

# 10 Best Places to Live in Washington, According to Local Real Estate Experts

Pondering a move to the Evergreen State? Here are the best places to live in Washington, according to experts.

By

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With three national parks, over 8,000 lakes, and 155 miles of Pacific Ocean shoreline, Washington stands out with its natural beauty. But the Evergreen State is also one of the [most prosperous in the country](#), with a median household income of \$84,247 in 2022 — which was about \$6,000 more than the national average. As the home of major companies such as Amazon and Microsoft, Washington has many good employment opportunities. And while the Seattle region remains one of the most sought-after relocation destinations, there are plenty of other towns located up and down the coastline and in the state's interior that draw new residents with their idyllic settings, outdoor-focused lifestyle, tight-knit communities, and family-friendly amenities.

Here are 10 of the best places to live in Washington, according to local experts.

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01 of 10

**Seattle**

As the Pacific Northwest's tech hub, [Seattle](#) has long been an attractive place to live thanks to high-paying jobs, opportunities for professional growth, and tech innovation. However, even if you don't work in tech, there is something for you in the Emerald City. Its music scene has given the world some of the best rock bands of all time, and there are great [art museums](#) and restaurants. The city is also surrounded by stunning nature, ideal for people who want to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors.

"Countless summer and winter activities wait right outside our doorstep. Water fans can sail on Puget Sound or stand-up paddleboard on Lake Washington. Scenic peaks nearby present challenges for both the novice and experienced hikers. When winter arrives, a quick 1.5-hour drive leads to numerous snow sports destinations. Seattle, undeniably, is a recreational fan's paradise," Cassie Walker Johnson, a managing broker at [Windermere Real Estate/Luxury Portfolio International](#), the largest real estate company in the Western United States, said.

The city is also home to many neighborhoods, each with distinct energy and character, such as laid-back Magnolia, historic Ballard with its Nordic roots, upscale Laurelhurst on Lake Washington, and vibrant Queen Anne with breathtaking city views.

The only downside to life in Seattle is that it comes at a steep price, especially for new homeowners. The median sale price is \$834,000, and homes get snatched off the market after about eight days, according to Zillow.

02 of 10

## **Bellevue**

Nestled between Lake Sammamish to the west and Lake Washington to the east, Bellevue is known for having some of the best views of Seattle and Mount Rainier. The young city — it was incorporated in the 1950s — is a favorite among families for its many parks (2,700 acres of them) and top-notch schools.

"Our city council designed Bellevue's skyline as a 'tiered wedding cake' design with the larger skyscrapers in the heart of the city and the building heights slowly cascading down as you pan out. This offers everybody ample sunlight, beautiful views, and amazing amenities," Joseph Brazen, an agent at [Windermere Real Estate/Luxury Portfolio International](#), said.

The city's real estate market is sizzling hot, though, with 45 percent of homes pending within a week of listing, according to broker Eric Dang of [John L. Scott Real Estate](#). He recommends looking in Eastgate, a hub for new-construction homes with "excellent schools, easy access to downtown, and great value for the price."

03 of 10

## **Walla Walla**

The residents of this beautiful town on the border of Oregon and the Walla Walla Valley have access to over 120 nearby wineries. And compared to other wine regions in the country, such as Napa or Sonoma, real estate is relatively affordable here — median home value is \$407,000, according to [Zillow](#).

"An increase in new-construction homes is also giving buyers more opportunities when purchasing," Allison Stensrude, an agent at [Windermere Real Estate](#), explained. "A favorite neighborhood that buyers should consider is the Pioneer Park area. Here, you will find mature landscaping and beautiful historic homes, and you will be within a short walking distance to parks and downtown Walla Walla."

04 of 10

## **Mercer Island**

Island living between two of Washington's largest cities? It's hard to believe that residents of Mercer Island, located in Lake Washington, can escape the hustle and bustle of Bellevue and Seattle in just a few minutes and enjoy waterfront living at its finest. With over 473 acres of parkland and green spaces, walking trails, three public beaches, and stunning views, living on Mercer Island feels like a lakefront vacation. And there are plenty of home styles to choose from.

"The Island's architectural landscape is a journey through time and styles," Lori Holden Scott, a [John L. Scott Real Estate/Luxury Portfolio International](#) broker, explained. "Mercer Island was originally a vacation island, so there are cozy vintage cottages dating way back to the 1900s. The '50s and '60s introduced mid-century aesthetics, while the '70s saw a surge of Northwest Contemporary or the 'tree house' style residences. The '80s brought forth traditional two-story designs with brick touches, followed by a '90s emphasis on Craftsman elements."

The only downside is that available homes sell quickly and often above the asking price, which is around the \$2 million mark on average.

05 of 10

## **Woodinville**

If Woodinville's beautiful setting in a scenic river valley is not enough to make you want to move there, we have a few more things to convince you. The area is home to over 130 wineries — from big names to many up-and-coming businesses. There are parks, restaurants, boutique shops, and excellent schools, and if you miss big-city living, Seattle is just 20 miles south.

