

LOCALS ONLY · REGION NO. 06

Hilton Head & the Lowcountry

A 20,000-acre Montage sanctuary, the island's original resort, a car-free island reached only by ferry, and the private clubs where the golf runs from Nicklaus to Pete Dye.

A field guide to 6 communities, each scored out of 100.
Reported by Damian Hall · Current to June 2026

THE BRIEF

Hilton Head & the Lowcountry, at a glance.

The Lowcountry splits between Hilton Head Island, reached by a single main bridge, the Bluffton mainland, which avoids that bottleneck entirely, and Daufuskie Island, which has no bridge at all. All run hot and buggy June through September and shine in spring and fall, and all carry rising Beaufort County insurance costs, lower on the mainland than on the beachfront.

These six communities each own a clear story. One is the largest sanctuary on the map with a Montage. One is the island's original and still its most recognizable. One is a car-free island you reach only by boat. And three are private clubs where the differentiator is the golf, the harbour, or the river. Where a club publishes its initiation, we note it; where it does not, we say so.

THE SCORECARD

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| Palmetto Bluff | MONTAGE · NICKLAUS & COORE GOLF | 85/100 |
| Colleton River Club | NICKLAUS + DYE GOLF · RIVER | 84/100 |
| Sea Pines | PETE DYE GOLF · HARBOUR TOWN | 81/100 |
| Long Cove Club | PETE DYE GOLF · MEMBER-OWNED | 80/100 |
| Haig Point | REES JONES GOLF · FERRY-ONLY ISLAND | 79/100 |
| Wexford Plantation | LOCK HARBOUR · PALMER GOLF | 78/100 |

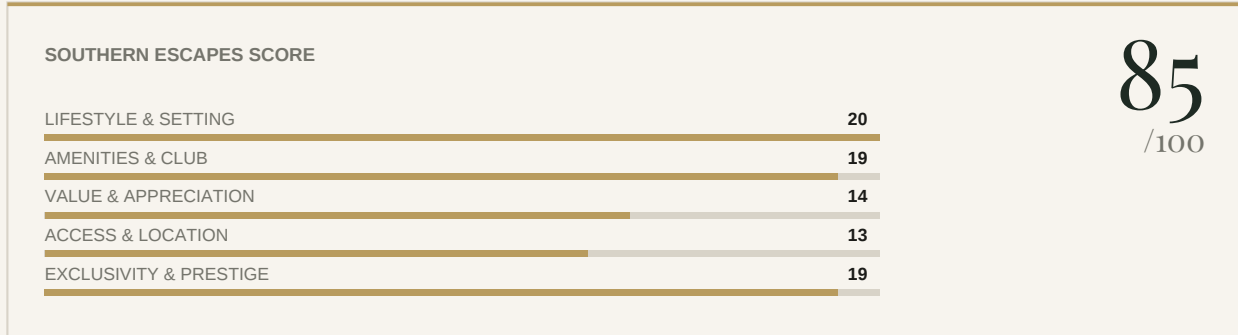
HOW THE SOUTHERN ESCAPES SCORE WORKS

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

Palmetto Bluff

A 20,000-acre Lowcountry sanctuary where a Forbes five-star resort, working stables, and three golf courses share more land than Manhattan.



Palmetto Bluff spans twenty thousand acres along the May River in Bluffton, organized into distinct villages and built in a deliberately anti-resort Lowcountry vernacular of moss, tidal creeks, and private docks. A Jack Nicklaus Signature course was joined in 2025 by a walkable Coore and Crenshaw layout, with a third course planned, and the Montage Palmetto Bluff anchors a spa, restaurants, and Longfield Stables. Residents kayak and fish off the dock with the same ease others play golf.

