



BUYING PARADISE

Taking the Plunge?

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When asked to share what we love about the Florida lifestyle, most of us would cite the gorgeous beaches, palm-tree lined walkways and streets, citrus trees blooming with fragrant oranges, and the enviable weather that makes it possible to enjoy outdoor endeavors practically any day of the year. Ranked as the fourth-most popular sport or activity in the country by the U.S. Census Bureau, swimming is likely to be found toward the top of any list of pursuits appealing to those who live in or visit this region, which is why many homebuyers may consider a pool to be a must-have feature when looking for their new place in the sun.

What, you may wonder, is it about a pool that makes it a desirable feature for so many homeowners? While we may initially think of the convenience that having one just a few steps away would offer, the advantages of having your own personal backyard oasis extend well beyond that. A swimming pool can open the door to a lifestyle that improves your health and wellness in multiple ways. In our weather especially, a pool, particularly when it is heated, can provide a year-round source for recreation and exercise. A low-impact form of cardiovascular exercise, swimming puts less strain on the body and less pressure on muscles and joints, making it an excellent choice for individuals with arthritis. Pools also provide a wonderful environment for aqua therapy, which can be helpful for people who have bone or muscle conditions. Since swimming is a full-body workout that targets both primary and secondary muscles, it can also help in building strength and stamina. Additionally, studies have established that swimming can promote physical and mental stress relief.

Another perk of pools, particularly in Florida, is the potential to enjoy them,

year-round. As those who live in our region can easily attest, a refreshing dip during the warmer months can certainly help us beat the heat. Pools provide an easy way to instantly cool down on hot days without having to travel to a public pool, which often requires a fee or paid membership. With a heated pool, you can enjoy a refreshing swim even when it gets cooler during the winter months. Plus, since our falls and winters are warmer than those up in the northern states, it's not necessary to close down our pools for these seasons of the year.

Aside from these advantages, a pool offers a cost-effective venue for entertaining, as it can be a great location for hosting get-togethers, parties, and other informal gatherings. In the past, while having a pool may have opened up the possibility to take a staycation at home, it has proven to be even more of a valuable asset over the course of the last year. During a period when we've spent more time at home, a backyard retreat with a pool has provided us with a much-needed change of scenery, physical activity, and stress relief.

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Buyers looking to the long-term may appreciate knowing that a pool can add value when they resell their home at a future date, particularly in warmer climates. Numerous studies have shown that Florida is one of the top five states for this type of return on investment. A cost-value analysis from Investopedia shows that homes in Florida could yield an 11 percent return on investment for pools compared to 7 percent in other regions of the country. Plus, a pool can increase the aesthetic value of a property: when this feature is well maintained and care is shown to maintain its surroundings, it creates an impression of cohesiveness in which the pool area is seen as part of the home rather than a separate feature.

With all the positive attributes, it may seem as if there are no disadvantages to owning a home with a pool in Florida, but there are a few cons to consider. To start, you will be responsible for all the costs related to having a pool including the upkeep. Regular maintenance requires chemicals, cleaning, and repairs, and HouseLogic estimates these costs for a year-round swimming pool to range between \$15 and \$25 weekly. You'll also want to have a reserve fund set aside for equipment repairs in case anything were to happen. Plus, you may see slightly higher utility bills because of the electricity costs for running a circulating pool pump or heating your pool.

Another downside is the amount you'll typically pay a bit more in insurance costs on a home with a pool: some experts report that homeowners with pools may pay about \$30 to \$50 more annually on homeowners' insurance. You may have to pay more in annual property taxes, as well. It's advised, however, that you can mitigate insurance costs and add a significant measure of safety if your pool is protected by childproof fencing and locked gates.



After weighing the pluses and the minuses, it is best to next look at your lifestyle, budget, and preferences in determining whether you should buy a home with a pool. Ultimately, if it fits with your situation, you may find that you want a residence with this fabulous amenity. By working with the right real estate agent, you can confidently dive into the market and find the pool home of your dreams.