"Among the standout neighborhoods in Woodinville, we would recommend exploring the enchanting Wellington, where lush landscapes harmonize with exquisite architecture. Additionally, Hollywood Hill boasts an elegant rural charm, while Saybrook's tranquil streets offer an ideal haven for families seeking a close-knit community with access to many top-tier schools and recreational amenities," real estate broker Chelsey Samonte of [John L. Scott Real Estate](#) suggested.

According to [Zillow](#), the median home value is \$1,239,000, down five percent since last year.

06 of 10

## **Olympia**

"Olympia hits the mark for those looking to live in a mid-sized city with little traffic, lower housing costs than markets north and south, and proximity to everything Seattle has to offer," Missy Watts, a broker with [Olympia Sotheby's International Realty](#), said. Washington's capital is about an hour away from Seattle and two hours from Portland, Oregon, and its residents have access to many beaches, lakes, and a number of urban amenities. The city's downtown creative district spans 30 city blocks and is a hub for local breweries, galleries, theaters, and a farmers market.

Watts explained that the city is especially popular with retirees. "With our active arts scene, abundant medical facilities, incredible access to the outdoors, and amazing Pacific Northwest scenery, it's an attractive town to call home. Additionally, Washington has no state income tax, so any income from pensions, Social Security, and withdrawals from retirement accounts is tax-free," she added.

07 of 10

## **Bainbridge Island**

"Bainbridge Island is the Nantucket of the West," Ty Evans, an agent with Windermere Real Estate, explained. "It offers a wonderful array of lifestyles, from main street to small-town living to waterfront estates."

Located a 35-minute ferry ride from downtown Seattle, it affords its residents a unique blend of two distinct lifestyles. The island is home to the Grand Forest, a 240-acre nature preserve with many hiking and cycling trails, high-ranking schools, shops, and restaurants. Waterfront properties are the most sought-after type of real estate in areas such as Port Madison, Crystal Springs, and Lynwood Center.

"The Island is eclectic when it comes to the style of homes. Most of the homes are Pacific Northwest-style homes of natural wood, embracing nature and the beauty of the Pacific Northwest," Caron Anderson, an agent at [John L. Scott Real Estate/Luxury Portfolio International](#), added.

08 of 10

## **Spokane**



With the Spokane River passing through its downtown and many more natural sites in its immediate vicinity (including Spokane Falls and Riverfront Park), Spokane is a haven for those seeking a tranquil and laid-back urban environment to live in and raise a family. Add to that the many hiking and biking trails, the five winter resorts located within an hour of town, over 70 lakes, a dozen golf courses, and wineries, and you get a good picture of what makes this city of about 229,000 a wonderful place to call home.

Also, unlike other cities in Washington, real estate in Spokane doesn't come with eye-popping price tags. The median sale price in July 2023 was \$386,000, according to [Zillow](#). "Currently, the market is slightly slower than it has been in the past years as interest rates keep climbing, putting a hold on plans for selling and buying. However, people finally have more inventory to choose from after the massive shortage during the pandemic," Marissa Lewis, a John L. Scott Real Estate broker, explained.

If you're looking for a home with lots of character, then the Perry District on the lower South Hill of Spokane is an excellent choice. And if you prefer a modern townhome or a condo, then Kendall Yards, overlooking the Spokane River, would be a perfect match.

09 of 10

## **Whidbey Island**

"Whidbey Island is one of the most unique places on Earth," John L. Scott Real Estate agent Cheryl Keefe said. "You are surrounded by natural beauty from the Salish Sea to the towering forest."

This 37-mile-long island in Puget Sound is located about 30 miles north of Seattle and treats its residents to stunning views of the Olympic and Cascade mountain ranges. Life there is all about enjoying the outdoors — by hiking, boating, fishing, wine tasting, and strolling along its many public beaches.

Louis Muniz, an agent with Windermere Real Estate, explained that while the median sale price in July was about \$715,000, that number was significantly lower on the island's north end, where it was about \$475,000. "One of our most popular waterfront locations is Mutiny Bay, also known by some as the 'Gold Coast of the Northwest.' It is sought-after for its 180-degree views of the Olympic Mountain range, sandy beaches, and evening sunsets that will take your breath away," Muniz added.

10 of 10

## **Bellingham**

This coastal college city of about 100,000 lies 90 miles north of Seattle and offers a taste of the classic Pacific Northwest lifestyle with stunning scenery, proximity to [North Cascades National Park](#), many water activities, winter sports, and plenty of craft breweries and farm-to-table restaurants. And you can find a variety of home styles here — from classic Craftsman-style bungalows to newer, more contemporary residences. According to one real estate agent, now is a great time to invest in real estate in Bellingham.

"While our inventory is slightly higher currently, we are still in a stable market. Median home price in Bellingham is just over \$700,000 as of July 2023," Renata Mason of Windermere Real Estate added. "Once interest rates stabilize, the demand from pent-up buyers will surge." And her number one tip for potential new residents? "If you are looking to relocate to Bellingham, I would advise visiting multiple times and experiencing all of our seasons."