

The Palm Beach Post

Best in our backyard: West Palm ranks on best places to live in Florida



The West Palm Beach skyline along the Intracoastal Waterway. *Greg Lovett, The Palm Beach Post*

We already know that we live in paradise. And a travel magazine around for more than eight decades agrees.

Travel + Leisure recently named West Palm Beach as one of the nine best places to live in Florida.

The qualities that ticked the magazine's boxes were the city's proximity to Miami while maintaining a small-town feel, the highest average salary in Florida at more than \$61,000 and the ability to go anywhere at any time with three international airports relatively close by.

One big hitch in West Palm Beach's presence on this list is the high cost of living, the magazine wrote. The typical home value was \$442,088 as of November according to Zillow, a 29.1% increase year-over-year, and it had a shortfall of affordable housing.

A Palm Beach Post investigation in August found that Palm Beach County had over the years whittled down its once-enterprising affordable housing program in favor of developers' demands for fewer or weakened requirements. This led to fewer units being built and 16 years later a crippling affordable housing shortage as costs from rent to groceries skyrocketed.

But the job possibilities (and [an unemployment rate of 2.6%](#) as of November), entertainment options from the Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts to countless art galleries and abundance of ways to enjoy the outdoors made living here worthwhile.

West Palm Beach and Miami were the only South Florida cities on the list. They were joined by cities that varied in location and affordability, including Jacksonville, Tampa, Ocala, Cape Coral, Orlando, Lake City and the infamous retirement community, The Villages.

Of course, these kinds of lists can be arbitrary. What is “best” for some may not be “best” for others.

A handful of Travel + Leisure’s picks made a [Forbes Advisor ranking](#) of the best places to live in Florida that was published three days later — namely, Miami, Cape Coral, Orlando, Jacksonville and Tampa, which took the No. 1 spot — but West Palm Beach did not. The Forbes list considered monthly expenses, crime and a “community wellness score” in its ranking.

But if the droves of new residents flocking to the area aren’t evidence enough of West Palm Beach’s appeal, being recognized in these “best of” lists serves as a good reminder.