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# Escape to the Great Outdoors

At **Graystones Preserve**, homeowners can enjoy all the benefits of a serene, secluded setting and a lifestyle they are unlikely to find anywhere else.

by **MATT COSENTINO**

**F**or residents of Philadelphia and New York, escaping the everyday hustle and bustle of city life to experience a natural outdoor paradise featuring a world-class trout stream, waterfalls, beautiful meadows, and bald eagles flying above would normally take at least half a day in the car or a flight to the other side of the country. Now they can get there in two hours or less—and stay for as long as they’d like.

Graystones Preserve, formerly a private fly-fishing club owned and operated by three generations of one family since 1934, is transitioning into a unique housing development in the heart of the Northeast Pennsylvania mountains. Homeowners will become stewards of a stunning property spanning 4,000 acres and surrounded by 62,000 acres of state forest.

“I do a lot of things in the business world, but this has been the most enjoyable, mostly because the property is just absolutely amazing,” says Mike Holland, the managing partner of the project. “Photos and videos do not do it justice. It’s hard to believe that this place even exists undeveloped so close to the two largest cities on the East Coast.”

Only 73 homesites are available—58 12-acre lots and 15 three-acre lots—and all of them are on the northern end of the preserve, meaning they come with 25-mile views of nothing but wilderness. No more lots will ever be added and none of the existing ones can be subdivided.

In fact, 2,541 of Graystones’ acres will be conserved through the Wildlands Conservancy. The idea, Holland explains, is to keep everything that makes the land so special in place, just the way he originally experienced it with his wife when his business partner first came to him with the proposal.

“When we pulled into the preserve, we were blown away,” he says. “We’re Vermonters, so we’re used to beautiful mountains and wilderness and lakes. We didn’t expect to see land that would impress us in Pennsylvania. ... We’re doing all we can so that it will stay the way we are delivering it to the buyers forever.”

About a third of the homesites have already been purchased, and those interested in building their dream vacation or retirement home, or making a permanent move right away, can arrange a tour with general manager John Henry or reach out to listing agent Lavinia Smerconish, a renowned Philadelphia Realtor from COMPASS Real Estate. She believes in the project so wholeheartedly that she and her husband bought a 12-acre lot themselves.

Featured home designs from three architectural firms—Lang Architecture, Archer & Buchanan Architecture, and Berglund Architects—are displayed on the Graystones website, [graystonespreserve.com](http://graystonespreserve.com).

“Buyers can choose whoever they want for an architect; we have just vetted these three who we really like and have different styles,”

Holland says. “They’ve been to the preserve several times and they really love the project, and they would love to be involved in designing people’s homes for them.”

The owners of the lots also own the rest of the preserve as common grounds of an HOA, and Graystones is not open to the public. The property boasts scenic biking and hiking trails, a five-acre boulder field left over from the last ice age when the glaciers receded, and a natural cold plunge to cool off on those hot summer days.

Amenities include a pool, a fitness center with brand-new equipment and an accompanying game room for the kids, 50,000-square-foot tended organic flower and vegetable garden for the sole benefit of lot owners, a tennis court and pickleball court, a six-person outdoor sauna from Europe, and 10 riverside suites with kitchens, living rooms, and bedrooms, for use by the owners or their guests, free of charge. Two hospitals, ski resorts, golf courses, restaurants, bars, and shops are located nearby.

“It’s really an unusual feeling when you’re in the middle of 4,000 acres, almost by yourself, and surrounded by 62,000 acres of state forest,” Holland says. “It’s good for your soul and you don’t want to leave. Some of our buyers have told us that they previously owned houses at the Jersey Shore, but they’ve just had enough of the crowds and the traffic. This is a great place to be secluded with your family while taking advantage of all the activities.” ■

A panoramic view of Graystones Preserve

## Graystones Preserve

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