

St. Petersburg, Fla.



Thinking of retiring to Florida's Gulf Coast? The beaches are beautiful, the weather is warm and taxes are low. The downside: tropical storms and an aging population.

- **Population:** 244,800 (39% over age 50)
- **Housing costs:** \$108,000 to buy a home/\$1,000 a month to rent
- **Cost of living index:** 94 (100 is average)

Can't imagine retirement without a beach? In St. Pete you can dip your toes in the Gulf of Mexico or Tampa Bay -- plus play a round of golf, eat virtually any type of cuisine, and see famous art, all in a single day.

While St. Petersburg is undoubtedly a retiree hotspot, the city has also drawn more young families in recent years, says local realtor Judy Horvath. The mix helps keep the city vibrant and stocked with boutiques, galleries, and restaurants.

Where to live

Downtown: The market for new apartments and condos was flattened by the

bust, but developments are now back on track and in many cases selling out quickly. New two-bedrooms downtown start at around \$300,000, says St. Petersburg agent Rachel Sartain.

Surrounding neighborhoods: If that's too expensive, going five or 10 minutes outside of downtown brings prices down dramatically; condos in many central areas start in the \$200,000 range, says Sartain.

What to do

Beaches: Two of the nation's best (according to TripAdvisor readers) are just a 10-mile drive from downtown, including North Beach, located in the 1,140-acre Fort De Soto Park.

Art: Try the Dalí Museum for works by the Spanish surrealist, or the Museum of Fine Arts for Monet and O'Keeffe.

Sports: Tropicana Field is home to the Tampa Bay Rays. There are also plenty of golf courses, including Mangrove Bay, a par-72 championship course. At \$25 a round, these municipal greens may be the city's best bargain.

Taxes

Retirement income is not taxed. Permanent residents get a property tax exemption of up to \$50,000.

- Income tax: None
- Sales tax: 7%
- Median property tax: \$1,080