SUNSHINE STATE
COMPANY

FLORIDA'S 7 BEST BEACH TOWNS

THE 2026 RELOCATION GUIDE

Seven incredible beach towns.
Seven different lifestyles.
Find the one that fits yours.



FLORIDA BEACH LIVING

REAL INSIGHTS.
REAL NUMBERS.
REAL FLORIDA.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Start with the fit, not the town

These towns were chosen for range, not ranking — there is no number one. A town can be objectively wonderful and completely wrong for you: wrong coast, wrong price, wrong distance from an airport, wrong amount of activity on a Tuesday in July. So the goal was to cover the whole state and every price posture, then be specific about who each place actually serves. Two ideas run through all seven write-ups, and they are worth naming up front.

IDEA ONE

Visiting and living are different products. Visiting a beach town, you want energy and easy public access. Homesteading there more than half the year, that same access means crowds outside your door every weekend. Several towns here are on the list because they solve the second case.

IDEA TWO

Some prices reflect a bias rather than a fact. Reputations lag reality by years. When a town changes materially and the market is still pricing the old story, that gap is the opportunity — and it closes.

A note on the numbers

Every price here is a **median** — the middle of a mixed bag. It blends condos with single-family, waterfront with inland, new construction with 1970s cottages. That makes medians excellent for comparing towns to each other and unreliable for predicting what *your* house will cost. Treat them as the start of a conversation, not the answer.

What is in here

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THE SHORT VERSION

All seven at a glance

Scan this page, pick the two or three that could plausibly work for your coast and budget, then read those write-ups closely.

	TOWN	WHERE IT SITS	COAST	MEDIAN	STRONGEST FOR
1	**Amelia Island**	Far northeast, at the Georgia line	Atlantic	—	History and character with real city access
2	**Venice**	45 min south of Sarasota	Gulf	**Under $400K**	Value, new construction, beach proximity
3	**Delray Beach**	Between Boca Raton and West Palm	Atlantic	**$342K**	Walkable downtown energy at a fair number
4	**Indian Rocks Beach**	6 mi south of Clearwater	Gulf	**$742K**	Quiet coastal life inside a major metro
5	**Seaside**	The 30A corridor, panhandle	Gulf	**~$900K**	Design, walkability, a true town center
6	**Anna Maria Island**	North tip of the Sarasota barrier islands	Gulf	—	Low-rise, low-key, old-Florida character
7	**Vanderbilt Beach**	North Naples, into Bonita and Estero	Gulf	—	Naples quality without the Naples ceiling

Medians are the figures cited in the video (August 2026); a dash means no median was quoted on camera.

Orienting yourself: six stretches of coast

Florida is not one coastal market. The gaps between these regions are bigger than the gaps between towns inside them — get the region right first.

NORTHEAST ATLANTIC

Amelia Island, Jacksonville, St. Augustine. History, real seasons, cooler water.

TAMPA BAY

Indian Rocks Beach, Clearwater, St. Pete. The strongest big-city economy on the coast.

SOUTHWEST / NAPLES

Vanderbilt Beach, Bonita, Estero, Marco. Highest-end product; everything ends below Marco.

SOUTHEAST ATLANTIC

Delray, Boca, West Palm, Miami. Dense, urban, walkable, busy year-round.

SARASOTA & MANATEE

Anna Maria Island, Siesta Key, Venice. The classic relocation belt — quartz sand and arts.

THE PANHANDLE

Seaside and the 30A corridor. The best design and sand, the most weather exposure.

1 Amelia Island

NASSAU COUNTY • ATLANTIC COAST • FAR NORTHEAST FLORIDA

Go as far northeast as the state allows — you are hugging the southern border of Georgia and nearly out of Florida. What you get is a blend that does not exist anywhere else on the coast: something close to Savannah married to Charleston and dropped inside the Sunshine State.

COAST	TO JACKSONVILLE	CHARACTER
Atlantic	**~30 min**	**Historic**

Why it makes the list

- **It looks in person the way it looks online.** That sounds like a low bar. It is not. Plenty of Florida coastal towns photograph better than they live, and this one holds up the way 30A holds up in the panhandle.
- **Genuinely charming and walkable.** A historic downtown core with real texture to it, rather than a strip of rebuilt retail.
- **Serious access for a small town.** Roughly 30 minutes to Jacksonville, one of the largest cities in the contiguous United States — which means an airport, hospitals, and an actual job market.
- **Day trips in every direction.** About an hour and a half above St. Augustine, the oldest continuously inhabited city in the country, and around two hours from Gainesville. Everything in southern Georgia is open to you too.