Entry starts around \$1.3M, with a median near \$2.75M and the high end into the teens. The club raised its top golf initiation to \$300,000 in 2025, a deliberate barrier, and the median has eased about twelve percent off the peak. There is no beach; it is river and marsh, thirty to forty minutes from the Hilton Head sand. For a buyer who wants land, nature, and a five-star layer with no bridge bottleneck, nothing in the Lowcountry matches the scope.

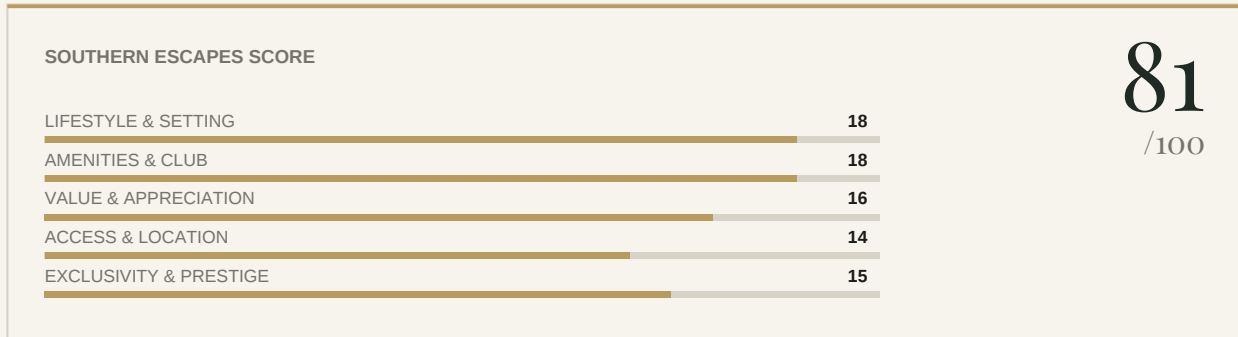
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| <p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$1.3M to teens</p> | <p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Montage, two-plus courses, equestrian, May River</p> | <p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Golf initiation to ~\$300K (2025)</p> |
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| <p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmatched scope: twenty thousand acres and a Montage • Two elite courses, with a third on the way • Mainland location, no island bridge bottleneck | <p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No beach; thirty to forty minutes to the sand • Top golf buy-in is now a steep \$300K • Median has softened and is still developing |
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No. 02

Sea Pines

Hilton Head's original masterplan and still its most recognizable address, where the PGA Tour plays every spring.



Sea Pines, developed starting in 1956, is the island landmark: five miles of private beach, more than twenty miles of leisure trails, and Harbour Town with its candy-striped lighthouse and yacht basin, arguably the most photographed scene in the state. Three Pete Dye courses, led by Harbour Town Golf Links and its annual RBC Heritage PGA Tour stop, give it a pedigree newer communities cannot manufacture, and its scale means everything from beachfront estates to golf cottages lives inside one gate.

Entry runs from around \$500K for older villas, with a median near \$905K and a luxury tier from \$2M into the teens, and an unusually low HOA. The catch is that it is not fully private: day-pass visitors and a heavy rental presence dilute the exclusivity, and the single island bridge means real summer traffic. Club membership is optional, a meaningful cost flexibility. For name recognition and beach access in one address, Sea Pines is the benchmark.

