

# What to Consider Before Buying a Resort Home

May 1, 2017  
By Michele Lerner



A Tuscan-inspired villa luxury home in the resort community of Toscana Country Club in Indian Wells, Calif., provides the opportunity for a long season vacation or can be used just for weekends. Photo Courtesy of Sunrise Co.

A study by Bankrate found that 52 percent of Americans didn't plan on using their vacation time in 2016.

On the opposite side of the spectrum are wealthier Americans who purchase newly built homes in resort communities and vacation there for weekends, weeks, months and sometimes several seasons.

Some purchase vacation homes with an initial plan to use them sporadically but then, as their children grow up or they are able to work remotely, they convert these homes into a full-time residence and spend less time at their primary home.

Choosing the right newly built vacation home requires a match between your preferred location, climate and activities, as well as the home itself. Here's what to consider before you buy a resort home, including security and amenities.

## • Security, Service and Style Over Size

While there are certainly plenty of mansions built in resort areas, vacation home buyers are more often focused on the services and lifestyle that come with their homes than size.

"We don't have aspirational buyers in our resort, we have buyers who already own

homes in New York City, the Hamptons and Florida who also want to spend a few weeks in Hawaii every year,” says Greg Spencer, CEO of Timbers Resorts, the Colorado-based developer and operator of Hokuala in Kauai.. “We offer everything from two-bedroom flats for \$2.8 million up to a \$9.5 million oceanfront home on a cliff with 270-degree views of the ocean.”

### *Island Life*

The most important home feature for most buyers at Hokuala, says Spencer, is their private lanai, which ranges in size from 400 to 2,800 square feet.

At Hokuala, turnkey concierge services are provided to every homeowner, including those who opt for fractional ownership. In addition to the 47 full ownership residences, Spencer says the resort offers one-twelfth ownership starting at \$350,000 and one-sixth ownership starting at \$750,000 for buyers who prefer to use their resort home for one or two months per year.

“We provide concierge and housekeeping services so you can literally arrive with a toothbrush and find all your personal belongings in place when you arrive, whether you are a full or fractional owner,” says Spencer.



The annual \$12,000 to \$50,000 HOA fees include a spa, swimming pools next to the Pacific Ocean, a fitness center and concierge services.

### *Desert Life*

At Toscana Country Club in Indian Wells, Calif., 90 percent of the buyers are purchasing second, third or fourth homes that they use for a long season or just for weekends, depending on the location of their permanent home, says Phil Smith, president and COO of Sunrise Co., the developer of Toscana Country Club, where the homes resemble Tuscan villas.

“Each home has an open floor plan for entertaining and indoor-outdoor living, with a view of one of the golf courses and the mountains,” says Smith. “Each home also has a guest house for added privacy and room for friends and family.”

The homes range in price from \$1 million to \$3 million and have 2,500 to 5,500 square feet in the main house. HOA fees are \$580 per month and cover security and common area maintenance.

“The weekenders from Los Angeles and Orange County tend to pick the smaller homes, while people who stay for six months or more opt for larger homes,” says Smith. “Everyone likes the gated security system and roaming patrols so they can feel comfortable leaving their homes empty sometimes.”

### *Mountain and Lake Life*

At the Clear Creek Tahoe resort near Carson City in Nevada, 56 cottages will be built with 2,000 to 3,000 square feet of living space, with prices anticipated to range from \$1.5 million to \$2 million, says David Hutchison, principal and managing director of the resort. Custom home lots are priced from \$350,000 to \$1.7 million.

“The homes offer a mountain-style contemporary look, but are slanted to the smaller size because even though our buyers are affluent they’re attracted to the idea of somewhat more modest home,” says Hutchison. “We also offer custom home lots with a minimum house size requirement of 2,500 square feet. Each of those lots can include a guest house. We have one buyer building a 1,200-square foot house for himself and a 1,300-square foot guest house.”

HOA fees at Clear Creek are \$3,000 annually and include 24-hour security for the gated community, as well as complete exterior maintenance for the cottages.

### *Florida Retreat*

At The Concession in Bradenton, Fla., near Sarasota, all the homes are custom-built by one of the community’s seven preferred builders. The homes range in size from 3,000 square feet on half-acre lots to 4,000 to 5,000 square feet or larger on one-acre lots. Home prices range from \$1.3 million to \$3 million.

“Our buyers are looking for turnkey, maintenance-free living,” says Mark Bruce, director of sales at The Concession. “The most important amenity to them is that this is a gated community with plenty of security. We also connect them with our preferred partners for concierge services and any other services they need.”

HOA fees at The Concession are \$3,600 per year to cover security and common-area maintenance.

#### **• Amenities and Services – For a Fee**

Hutchison says a big shift taking place in resort communities is the interest in living more of the year in what started as a vacation home.

“People who stay six or seven months a year in their second home are more interested in the accessibility of conveniences like grocery stores, places to get their car serviced and the airport,” he says. “Health and wellness services are also extremely important within a community and nearby.”

While The Concession, Toscana Country Club, Clear Creek and Hokuala each include one or more golf courses, the costs associated with living there depend in part of whether you want to join the golf club.

- The Concession: \$100,000 plus \$15,000 annually to join the golf club and \$15,000 annually for dues. Non-golf memberships \$500 per year, plus a minimum annual expenditure of \$1,500 on food and beverage purchases.
- Clear Creek: \$35,000 annual fee includes golf, a ski lodge and a beach club on Lake Tahoe, as well as access to an extensive health and wellness program with a full spa, classes, activities, an outdoor lap pool and a range of outdoor activities such as hiking and mountain biking.
- Toscana Country Club: \$2,150 monthly for golf on two courses, as well as a tennis complex, restaurants, a spa and a sports club. Non-golf fee is \$725 per month.
- Hokuala: \$3,500 to \$10,000 annually for unlimited golf for themselves and their guests or greens fees per game for sporadic golfers. The HOA fee covers other activities.

When your vacation home offers the healthy lifestyle you crave, it's easy to see why more people are striving to turn their second home into the place they spend the most time.