THE WAY TO THINK ABOUT IT

This town is a peacock. If the blend is right for you, there is no substitute for it in the state and it feels like the dream. If you are cross-shopping it against the Gulf coast on sand and water color alone, it will lose a comparison it was never trying to enter.

The honest trade-offs

- This is the most *different* town on the list. It is more unlike the rest of coastal Florida than it is like it, and that cuts both ways.
- If your mental image of Florida is clear Gulf water and white quartz sand, the northern Atlantic will not deliver it. Different water, different sand, cooler shoulder seasons.
- It is a small market. Inventory that matches a specific wish list may simply not be there in the month you are looking.

WHO IT FITS — Buyers who want history, architecture, and four real seasons of coastal charm — and who want a major city and airport within half an hour rather than two.

2 Venice

SARASOTA COUNTY • GULF COAST • 45 MIN SOUTH OF SARASOTA

The 2026 story here is a town stepping out of Sarasota's shadow. Venice sits 45 minutes below the belle of the ball and mirrors it in most of the ways that matter — coastal downtown, beaches, self-contained — but spent decades being treated as the junior version.

MEDIAN	BEACHES	TO FOUR BEACHES
Under $400K	**Four**	**Under 18 min**

Why it makes the list

- **Four separate beaches** in the immediate area, including the only dog beach in the county — plus a historic Venice Island downtown that feels like a smaller Siesta Key and is lovely on its own terms.
- **It feels beachier than its neighbors, because it is.** The rest of the area is separated from the water by a wide stretch of barrier islands. Here that separation mostly is not there, so you can catch the coastal breeze from almost anywhere in town.
- **Wellen Park.** A master-planned community of 25-plus neighborhoods, essentially all new construction, sitting under 18 minutes from four beaches. Close to unheard of — coastal land got built first everywhere, so new construction almost always means moving inland to where the land is.
- **A wider corridor than the name suggests.** Past Osprey and Nokomis, Venice runs together with northwestern Englewood and western North Port, which gives you real optionality on price and product.

WHY THIS ONE GETS A LONGER ENTRY

The change landed in roughly the last 24 to 36 months and the market still appears to be pricing the old bias. Four beaches, a historic coastal downtown, and thousands of new homes inside 18 minutes of the water, at a median under $400,000, is more unusual than it sounds.

The honest trade-offs

- Growth brings growth. Construction traffic and busier corridors are part of the deal right now.
- It is less established than Sarasota proper — a settled arts and dining scene is still north of you.
- The recency of the change means some of the upside is a thesis, not a certainty.

WHO IT FITS — Value-focused buyers, remote workers, and empty-nesters who want new construction and beach proximity in the same purchase, and who do not need big-city economics on their doorstep.

3 Delray Beach

PALM BEACH COUNTY • ATLANTIC COAST • SOUTH FLORIDA

Not a sleepy beach town, and not quite Miami. Delray sits on the Atlantic between Boca Raton and West Palm Beach, which puts real southeast-Florida energy within reach without asking you to live inside it.

MEDIAN	COAST	DOWNTOWN
$342K	**Atlantic**	**Walkable**

Why it makes the list

- **A downtown that is actually hopping** — restaurants, nightlife, and foot traffic that does not switch off after season.
- **A real arts district** layered on top of the beach, which is a rarer combination in Florida than you would expect.
- **The widest housing mix on this list.** Coastal condominiums, relatively affordable new construction, townhomes, and multifamily all coexist here, so the town can meet several very different budgets.
- **The number is competitive.** At a $342,000 median as of August 2026, it compares favorably to almost anywhere southwest in the state, or along the Atlantic from Miami up to Jacksonville.

The honest trade-offs

- That median is mix-driven. A lot of attainable condo inventory pulls it down; single-family near the water is a different conversation entirely.
- Density and season. This is southeast Florida — traffic, crowds, and winter population swings come with the address.
- If quiet is your first priority, the energy that makes Delray appealing will work against you.

WHO IT FITS — Younger buyers and professionals, and anyone who wants nightlife, art, and a walkable core more than they want seclusion. Worth a look purely as a thought exercise even if South Florida was not on your list.

4 Indian Rocks Beach

PINELLAS COUNTY • GULF COAST • TAMPA BAY AREA

One of my personal favorites, and the clearest example on this list of residential coastal living tucked inside a big city. It sits about six miles below Clearwater and roughly 13 miles above St. Pete Beach, with the whole Tampa Bay metro behind it.