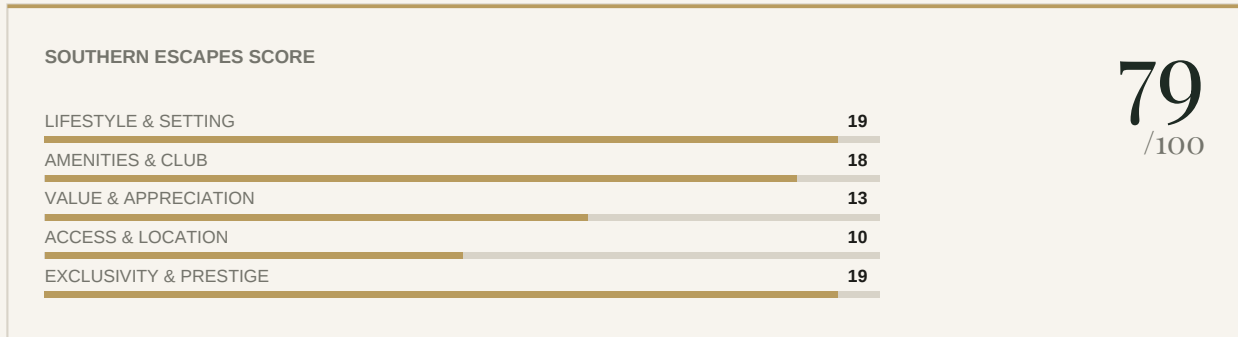
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| <p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$500K to teens</p> | <p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Three Pete Dye courses, Harbour Town, beach</p> | <p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Sea Pines CC optional; figures by inquiry</p> |
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| <p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five miles of beach plus Harbour Town in one gate • Pete Dye golf and an annual PGA Tour event • Optional club membership and a low HOA | <p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not fully private; day passes and rentals dilute it • Single island bridge means summer traffic • Beachfront insurance costs are elevated |
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No. 03

Haig Point

The Lowcountry's only car-free island address: no bridge, no public roads, reached by private ferry, where you trade the car for a golf cart at the dock.



Haig Point occupies the northern tip of Daufuskie Island, in Calibogue Sound between Hilton Head and Savannah, reachable only by the community's own private ferry. Fewer than three hundred homes sit across roughly one thousand acres, golf carts are the only vehicles, and the restored 1873 lighthouse anchors a property layered with Gullah Geechee heritage that gives Daufuskie a cultural depth the resort islands cannot manufacture. Days run to fishing and crabbing the Sound, riding at the equestrian center, and watching the sun set behind Harbour Town's lighthouse across the water.

A Rees Jones Signature course has earned national top-100 recognition, paired with an equestrian center, a deepwater marina, and a tennis program, and a member-approved investment of more than \$40 million is upgrading the golf and amenities through 2029. Homes run from roughly \$400K into the low seven figures, with interior lots that are inexpensive by luxury standards. The honest trade is the water: ferry dependence is total, and groceries, contractors, and even hurricane evacuation cross by boat, which is why the club stood up its own barge company to handle construction. For a buyer who treats the ferry as the price of genuine seclusion, nothing in the Lowcountry is more private.

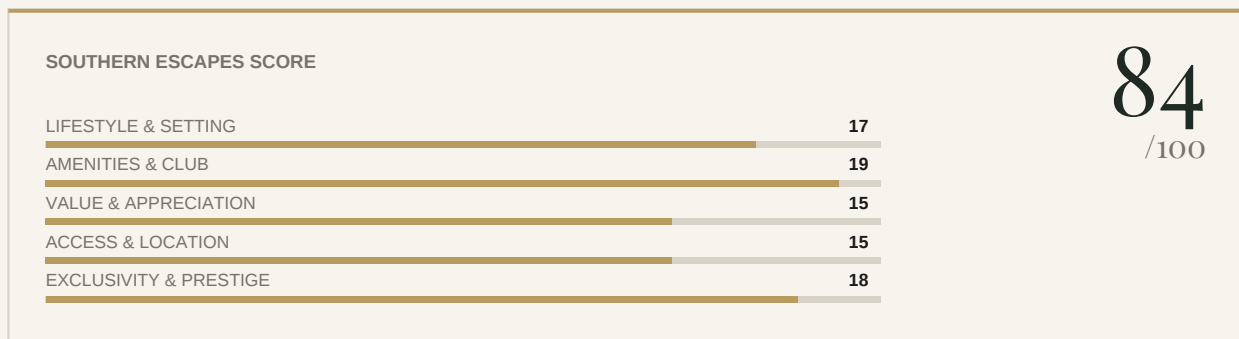
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| <p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$400K to low 7 figures</p> | <p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Top-100 Rees Jones golf, car-free island</p> | <p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>~\$65K initiation; dues by inquiry</p> |
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| <p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genuine car-free island life, fewer than three hundred homes • A top-100 Rees Jones course, equestrian center, and marina • A \$40M member-approved upgrade is underway through 2029 | <p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total ferry dependence; deliveries and evacuation cross by boat • POA and club dues have climbed steeply and keep rising • Thin resale liquidity and a small qualified-buyer pool |
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No. 04

