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### CONCIERGE LIVING

## Professional Pamperers Make Life a Cakewalk

By Julie Bennett

Concierge services at upscale properties do a lot more than make theater reservations and deliver room-service meals. They can also enhance your outdoor experience.

The services of Alpine Concierge at Stowe Mountain Lodge in Stowe, Vt., for instance, are so appealing that Ivy Zicarelli bought a condo there, just so she could take advantage of them.

Mrs. Zicarelli and her husband, a Manhattan dentist, already owned a vacation home in Stowe. "I have two young children," Mrs. Zicarelli says, "and I was always trudging across the parking lot to the ski lift, carrying three sets of skis. When I learned about the services available to owners, I bought a condo before the Stowe Mountain Lodge even started construction.

"Now I drive up to the Alpine Concierge tent and a valet parks my car. They keep all our ski equipment and the staff will even carry it to the lift for us. When we're finished, we sit in a lounge with leather couches and they serve the kids hot cocoa and fuss over them. And when we're ready to go, they warm up the car and bring it right to me. The services have changed my life. I'm happy to go to the mountain every day and we have a lot more time to ski," Mrs. Zicarelli says.

Jamie Cheng, co-founder and chief analyst for Halogen Guides in San Francisco, a company that provides printed and online resources for upmarket consumers, says many top ski properties offer similar services. "If you take a traditional week-long ski vacation, in your second home or a rented condo," Mr. Cheng says, "you spend the first day stocking up on groceries, checking your equipment and buying lift tickets, and the last day closing the place down. A concierge program allows you to enjoy all seven days, because when you show up the fridge is stocked and your skis are waxed and ready to hit the slopes."

"All I have to do is pack my briefcase and get on an airplane," says Mitchell Brown of Reisterstown, Md., the fractional owner of a three-bedroom unit at The Residences at The Chateaux in Deer Valley, Utah. "They pick us up at the airport and when we get to the resort, our clothes are in our rooms. The service is so unbelievable, it's almost embarrassing. One day I came in with a little rip in my ski pants. Someone from the concierge staff had it repaired and back to me that evening."

Such services are complimentary, but they aren't really free because developers and operators assess annual homeowner or club dues to defray concierge expenses, says John Melicharek, the Orlando, Fla.-based head of the hospitality industry practice at Baker & Hostetler, an international law firm. The whole-ownership units still available in the Stowe Mountain Lodge, which opens this spring, have three-bedrooms and sell for \$1.51 million, plus annual dues of \$11,000. The lodge



The Residences at The Chateaux in Deer Valley, Utah, (left) and Ho'olei on Maui, Hawaii, offer a wide range of concierge services.

also has 34 units it is selling in one-eighth fractional increments (each buyer can spend about six weeks there each year) at \$359,000 plus annual dues of \$8,500 for a two-bedroom; \$399,000 plus \$10,000 dues for a three-bedroom; and \$469,000 plus \$12,000 for a four-bedroom unit. All available units at The Chateaux are one-sixth fractionals, selling for \$356,000, plus \$11,948 in annual dues for a three-bedroom and \$440,000 plus \$14,792 in dues for a four-bedroom unit.

Ski resort concierge services continue after the snow has melted. Mr. Brown of Reisterstown, who is a private investor, says he and his wife and two teenage sons have used their unit eight times since buying it in 2006. "We love going in the summer, because the concierge staff also stores our mountain bikes, leads us on hikes and arranges for fly-fishing trips," he says.

It's always summer in Hawaii where Jim Hooper, director of operations at Ho'olei, a townhouse complex adjacent to the Grand Wailea resort on Maui, oversees a concierge staff of 15. Staff members design a personal activities itinerary for each arriving guest, Mr. Hooper says, and can schedule everything from reservations for the resort tennis courts to off-site adventures, for which guests pay a fee. Private surfing lessons, for example, cost \$140, while a swim with the "well-fed" sharks in a tank at the Maui Ocean Center costs \$199.

Ho'olei's 120 luxury units, some of which are still under construction, feature private elevators, two-level covered lanai with ocean views, three bedrooms and three and a half baths and sell for

\$3 million to \$4 million, plus monthly dues that start at about \$1,200. Ho'olei at Grand Wailea offers rental units with introductory rates starting at \$1,000 a night, Mr. Hooper says.

While many concierge services provide transportation to and from off-site activities, most of the owners of the 69 Residences at Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman, drive themselves during their stays in complimentary luxury cars. "All you have to do is choose a convertible, sedan or SUV," says Mary-Dale Alton, director of concierge services, "and

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pay for the gas." Prices at The Residences start at \$3.3 million for a three-bedroom unit and go up to \$44 million for a 20,000-square-foot penthouse that comes with a media room, an office, an art gallery, a wine cellar, six bedrooms, and a custom-designed Rolls-Royce Phantom. Annual homeowner dues range from \$17 a square foot for the smaller units and will go up to \$20 a square foot for the penthouse.

Bruce Williams, a grain trader from Burr Ridge, Ill., says he and his wife and three teenage sons use their two-bedroom condo at Grand Cayman

Residences six to eight times a year. "I also donate a week's stay there to a couple of charities [to be auctioned off] and like to send down friends and business associates," Mr. Williams says. "Each month I call the concierge desk to tell them who's coming and they take care of everything else, including the use of a boat with a captain, so my guests can snorkel at Sting Ray City."

Tennis magazine owner George Mackin, of Pacific Palisades, Calif., says he was so enamored by the concierge services that will be provided at a vacation home he purchased that's now being built in The Residences of Kapalua Bay in Hawaii, managed by Ritz-Carlton, that he bought a two-bedroom condo near Palm Springs with similar amenities. The Residences at the Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage, is still under construction, with one- and two-bedroom residential suites priced from \$795,000 to \$1.85 million, and monthly dues ranging from \$1,422 to \$3,140. When it opens in November, the desert resort will have a golf/tennis concierge, a hiking butler to plan and/or escort treks onto nearby trails and a constellation concierge, who will show guests the stars through a powerful roving telescope.

A concierge can even enhance outdoor activities in urban environments. Daniel DeVito directs a concierge staff of 20 who serve owners of the 64 residences in the Mandarin Oriental, New York, on a 24/7 basis. "We've been asked to find trainers," he says, "to go along with owners while they're running or biking through Central Park."

Now that's pampering.