywhere and choose elevation, scarcity, and quiet.

These five clubs do not compete so much as specialize. One is golf and nothing else. One is a full Discovery Land ecosystem on a mountain lake. One trades on a century of history. One refunds most of your membership when you leave. And one has no golf at all, on purpose. A note on the numbers: plateau clubs guard their fee schedules, so where we cannot confirm a figure, we say so.

THE SCORECARD

Mountaintop Golf & Lake Club	FAZIO GOLF · LAKE GLENVILLE	88/100
Wade Hampton Golf Club	FAZIO GOLF · INVITATION ONLY	86/100
Old Edwards Club at Highlands Cove	TOM JACKSON GOLF · SPA	83/100
High Hampton	HISTORIC RESORT · GOLF · LAKE	82/100
Lonesome Valley	NO GOLF · BOX CANYON	79/100

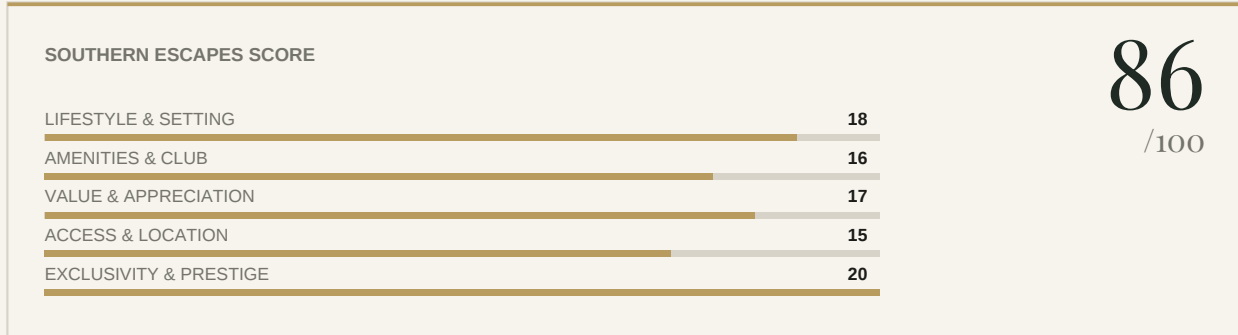
HOW THE SOUTHERN ESCAPES SCORE WORKS

Every community is rated out of 100 from five pillars worth twenty points each: Lifestyle & Setting, Amenities & Club, Value & Appreciation, Access & Location, and Exclusivity & Prestige. It is one editor's working opinion, not an appraisal. On this plateau of addresses, a 79 is not a failing grade.

No. 01

Wade Hampton Golf Club

The prestige anchor of the plateau, a top-thirty course in the world and a waiting list longer than the fairways.



Wade Hampton, just south of the Cashiers crossroads at thirty-six hundred feet, is golf and almost nothing else, and that is the appeal. The Tom Fazio course, carved from the old Hampton estate, ranks among the top thirty in the world; no hole has homes on both sides, and many have none at all. There is no pool and no tennis on site. Membership is member-owned, tied to property, and comes only by invitation, which makes it the hardest address on the plateau to enter.

Homes run from roughly \$800K to \$3M-plus, with premium golf-front estates above that, and lots from the low six figures. Initiation and dues are not published; treat any figure you see online as a ballpark to confirm with the club. For a serious golfer who wants the best course in the Southern mountains and minimal social-club noise, there is no substitute.