Colleton River Club

The only Lowcountry club where Nicklaus and Pete Dye built on the same property, with seven miles of shoreline and a nature preserve next door.



Colleton River occupies one of the most dramatic sites in the Lowcountry, a fifteen-hundred-acre peninsula in Bluffton bounded by river and marsh, with a twelve-hundred-acre nature preserve forming a permanent buffer. Its calling card is golf: a Jack Nicklaus Signature course and a Pete Dye Signature course on the same property, one of the rarest dual-designer pairings in private-club America, plus a par-three course and deepwater dock access to the Intracoastal. Roughly five hundred twenty-five custom homes on large lots keep density low.

Lots start near \$350K and the median sits around \$2.15M. Membership is published and serious: a \$125,000 full initiation with annual dues near \$30,000, the steepest in the region, which buys deliberate scarcity. There is no beach, and the social scene is quieter than Palmetto Bluff. For a serious golfer who wants two elite, distinct courses on the mainland with no bridge risk, this is the strongest pure-golf address on the map.

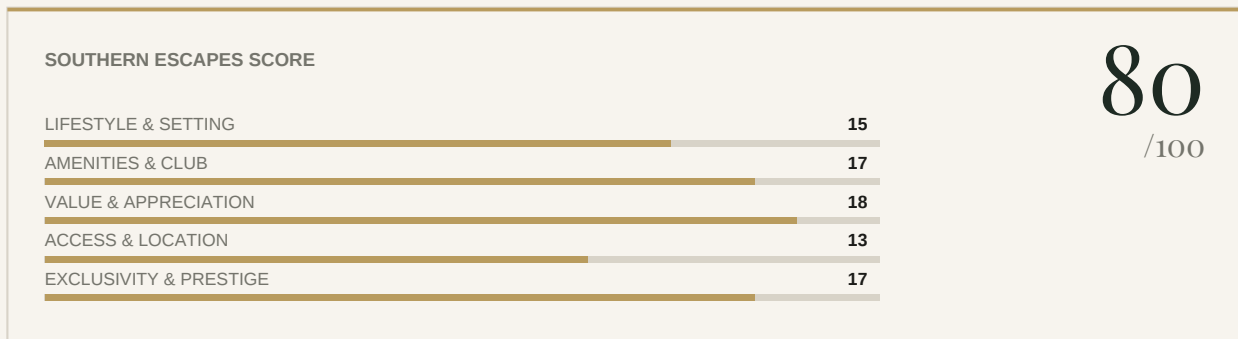
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| <p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$350K lots to \$2M+</p> | <p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Nicklaus + Pete Dye courses, ICW docks</p> | <p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>~\$125K initiation, ~\$30K dues</p> |
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| <p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strongest dual-course golf in the Lowcountry • Large lots, a nature preserve, deepwater access • Mainland location with no island bridge | <p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest annual dues in the region • No beach; a drive to the Hilton Head sand • Quieter, more sedate social scene |
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No. 05

Long Cove Club

Hilton Head's most members-only club, a top-100 Pete Dye course owned outright by the people who play it.



Long Cove sits on about six hundred acres on the island's south end, organized entirely around a Pete Dye course that has held a place among America's top hundred private layouts for three decades. Membership is mandatory and member-owned: no developer, no outside management, every owner a member, which makes for unusually tight social cohesion. Tennis, a pool, fitness, marina access, and clubhouse dining are all included in one annual figure with no outside play on the course.

