

Best Places to Live: St. Petersburg, Florida

By **Bob Curley and Tracey Minkin**



Get to know this upstart city on Florida's Gulf Coast, and one of the 20 Best Places to Live 2017. Get the inside scoop on St. Petersburg, including where to eat, drink, play, and stay.

Nestled on the bright blue waters of Tampa Bay, this cosmopolitan city just keeps getting better and better, with a downtown arts and culture scene best exemplified by the spectacular Dalí Museum anchoring the waterfront. Historic, small-scale neighborhoods balance the big-city pleasures. With mild winters, this is a year-round city of outdoor play, and the proximity of 35 miles of white-sand beaches adds a quality-of-life layer that few other sophisticated enclaves possess.

St. Petersburg by the Numbers

Population: 257,083

Average July high: 91

Average January low: 53

Median home price: \$159,800

Average commute time: 22 minutes

Number of sunny days: 248

Best Beaches and Other Attractions

It's hard to beat the five miles of white sand and the clear waters of St. Pete Beach, which also includes the grandly pink backdrop of The Don CeSar hotel. And if that isn't enough, next-door Clearwater Beach is a showcase of two and a half miles of more gorgeous white sand and clear waters, with a new, gently curving BeachWalk, making strolling (and rolling) a pleasure for all.

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[Fort de Soto Park](#) has more than 1,000 acres of parkland spread across five small islands in Tampa Bay. When you're not chilling on one of the best beaches in the United States, you can tour the 1898 fortifications on Mullet Key, picnic or camp overnight, or explore via the park's nature trails, 6.8-mile paved recreation trail, and a two-mile canoe trail.

The [Dalí Museum](#) is an architectural knockout that pairs its vast permanent collection of the artist's works with fascinating rotating exhibits. Long a local favorite, the museum has emerged into a world-class destination and waterfront superstar. Nearby, in the center of downtown and steps from the waterfront, St. Petersburg's revitalized Sundial complex anchors some of the city's coolest food and drink hangouts, as well as shops.

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Where to Eat and Drink

Leading St. Petersburg's culinary scene, chef Fabrizio Aielli showcases Florida seafood at [Sea Salt](#), not to mention 130 different salts from around the world to season that catch. Next door to Sea Salt in the Sundial complex, [Locale Gourmet Market](#) is Michael Mina's fever dream of market-style shopping, mind-blowing prepared foods, and a killer cocktail bar. One could live here, if one chose.

Gear up for plates of Southern-flavored mixed-grill charcuterie and generous meat and seafood dishes downed with handmade cocktails in a delightfully rustic atmosphere (paper plates intentional) at [The Mill](#), a new and excellent culinary contender. Dine on New American cuisine al fresco or in an oenophiles' dream dining room at [Birch & Vine](#), located in the boutique Birchwood Inn.

For drinking expeditions, head straight to [The Mandarin Hide](#), the heralded leaders of St. Petersburg's cocktail renaissance. And for that *other* kind of drinking expedition, [Kahwa Coffee](#) is a homegrown mini empire of 11 bright cafés with excellent coffee, plus a Kahwagon Mobile Coffee Shop truck that brings brew to special events.

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Where to Stay

The coral-tinted facade and octagonal observation tower of the [The Vinoy Renaissance St. Petersburg Resort & Golf Club](#) have been beacons for winter-weary snowbirds flying south to St. Pete since 1925. Now a Renaissance hotel, the resort on Tampa Bay remains the city's most fashionable vacation spot; a walk through the original Moorish archways leads to water view rooms, a destination spa, and the Vinoy Golf Club.

For another dose of [historic pink](#) (and steps to the beach), there's no greater destination than the [Don CeSar Hotel](#) in neighboring St. Pete Beach (pictured above).