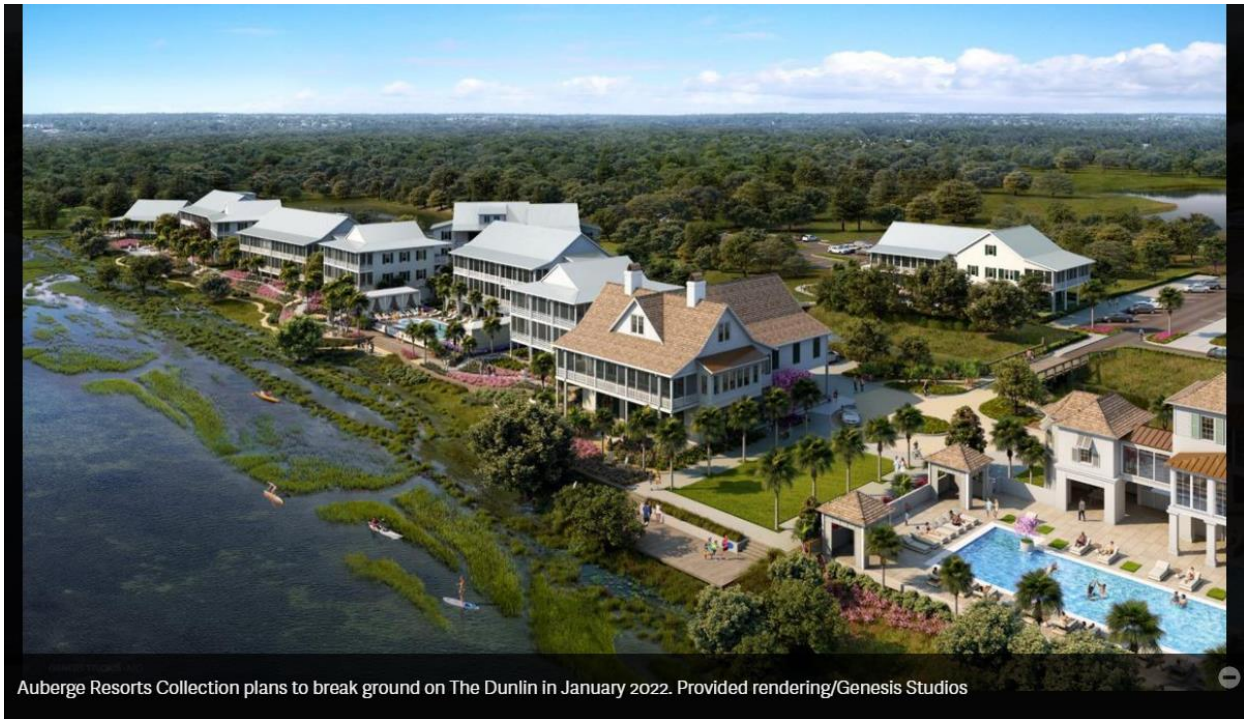


Auberge announces hotel plans at Kiawah River, breaking ground soon

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Auberge Resorts Collection plans to break ground on The Dunlin in January 2022. Provided rendering/Genesis Studios

A luxury hospitality group will be breaking ground soon on a new coastal getaway in the Charleston area. Auberge Resorts Collection will be opening a resort, called The Dunlin, at Kiawah River, a 2,000-acre master-planned community on Johns Island. The cost was not disclosed.

The hotel, which will include 72 “cottage-style” guestrooms and suites, 19 villas and a signature riverfront restaurant, is expected to open in 2024. Auberge and Kiawah River’s developer, The Beach Co. of Charleston, and the Houston-based venture capital firm McNair Interests, will break ground on the project in January. The resort will employ about 150 to 200 workers when completed.

Plans for the Kiawah River development have included a boutique hotel element from the beginning, said John Darby, CEO at The Beach Co.

The ownership wanted a hotel partner that would enhance what the riverfront community of houses, farmland and nature trails already has.

“When Auberge approached us, we felt like it was a perfect match,” Darby said.

Auberge has 22 existing resorts and multiple locations in the works, including The Dunlin and resorts in Florence, Italy; San Francisco and the Hudson Valley. This will be its first property in South Carolina.

“We love the Charleston market,” said Craig Reid, CEO at Auberge Resorts.



Noting recent accolades for the Mill Valley, Calif.-based operator — 18 Auberge properties got nods in Condé Nast Traveler’s last “World’s Best” awards, and a dozen were recognized in Travel + Leisure’s 2021 awards — McNair Interests CEO Cary McNair said in an announcement that The Dunlin should put Kiawah River on the map as a destination for an “adventurous, cosmopolitan clientele.”

Reid said the resort at Kiawah River will compete “at a national level” and will count properties like the Forbes Five Star-rated Montage Palmetto Bluff in Bluffton and the Sea Island Resort in Georgia among its direct competitors.

But, while the property will be high-end, it should feel laid-back, Darby said, matching the feel of the rest of the community.

Reid described the niche his firm is targeting with The Dunlin as “barefoot luxury.”

The design of the property overall is meant to be “consciously harmonious with the ecosystem” there on Johns Island, according to an announcement. Architect Robert Glazier was tapped to design it. The interiors, which are being done by Amanda Lindroth of Lindroth Design, will have a “whimsical” aesthetic that’s “island-inspired.”

Guest rooms will be large, between 450 to 650 square feet, Reid said, all with views of the river.

The 19 villas included as part of the resort will be sold, and the owners will have access to hotel amenities like housekeeping, concierge and spa services. Owners will likely put their properties in the rental pool when the residences aren’t being used, Reid said.

Resort guests will be able to visit a main lodge with a wraparound porch and a library lounge. The resort’s signature restaurant will overlook the river with an “expansive outdoor deck.”

Other hotel amenities will include a full-service spa, a pool with cabanas and a 10,000-square foot indoor-outdoor event venue.

Already now, Kiawah River is a popular choice for weddings, Darby said. With the new event capacity coming at The Dunlin, he predicted it will become “one of the top destination wedding locations in the Southeast, if not the country.”

A variety of outdoor activities will be offered, including fly fishing, crabbing and boating excursions. Guests will also be able to walk nature trails and visit the community’s working farm.



The Dunlin, Auberge Resorts Collection, will be located in the Kiawah River development. Provided rendering/Genesis Studios

Bird-watching at Kiawah River is “spectacular,” Darby said, so an avian-inspired name felt fitting for the hotel. A dunlin is a little brown shorebird in the sandpiper family.

The property has been in the planning stages for a few years now, and with a fully-formed concept, a design and financing, construction is set to start soon.

United Bank, which two years ago [bought out the second-biggest bank based in South Carolina](#), will provide construction financing for the hotel.

By the time The Dunlin opens in 2024, between 400 and 500 homes are expected to be built at Kiawah River, Darby said. Eventually there could be as many as 1,000 housing units in the development.

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