The median runs near \$1.43M, with the strongest appreciation of these five communities, and the initiation recently stepped up to \$75,000 with all-in annual dues near \$21,000, a single predictable number that covers everything. There is no beach access from within the gate, and the community is small enough that amenity variety is limited. For a serious golfer who wants a top-100 course with zero resort traffic and a member-owned structure, it is a tight, appreciating market.

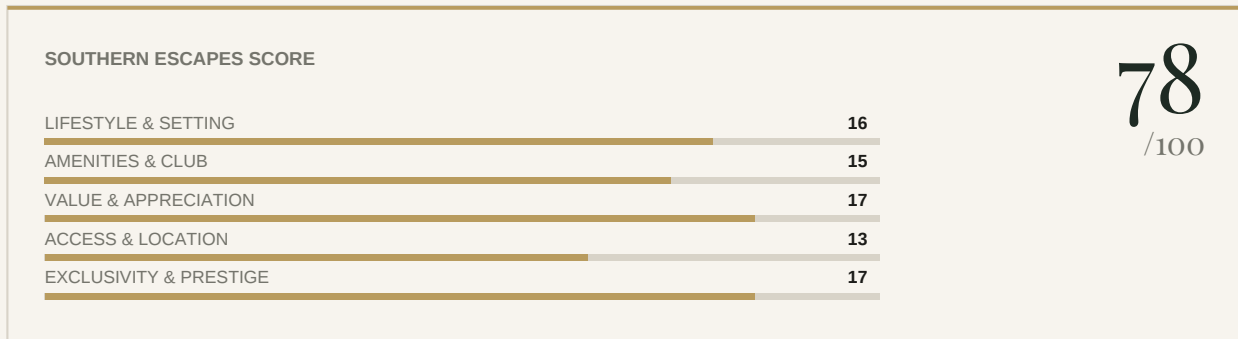
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| <p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$1.3M to \$3.5M+</p> | <p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Top-100 Pete Dye course, member-owned</p> | <p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>~\$75K initiation, all-in ~\$21K dues</p> |
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| <p>WHY LOCALS RATE IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A top-100 Pete Dye course with no outside play • Strongest price appreciation of these five • Member-owned, all-in dues, no developer agenda | <p>WHAT TO WEIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No beach access from inside the gate • Small community, lighter amenity variety • Island bridge dependence applies |
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No. 06

Wexford Plantation

Hilton Head's most unusual address, built around one of only three lock-controlled deepwater harbours on the East Coast.



Wexford's five hundred twenty-five acres center on a thirty-seven-acre inland harbour held at a constant eight-foot depth by a lock system, so members berth boats up to sixty-five feet regardless of the tide, a genuine rarity on the East Coast. An Arnold Palmer Signature course, tennis, and a nautical-themed clubhouse round it out, and a no-rental policy with mandatory membership keeps it owner-occupied and consistent.

Townhomes start near \$900K, golf-course homes run \$1.5M to \$2.5M, and the median sits around \$3.1M with strong recent appreciation. The structure is a \$70,000 initiation on a home purchase plus mandatory annual assessments near \$20,000. There is no beach inside the gate and the Palmer course sits a tier below the Dye and Nicklaus layouts nearby. For a boater who wants tide-proof deepwater access on the island with no rental churn, the lock harbour is the whole argument.

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| <p>HOMES</p> <p>~\$900K to \$15M+</p> | <p>THE DRAW</p> <p>Lock-controlled deepwater harbour, Palmer golf</p> | <p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>~\$70K initiation, ~\$20K assessments</p> |
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WHY LOCALS RATE IT

- A tide-proof lock harbour found almost nowhere else
- No rentals; consistent, owner-occupied community
- Strong recent price appreciation

WHAT TO WEIGH

- Palmer course is a tier below the Dye/Nicklaus peers
- No beach access within the community
- Island bridge dependence and a smaller social scene

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.