



Pacifica: The Peninsula's Beach Town

Thanks to its idyllic setting on the Pacific Coast and small-town feel, Pacifica has earned a reputation for being the Peninsula's most charming beach city.

BY MEGAN LYNCH

Although the Peninsula is surrounded by water, most of the land neighboring the Pacific Ocean is undeveloped and largely open space. Living next to the water is somewhat of a luxury, and residents of Pacifica are some of the lucky few who get to enjoy it.

Beachgoers are often found laying in the sun on warm days, surfing Pacifica's waves or enjoying a breathtaking sunset. Others prefer more exciting sports like kiteboarding and paragliding. This gives the City a beach-town feel and makes it a great place to spend your weekend or any sunny afternoon. "One of the best parts about living in Pacifica is being right next to the ocean," said Realtor Sue Vaterlaus who has lived in Pacifica since 1979.

Pacifica is set on the Pacific Ocean, just 15 minutes south of San Francisco. The city is spread out among five valleys that wind their way up and down the coast. Some residents live across the street from the water and others are just blocks away. All are within minutes of the ocean! This is the ideal setup for anyone who can't live without the water.

The City of Pacifica is full of friendly, welcoming faces who wave to one another on the street. As a whole, the community is tight-knit and people work together to improve their hometown and spend weekends together relaxing. This gives the City a small-town feel and makes it an ideal place to raise a family. "People are really friendly to one another. We have a large sense of community and have much more of a hometown feel than other cities in San Mateo County," said Vaterlaus.

Kids love how close their friends are, and families get together on weekends for beach parties and barbecues. Pacifica

also sponsors the annual Fog Fest (September 23rd and 24th this year), complete with crafts, music, food and a parade. The festival draws people from across the Bay Area and is a time of year that many residents look forward to.

Pacifica is home to two high schools and five elementary schools that cater to kids with all different interests and needs. Parents are especially involved in supporting their children's schools and work to help them expand and grow. Learning and fun for children continues on the weekends. The City sponsors a variety of activities for kids of all ages.

The biggest sport in Pacifica: Soccer. "Soccer is a big deal in Pacifica, something like 8,000 kids play soccer

here each year," said Vaterlaus. Vaterlaus is a member of SAMCAR (the San Mateo County Association of Realtors). SAMCAR is a professional trade organization that organizes Realtors on the Peninsula. The Association provides members with opportunities for community involvement and access to a network of professional resources and business contacts. Realtors must abide by a strict code of ethics and participate in additional training above and beyond state real estate license requirements.

Weekends are also perfect for taking advantage of the miles of open space

surrounding Pacifica. San Pedro Valley Park, Milagra Ridge, Sweeney Ridge, and Sharp Park Beach are popular spots among locals. The hiking and bike trails are perfect for experts and beginners thanks to the breadth in size and distance of available routes.

Because of its location on the water, Pacifica is also known for having cooler weather with more fog than other neighboring cities. Pacifica is the first to be hit by fog as it rolls off the water and is the first to cool down after a hot day. Summers here are especially known for their cool and slightly gloomy weather, but once September hits, the weather clears up (just in time for Fog Fest!).

Although the fog keeps some people away, it is a draw for many residents. "The weather is not as foggy as people seem to think it is. We have very comfortable weather and regardless of the time of year, you can almost always wear a short-sleeved t-shirt outside," said Vaterlaus.

Homebuyers are also drawn to Pacifica because of the more reasonable housing prices. A three bedroom/two bathroom house can sell for \$600,000 (give or take a little), which is more affordable than many other Peninsula communities. If you're looking for a bigger home, Pacifica also has larger homes on private lots that sell for more than \$1 million. Basically, the City offers homes to meet a wide range of tastes and needs.

Spending time in a laid-back beach town is a perfect way to unwind after a long day's work. For Pacifica residents, the beach is just footsteps away and relaxing is a way of life.

Information in this series of community profiles is provided by the San Mateo County Association of REALTORS® (SAMCAR). Megan Lynch is a freelance journalist based in San Francisco. Please send questions, suggestions or feedback by e-mail to samcar@samcar.org or call 650.696.8200.



PHOTOS BY ANSON CHAN, THE EXAMINER

The Top Five Reasons to Live in Pacifica

BY MEGAN LYNCH

PROXIMITY TO THE BEACH

Imagine waking up every day and stepping outside into the crisp morning air. The beach is just footsteps away and you can hear the roar of waves crashing against the shore. Live in Pacifica, and this could be your dream come true. The City is home to (and visited by) beach-lovers, surfers and sunbathers alike. It's perfect for those who can't bear to be separated from the ocean and who love the cool ocean breeze that rolls in each day.

OPEN SPACE

Surrounded by open space to the East and the Pacific Ocean to the West, Pacifica is a haven for anyone who enjoys the great outdoors. In fact, the City even boasts that it has the largest ratio of open space to population on the San Francisco Peninsula. The parks, peaks and trails have something for everyone. Whether your fancy is biking, hiking or just exploring, Pacifica has a park that will cater to your needs.

FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

Pacifica residents are known for their big smiles and welcoming attitudes. People recognize each other on the streets and will stop on the sidewalk to say hello. Residents regularly get together for barbecues, soccer games and local festivals. This gives the City a small-town feel and makes it an ideal place to raise a family or get involved in your local community.

REASONABLE REAL ESTATE PRICES

Real estate is not cheap on the Peninsula, especially if you are looking for a home for your family. Pacifica is one of the few remaining cities where real estate prices are more reasonable. A three bedroom, two bathroom house can sell for around \$600,000 (give or take a little depending on the condition of the property)—which is still within reach for many homebuyers.

SECLUDED ATMOSPHERE

Thanks to its setting on the ocean and proximity to plentiful open space, Pacifica feels miles away from the rest of the Peninsula. Coming home each day is like coming home to a beautiful retreat on the beach. The roar of passing traffic seems quieter, the crowded highways disappear and life seems a little more peaceful.



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