MEDIAN	TO DOWNTOWN ST. PETE	TO DOWNTOWN TAMPA
$742K	**~25 min**	**~35 min**

Why it makes the list

- **Two downtowns on call.** About 25 minutes to downtown St. Pete on the bay side, and roughly 35 minutes to downtown Tampa — where the Bucs, the Lightning, most of the entertainment, and a lot of the employment sit.
- **It solves the resident problem, not the visitor problem.** Yes, there is public beach access. No, it is not built to invite the masses in a meaningful way. That distinction is the entire point of the town.
- **Tampa Bay is, in my opinion, the best big city in the state** — and this gives you a quiet escape with all of it available whenever you want it.
- **You will not run out of beaches to visit.** From Marco Island at the southern tip, before the Everglades, all the way up through Clearwater Beach and Caladesi Island, the Gulf coast options are effectively endless.

The honest trade-offs

- **It is a pocket.** That is the caveat, and it is a real one. If you commute every day, you will feel the geography — not on a vacation week, but absolutely over a year of living there.
- The $742,000 trailing-twelve-month median is a genuine step up from the value plays on this list.
- Small-town inventory inside a large metro means competition for the good listings.

WHO IT FITS — Homesteaders and remote workers who want a quiet residential beach street more than 50% of the year, with metro amenities on demand. Less ideal if you are driving to an office daily.

5 Seaside

WALTON COUNTY • GULF COAST • THE 30A CORRIDOR

My new-old beach town, for lack of a better description, and one of the most unique places you can visit in the state. Seaside is one town among a strip of them along the 30A corridor in the panhandle — and unlike almost everywhere else on this list, it was built from scratch on purpose.

MEDIAN	DESIGN	GETTING AROUND
~$900K	**New urbanism**	**Walk / bike**

Why it makes the list

- **A town built to a philosophy.** As I understand the history, a large swath of family-owned land became a project to recreate the kind of place the developer remembered vacationing in as a kid — built under the principles of new urbanism.
- **Designed for walking and biking before driving.** Not retrofitted for it. Designed for it.
- **Architectural coherence.** The symmetry of the homes and the way they gather around a single communal downtown is the thing people remember, and it is why the place photographs the way it does.
- **The Hamptons of Florida.** Very social, quaint, and still recognizably southern.
- **The panhandle itself is underrated.** Historically, Southwest Florida residents had their own beaches and never went, and the panhandle drew Texas, Alabama, and Mississippi instead. That is changing — which makes this worth a look even just as a vacation destination.

The honest trade-offs

- **Scarcity.** There is a fixed amount of this, and no more is being made.
- **A heavy rental base.** Many homes are owned as annual rental businesses, which changes the texture of the neighborhood year-round.
- **Price.** The median came in around $900,000, and depending on how you slice the data that may be the bullish read.
- **Hurricanes and low-lying land** are the honest structural caveat for the whole panhandle.

WHO IT FITS — Design-minded buyers who want a real town center and a walkable, social daily life, and who are comfortable with a second-home price point and a rental-heavy neighborhood.

6 Anna Maria Island

MANATEE COUNTY • GULF COAST • GREATER SARASOTA

Locationally, this is the northernmost tip of the barrier islands in the greater Sarasota area. Greater Sarasota spans two counties — Sarasota and Manatee above it — and this is as far north as you can go before you fall off into the water and cross the bridge toward St. Pete.

COAST	HEIGHT LIMITS	SAND
Gulf	**No high-rises**	**Quartz white**

Why it makes the list

- **An oasis created by geography.** The island's shape and position make it a quiet pocket you escape into, rather than a place you pass through.
- **Heavily height-restricted.** You will not find high-rise condominiums here. If overdevelopment is what you are running from, this is a structural protection, not a promise.
- **Quirky and not pretentious.** Custom homes sit next to pastel cottages that have been there forever. That mix is the character, and it is increasingly rare.
- **Quartz white sand** — the kind that does not get hot to the touch, like Siesta Key where I grew up.
- **Two of the best cities in the state within reach.** Depending on what you consider far, all of Sarasota and all of Tampa Bay are right there.

The honest trade-offs

- The geography that protects it also constrains it — limited access on and off the island, and seasonal traffic that stacks up on a bridge.
- It will not work for everybody, and that is by design. Nightlife, big retail, and convenience are elsewhere.
- Tight inventory of a well-loved product means pricing is set pocket by pocket rather than by any town-wide average.