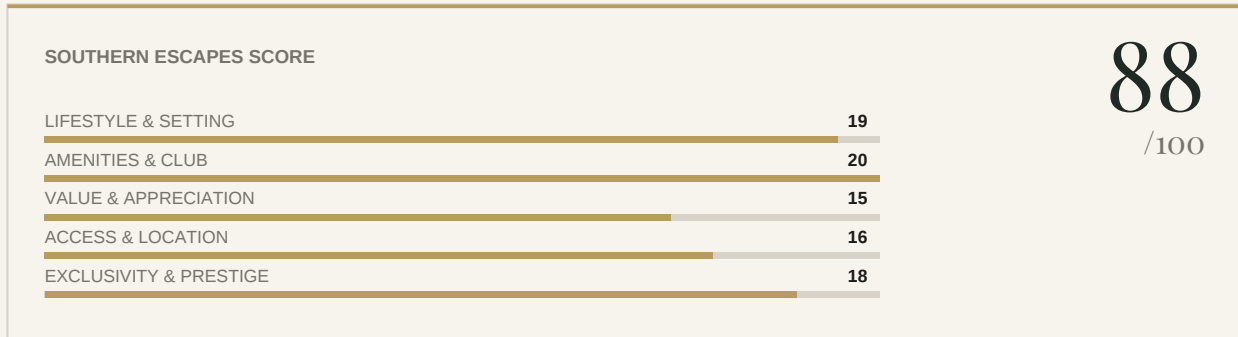
<p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$800K to \$3M+</p>	<p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Top-thirty Fazio course in the world</p>	<p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Invitation only; figures not public</p>
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<p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the finest courses anywhere, full stop • Truly private, member-owned, no resort traffic • Scarcity of roughly three hundred homes protects value 	<p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golf only; no pool, spa, or tennis on site • Entry requires both a purchase and an invitation • Seasonal, and a real mountain drive from any city
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No. 02

Mountaintop Golf & Lake Club

Discovery Land's plateau flagship, a Fazio course at 4,000 feet paired with a private club on the highest major lake in the East.



Mountaintop, between Highlands and Cashiers at four thousand feet, is the most complete amenity ecosystem on the plateau, run by Discovery Land Company. A Tom Fazio course, a fifty-six-thousand-square-foot lodge clubhouse, a spa, and a manned gatehouse sit alongside a Lake Club on Lake Glenville, the highest major lake east of the Rockies, with boats, paddleboards, and a waterfront pavilion. Golf and lake in one membership is the rare double here.

Homes run from about \$1M to \$5M, with lots from the mid-six figures. It carries the steepest combined initiation and dues of these five, and early 2026 brought modest price softening across the Cashiers submarket. For a family that wants a compound-grade property with the deepest amenity bench and the coolest summers on the plateau, the Discovery Land brand delivers.

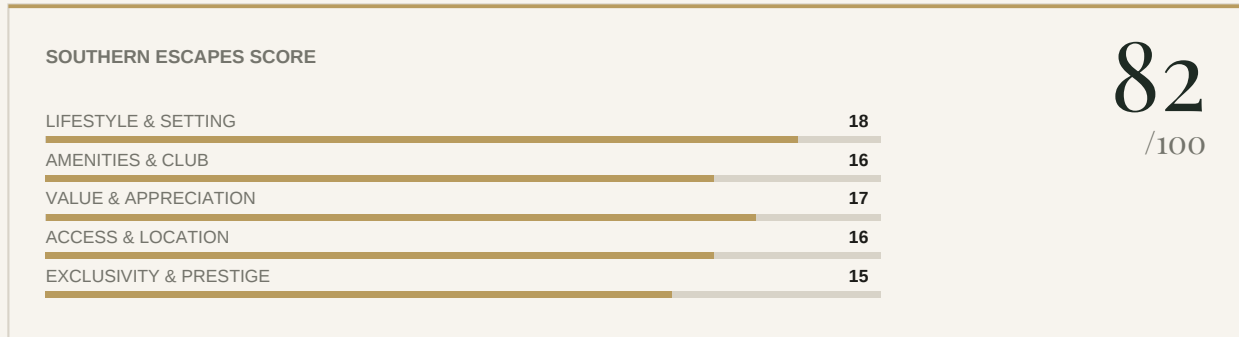
<p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$1M to \$5M</p>	<p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Fazio golf + Lake Glenville club</p>	<p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Equity, invitation; figures by inquiry</p>
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<p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most complete amenity stack on the plateau • Golf and a private mountain lake in one membership • Discovery Land operations and a manned gate 	<p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The steepest carrying cost of these five clubs • Some price softening noted in early 2026 • Membership and ownership are inseparable
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No. 03

High Hampton

A hundred-year-old mountain estate, comprehensively reborn, where a historic inn, a private lake, and a renovated course share 1,100 acres.