If you are currently a homeowner, you may wonder whether adding an inground pool would add value to your home. In other words: If you sell your home, will the selling price cover most or all of the costs of a pool, or will the return on your investment be weaker than you might hope? First, it's a good idea to look at how much you and your family may use the pool. If you're adding the feature now, but looking to sell later, your loved ones will have the opportunity to enjoy your pool. While the memories you make might have no tangible value, having a pool may enhance your quality of life, enriching your lives immeasurably.

On a more practical note, several factors can help you determine if a swimming pool will add positive value to your home. As previously stated, living in a warmer climate can make a pool more attractive to buyers. If you live in a neighborhood where many of your neighbors have swimming pools, having one would be to your advantage as it puts your home on more equal footing with the other homes that are available for sale. That being said, it might not be as crucial for a home to have a pool when the housing market is hot and listings are selling quickly.

When buyers view a home with a pool, other factors play into the equation including how well it fits on the property. Pools consume valuable yard space, and while they can be a beautiful addition to a larger parcel of land, they may overwhelm a property with a small yard. The condition of the pool is also important because if it isn't attractive or is in need of repair, its added value to your property likely will be diminished. On the other hand, when a house has a pool that's nicely designed and well-maintained, that boasts amenities such as adjacent decks, patios and shade structures, and the surrounding area is attractively landscaped, the swimming pool can positively impact the outcome.

Another practical matter in selling a home with a pool is to understand what kind of prospects you might find. Most homebuyers fall into one of three categories when it comes to buying a home with a pool. The first group consists of individuals who won't look at a home unless it has a pool. To their mind, a home isn't truly a home without this key feature. The three types of buyers most commonly interested in homes with swimming pools are families with teenage children, exercise enthusiasts, and high-end buyers with larger budgets. Fortunately, the Suncoast tends to attract more of these individuals: according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the three most popular states for pool homes are California, Arizona, and Florida.

The second group is of buyers who would prefer a home without a pool. Typically, these individuals are either families with small children who may have safety concerns or buyers who would rather not have the expense or upkeep related to having a pool. The third group has no strong feelings, one way or the other, on pool ownership. With this type of buyer, the decision to buy is more likely to be triggered if a home has all the other features they are seeking than by its having a pool.

When selling a home with a pool, a number of factors should be considered. To begin, it's a good idea to have your pool inspected and to take care of any necessary maintenance before putting your home on the market. This will help to ensure that all the components such as the pump and water filter are in working order. For a pool to be an asset in the sale of a home, it needs to be well maintained, so make sure that the water is clear with the proper chemical levels, circulation, and filtration. Tending to your pool's surroundings is crucial. Thoroughly clean and declutter the entire pool area. Spruce up the landscaping because an attractively landscaped pool area is more likely to appeal to buyers than one that is poorly maintained.



Fascinating Facts About Pools, Hot Tubs & Swimming

As of 2017, 10.4 million residential and 309,000 public swimming pools can be found in the United States, according to the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals (APSP)

The five states reporting the highest number of above-ground pool sales and installations are California, Texas, Florida, Ohio, and Illinois

The states reporting the most in-ground swimming pool installations are California, Florida, Texas, Arizona, and New York

More than 7.3 million hot tubs are in operation in the U.S., according to a study conducted by Pool and Spa Marketing.

The top five states for hot tub installations are California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New York

Swimming is the most popular recreational activity for children and teens ages 7-17

36 percent of children aged 7 to 17 years, and 15 percent of adults go swimming at least six times annually in the United States

About 91 million people over the age of 16 swim in oceans, lakes, and rivers each year in the United States

Pool safety is typically a concern for homebuyers, so it's a good idea to make sure that your pool adheres to the common safety guidelines. Among these, the pool should be completely surrounded with a 4-foot or taller safety fence and use a self-closing, self-latching gate. Pool and gate alarms that are activated when someone enters the pool can also be nice features to have.

Ultimately, it's all about how a homebuyer views your home. An experienced Realtor can help you to attract the right interested parties and market your home appropriately, making selling a home with a pool a breeze!



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