WHO IT FITS — Buyers who want old-Florida character, low-rise scale, and true island quiet, with Sarasota and Tampa Bay available on a drive rather than a walk.

7 Vanderbilt Beach

COLLIER & LEE COUNTIES • GULF COAST • NORTH NAPLES

This last entry is really a strategy, and it includes the whole concept of northern Naples. When people from out of state say Naples, they usually mean one very specific and very niche pocket — Old Naples, sitting far south, just above Marco Island, beyond which there is essentially no habitable Gulf coast at all.

COAST	NORTH OF OLD NAPLES	DRIVE TIME
Gulf	**8–12 mi**	**~25 min**

Why it makes the list

- **The Old Naples benchmark is real.** Full Gulf-front water in front of you, a distinctive downtown behind you on Fifth and Third, quaint and French-inspired, with deep-water canals for large vessels. The area reads like one continuous country club even across separate neighborhoods.
- **But almost nobody clears every hurdle there** — cost, the type of house, or simply how far south it sits.
- **So go 8 to 12 miles north.** Vanderbilt Beach, then on toward Bonita Springs and Estero — call it 25 minutes. What you get back is a material difference in cost, availability, flexibility, and new construction.
- **Quieter beaches.** As an in-betweener you are simply not absorbing the same visitor volume.
- **Unusual coastal optionality.** The land here is narrow and hugs in west of the interstate line, so there are more genuinely different ways to live coastal than in most of the state. In much of this area the meaningful divide is east versus west of the interstate, not north versus south.

The honest trade-offs

- You give up the walkability and the prestige of the Old Naples core, and that premium exists for a reason.
- In-betweener locations ask you to drive to the best of both ends.
- This is still Southwest Florida pricing — better relative value, not cheap.

WHO IT FITS — Buyers who want Naples quality of life but were priced or pushed out of the Old Naples pocket, and who value new construction and flexibility over a marquee address.

BEFORE YOU FALL IN LOVE

Six questions that narrow the list fast

Work through these honestly and most of the seven towns will eliminate themselves — much cheaper to do on paper than on a plane.

- **Am I visiting or living?** Write down how many nights a year you will actually be there. Under 90, buy for energy and access. Over 180, buy for quiet, parking, and how the street feels in March.
- **Do I need city economics?** A job market, a major airport, and a serious hospital system are not lifestyle items. If you need them, Amelia Island, Indian Rocks Beach, Delray, and North Naples answer very differently than Seaside does.
- **How far is far, to me?** Some buyers consider 35 minutes nothing; others will not do it twice a week. Pick your real number before a listing photo picks it for you.
- **Pocket or corridor?** Pockets — Indian Rocks Beach, Anna Maria Island — are wonderful and geographically constrained. On vacation you will not notice; over a year of commuting you will feel it 100%.
- **Is the price a bias or a fact?** When a town has changed but the reputation has not caught up, you are being paid to ignore an old story. Venice is the clearest current example.
- **What am I actually comparing?** Never compare a town's median to another town's median without checking property type, age, and distance to water. Those three variables explain most of the gap.

ONE MORE THING WORTH SAYING OUT LOUD

A list like this cannot satisfy every life stage at once. Young professionals, a 40-year-old with two kids, and a retired couple are not shopping for the same town, and coastal Florida leans toward the latter end. Worth knowing which end of the range you are reading from.

Then pressure-test it in person

These are the checks that change minds — and the ones out-of-state buyers most often skip until after closing.

- ☐ Drive the commute at the hour you would actually drive it.
- ☐ Walk the nearest public beach access on a Saturday.
- ☐ Get the flood zone and a real insurance quote.
- ☐ Check what property taxes reset to after purchase.
- ☐ Visit once in peak season and once in the off season.
- ☐ Sit outside the house around 8pm on a weekend night.
- ☐ Ask for HOA and CDD fee schedules in writing.
- ☐ Time the drive to the nearest hospital and airport.

NEXT STEPS

If you want help with the actual move

If we can assist with relocating, buying, selling, or anything in between, please consider reaching out — even if it is just to pressure-test a shortlist before you book a trip.

More resources on the website

- **Suburb-by-suburb guides** — mainly throughout Southwest Florida, going a level deeper than town-wide averages.
- **Relocation guides** — the logistics, timelines, and the questions out-of-state buyers usually find out too late.
- **Best places in the state of Florida** — broader roundups beyond the coast.
- **Audio and written versions** of the videos, so you can pick your poison — watch, listen, or read.

GET IN TOUCH

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