High Hampton, on Highway 107 in Cashiers at thirty-six hundred feet, carries the deepest provenance on the plateau, a National Register property that was a single family's mountain farm for ninety-five years. A 2017 acquisition and a renovation completed in 2021 restored the 1922 inn, reworked the golf course, and opened new homesites. The result is a hybrid: resort guests at the inn, club members, and residential owners sharing eleven hundred acres around Whiteside Mountain and a thirty-five-acre private lake, which gives it a year-round energy that purely private clubs lack.

Homes start lower than the plateau's gated clubs, from roughly \$600K into the seven figures, reflecting the resort-mixed character. Membership terms are not published. For a multigenerational family that values legacy and a Blackberry Farm sensibility over status signaling, and does not mind sharing the porch with inn guests, High Hampton is the story address here.

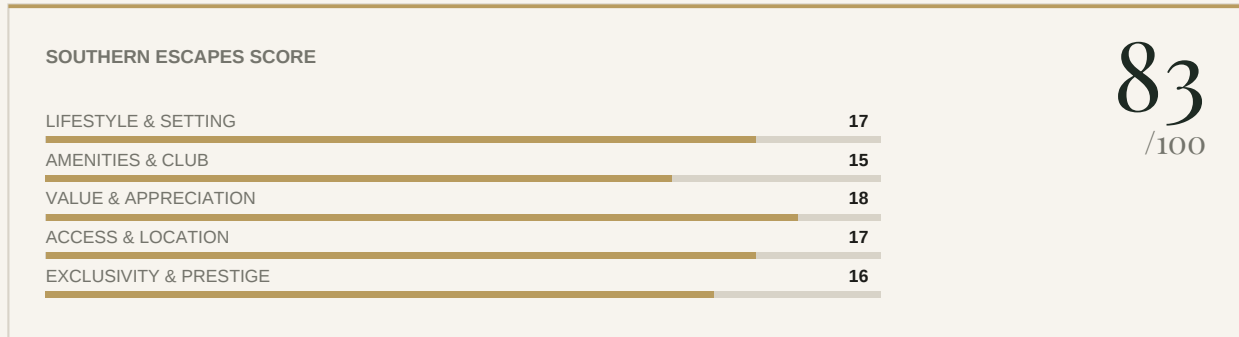
<p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$600K to \$3M+</p>	<p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Historic inn, private lake, renovated golf</p>	<p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Hybrid resort model; by inquiry</p>
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<p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The richest history and most acreage on the plateau • Inn and lake create real year-round life • Lower entry point than the gated clubs 	<p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still settling into its post-renovation identity • You share the property with hotel guests • Membership structure is less publicly defined
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No. 04

Old Edwards Club at Highlands Cove

The plateau's most buyer-friendly club, the highest elevation of the five, with an 80 percent equity refund and a Forbes spa in town.



Old Edwards Club sits at roughly forty-seven hundred feet, the highest of these five, which buys the coolest summers and the most dramatic ridgeline views. The four-hundred-acre gated community runs from condominiums to cottages to single-family homes, closer to walkable Highlands than the Cashiers clubs, and its membership ties to the Old Edwards Inn and Spa, a Forbes five-star property in the village. A Tom Jackson course earns Golf Digest recognition, and a generous family policy covers parents, children, and grandchildren under one membership.

The standout is structure: the club refunds eighty percent of the membership fee on exit, unusual on the plateau and genuinely buyer-protective. Specific real estate and fee figures are less transparent than peers and should be confirmed. For a buyer who wants Highlands village at the doorstep, a spa connection, and downside protection on the buy-in, this is the smart-money pick.

