

# A Home for Life



**With 32 new apartments, extensive leisure facilities and beautiful surrounding countryside, St George's Park is a community village offering a unique home for life.**

I have driven past St George's Park in Ditchling countless times; now I was entering the expansive landscaped grounds, about to discover what makes this village for the over 60's so unique.

I was greeted by Marketing Director Philip Smith. St George's is owned and managed by the charity Augustinian Living and Philip explained the advantages this can hold to any potential newcomer. "The apartments for sale are lifetime homes, fully adaptable for future changes," he told me. Residents can be assured that St George's can never be sold to a commercial developer as it is specifically prohibited within the planning approval. Nuns have been caring for people on this site since 1866 when they settled here from Belgium and the ethos is one of providing safe, independent living in an area of incomparable natural beauty.

32 new apartments are being built off plan. Half have already been sold, the majority having two spacious bedrooms, ideal for couples

downsizing from large houses. I was surprised at the space; 1,323 square feet for the largest apartment which is easily double the size of a standard city two bed. The smallest apartment is half this size; more than generous for a single person wanting just one bedroom. When the new apartment buildings are finished, which is due by November, St George's will be home to some 330 people – small enough to make a community but large enough to feel eclectic.

The facilities will be second to none; a 14m swimming pool with sauna and Jacuzzi, fully equipped gym, two games rooms, hobby room and a therapies room. A large communal restaurant and bar are up and running now along with a concert hall, library, indoor tennis and a pool room. The

restaurant, boasting a lovely green outlook, serves a delicious menu. Many residents prefer to eat together than cook separately and so enjoy the lively conversation that flows around food and wine.

A sense of community is perhaps

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Residents have access to numerous activities, including gardening in the allotment and fishing in the picturesque lake

the most important attribute of life at St George's. People know their neighbours, make lifetime friends and most importantly, are literally a moments walk from one another. This is country living without the isolation that can often accompany the rural dream. There are daily activities that range from poetry, line dancing, painting, cribbage and mahjong to name but a few. There is an active choir and numerous physical activities including bowls on a purpose built green and a croquet lawn. An 81 year old resident told me, "I play short tennis, go line dancing, paint and enjoy walking...I also share an allotment with my friend."

If someone simply wishes to enjoy time on their own in nature, the 250 acre grounds are home to wildlife and include an extensive woodland and a beautiful 3 acre lake in which residents can fish. Spring bluebells and rare orchids dot certain areas that are designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and the wildfowl that inhabit the lakes and surrounding areas are also protected. The stunning setting of St George's prompted one resident to comment, "the rural location with its lakes, fields and farm animals was so appealing...and the chance to have an allotment meant that we didn't look back." With the arts and crafts village of Ditchling on the doorstep and the curving South Downs peeping enticingly across open fields, this is the place for comfortable rural living yet it lies only an hour from London by train and Gatwick is half that distance. Philip told me that some residents keep a second home in the sun for winter and can lock up early in the morning and be sipping a beer in Spain by lunchtime!

Although there are parking spaces available, many residents have realised they don't need their own transport, preferring to use the 'Pay as you go' car club which allows the booking of a car from

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an hour to several days. A private minibus runs to Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath and there is a bus stop directly outside the entrance offering links to Brighton and Lewes.

There is so much happening within St George's that it's rarely necessary to look outside for entertainment or recreation. A sense of belonging seems to quickly settle on new residents; one lady said, "I don't think I've ever felt alone since I've been here, there's always someone to talk to, go around with, eat with...there's so much going on." Another lady commented that "when you buy at St George's you invest in a new lease of life, you instantly become a member of a bustling community." Many residents bring their pets with them when they move to St George's; the grounds are a dog walker's paradise and the Park is surrounded by footpaths and close to the South Downs Way.

Apartments in this award winning development sell quickly; there is a marketing suite where potential residents can view the new accommodation and ask the many questions they are sure to have before making such an important life change. If you are of retirement age and seeking to make your home within a safe, open and

active community, St George's is likely to exceed your expectations. A happy home and a sense of belonging are deeply necessary to our health and wellbeing and here, they exist in abundance. ■

#### ST GEORGE'S PARK

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