



The Amazing, Good, Bad and Ugly for Charlotteans Buying at the Beach

Barely four hours away lays the home of your fantasies...a house at the beach. Maybe you're thinking a second place for easy weekend getaways or perhaps you're done with the city rat race and dream of a permanent home at the beach.

Whether you're just flirting with the idea of purchasing a beach house or you're ready to start your search, here is a brief collection, both good and bad, of the things I wish I had known before I became a beach dweller.

The GREAT

- **The beach is great for your health.** Seriously. Several studies find we are more relaxed, tend to think more creatively, are more compassionate, sleep better, get relief from many respiratory ailments, and enjoy many other health benefits when we spend time at the beach.
- **Awesome nature.** If you've ever watched the sun or the moon rise out of the ocean or have been mesmerized by a pod of playful dolphins or diving pelicans or seen hatchlings emerge from a sea turtle nest, you already know how cool it is to witness the amazing events that take place on the beach. From the constantly shifting patterns in the sand to the lull of the waves lapping or crashing on the shore, there is always something worthy of captivating your attention.

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- **Kick-back opportunities are everywhere.** A leisurely walk at the edge of the surf. A nap in the sun. Sipping your favorite beverage as you watch the tide roll in or go out. “Chasing light” with your camera. Collecting shells. Reading in the breeze. Floating in the water. Walking your four-legged friend. Bicycling the flat terrain. Dangling a fishing line from a pier. Enjoying your fresh catch on your deck or patio. Holiday fireworks and boat flotilla parades. Flying exotic kites. Building sand castles. The list is endless.
- **Creating memories your kids, grandchildren and friends will cherish for a lifetime.** Beach homes are magical places that draw people together and foster bonds in ways that are hard to duplicate elsewhere.

The GOOD



- **Your new home is highly likely to appreciate in value.** No, my crystal ball isn't any clearer than the next, but it doesn't take a great leap of faith to recognize that our country's population continues to grow and, as it does, so do the number of people who dream of and work hard to one day own a place at the beach. Yes, there could be years (like 1999) when multiple storms curb home value appreciation, but the pattern is always followed by a bump in prices, because this is where so many people want to be.
- **You can subsidize your vacation home by employing it as a vacation rental when you're not using it.** One of the most popular vacation spots is the beach. That's good news for you if you won't be living here full-time and need or want to subsidize the cost of your beach home. None of the local beaches have enough hotel rooms to meet the summer demand for accommodations. What's more, many vacationers don't want to spend their vacation in a cramped hotel room. They far prefer to relax in a place that's more spacious and comfortable. (Check with your accountant to find out to maximize any potential tax benefits, too!)
- **You're more likely to exercise.** Whether your goal is to just get in your 10,000 steps each day or train for a triathlon, the beach provides plenty of opportunities to keep yourself moving. Think paddle boarding, surfing, sea kayaking, walks on the beach or boardwalk, bicycling, kite surfing, swimming, running, beach volleyball, horseshoes, beach bocce ball, clamming and shrimping. In addition, you're close to tennis and pickleball courts, golf courses, at least a dozen annual 5k races, and several world class marathon and triathlon events.
- **We have Exclusive Buyers Agents here.** (You have a few in Charlotte, too.) EBA's are real estate agents that work with companies that never take listings. That matters to you as a buyer because it ensures your agent is completely committed to getting the best outcome for you, not the seller. When you're making an investment this large, it's wise to consider whether you should be calling the listing company, especially when it doesn't cost any more to have an EBA covering your back side.

The Bad

- **The beach town you settle on is certain to become busier and more crowded.** I'll spare you the details about what it looked like 17 years ago when I first moved here. Just remember that every year the number of Americans increases, and one of the most popular American dreams remains constant: buy a place at the beach.
- **Beach homes require more maintenance than those on the mainland.** They are in salty, sandy, and sunny locations. Add high humidity and you have the perfect cocktail for an environment that prematurely ages a house. Expect to paint your home more often; replace your HVAC systems every 5-8 years (twice as often as a typical home); wash the salt spray off your windows frequently; and replace exterior hardware (door knobs, metal lamps, etc.) every few years.
- **Beach erosion.** If you opt for ocean front property, you need to be aware there is nothing man can create that Mother Nature can't eliminate. The coastline shifts constantly. Fortunately, most

town zoning and building codes call for set-backs that reduce the chances of beach erosion erasing your property from the coastline. However, that wasn't always the case. There are stretches along nearly every one of our beaches that had or have homes that nature re-claimed. If you spot an ocean front property with an amazingly low price, make sure your buyer agent checks to confirm it is on a "rebuildable" lot, meaning if the house was more than 50% damaged by fire or any other threat, you would be allowed to repair or replace the house.

- **If you decide to rent your beach home, remember renting is a business.** Don't keep things at the house or condo that you will cause you heart-break if they disappear or are broken. Fortunately, most renters are required to pay a security deposit. They also understand the homes are owned by real people and not a faceless corporation, so they tend to be very respectful of the property. Still, there's always a risk that they might do damage.

The Ugly

- **One word: hurricanes.** Since 2000, this area has barely been scathed by a storm, but there have been some nail-biters. There's no way around it. Mid-August through mid-October can be stressful months. While the odds are favorable that we will not get a punishing storm in any given year, there is always the chance that we will. And, on those occasions when a storm does threaten, I assure you it is a hassle to button up your home and put a plan in place for either riding it out or evacuating.
- **Related word: insurance.** Specifically, wind and hail insurance and, depending on the elevation of the beach town you choose and the structure of your house, perhaps flood insurance. If you finance your purchase, you will be required to carry wind and hail insurance and, maybe flood insurance. Compared to your home in Charlotte, it's going to be expensive. As a point of reference, wind and hail insurance for a relatively modest beach home valued at \$450,000 can run between \$3,000-\$4,000 per year. Flood insurance could cost another \$600 to several thousand dollars, depending on the elevation of your home.

Bottom Line

So, if I had known all these facts when I bought, would I have still chosen a primary residence on the beach? Unequivocally, yes. When I was considering the home I now live in, I ran into the wonderful people who lived (and still live) next door. They had been here for nearly ten years, so I asked, "What about the hurricanes?" He shrugged and said, "Yes, they can be pretty disruptive when they come, but they don't come often and the rest of the time...well, it's paradise."

Interested in more info about living at the beach? Take advantage of the wealth of information our Exclusive Buyers Agents are willing to share with you on a no-obligation basis. Call us and chat. No pressure. Just a genuine desire to be a free resource to you as you explore your options. **910-202-4813.**