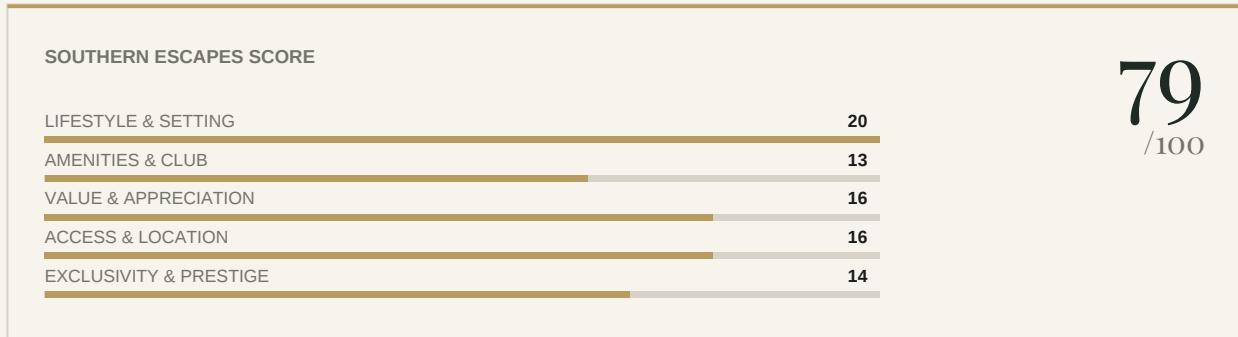
<p>HOMES</p> <p>Condos to ~\$3M+</p>	<p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Old Edwards Inn & Spa tie, 80% equity refund</p>	<p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Equity, partly refundable; by inquiry</p>
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<p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest elevation, coolest summers, best village access • Eighty percent equity refund is rare and protective • Forbes five-star spa connection in town 	<p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Jackson course carries less nameplate cachet • Real estate pricing is less transparent than peers • Smaller amenity bench than Mountaintop
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No. 05

Lonesome Valley

No golf, no pretense, just 800 acres inside the largest box canyon in the East and one of the South's best farm tables.



Lonesome Valley, two miles from the Cashiers crossroads in Sapphire, is the plateau's wildcard. It sits inside a granite box canyon, thousand-foot walls on three sides, with a strict Southern Appalachian architectural code, fifteen miles of private trails, a lake with a sandy beach, and roughly one hundred seventy homesites. There is no golf course at all. What there is instead is Canyon Kitchen, an open-air farm-to-table restaurant with a serious regional reputation, and Canyon Spa, which sources ingredients from the same farm.

Homes range widely, from lots near \$525K to custom estates above \$8M, with a fifty-percent equity contribution structure that is partly refundable on sale. The community is intimate and largely seasonal, with only a handful of full-time families. For the buyer who actively does not want a golf-and-club experience and wants the most distinctive natural setting on any of these pages, nothing compares.

<p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$525K to \$8M+</p>	<p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Box canyon, Canyon Kitchen, no golf</p>	<p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Equity, partly refundable; by inquiry</p>
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<p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A geologically singular box-canyon setting • Canyon Kitchen is a destination in its own right • The most affordable lot entry of these five 	<p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No golf, a dealbreaker for half the plateau pool • Thin full-time population; quiet shoulder seasons • Public restaurant and spa mean less seclusion
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Considering one of these addresses?

Before you tour a single home, an Advisory Conversation tells you which community actually fits the life you are building, and what the move is worth under the new Carolina tax math. Schedule one at calendly.com/damianhallgroup, or run the numbers yourself with the Tax Alpha Calculator at southernescapes.com.

The Southern Escapes Score is an editorial opinion, not an appraisal or investment rating. Price ranges, club fees, and market figures are estimates current to June 2026, drawn from sources believed reliable but not guaranteed, and they change. Confirm any figure with the community and your own advisors before acting on anything you read here.