

Some Information for Those Who Live “Up North”

Where’s the best place to live in Florida?

That’s a good first question. The answer is: wherever you feel most comfortable with the lifestyle in that area.

If you are comfortable with and desire the high density and high intensity living found in a large urban areas such as Boston, New York, Newark, Chicago or other such cities, you may want to look at Florida’s Southeast “Treasure Coast.” This is along I-95, the pipeline that has brought many transplants from cities along the Upper East Coast to Florida’s coastline, particularly between West Palm Beach and Miami.

On the other hand, if you prefer a lifestyle which is more laid back and relaxed, more suburban and small town in nature, yet with excellent amenities and good weather, you may want to look at Florida’s Southwest “Sunset Coast.” This is along I-75, which has brought many transplants from the mid-West, West and Canada. The Sunset Coast lies along the coastline from Tampa to Naples, especially Tampa to Sarasota and Port Charlotte to Fort Myers. Though the larger cities in this area tend to be congested, especially during the winter season, the areas just outside of them may be more what you are looking for.

Where are the Country Lakes Villages?

Country Lakes Villages are two happy resident-owned communities serving the age 55+ demographic. They are located on Florida’s Sunset Coast, tucked away in the suburban area between St. Petersburg and Tampa Bay just to the north, and Bradenton and Sarasota just to the south. If you want to see specifically where they are, see our website (more on that later); it has a map for you.

If you prefer, use Google Earth or Map Quest, and type in the office’s address of “6100 Bayshore Road, Palmetto, Florida, 34221.” Country Lakes Village 1 is immediately south of the office, and CLV-2 is 1/3 mile East. You’ll see that CLV’s two communities are at the mouth of Tampa Bay and it’s Sunshine Skyway Bridge, and a little northeast of the sandy beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. They are convenient to all the amenities offered by the nearby urban areas, but without being tangled in them.

Why are the Country Lakes Villages a desirable place to live?

We like to think we are an undiscovered jewel in paradise – everything you’d really like in a retirement or winter home -- without the frenetic lifestyle which has crushed some of the communities which have been “discovered” by the travel media. It supports a friendly and active community lifestyle in a low-cost area of Florida – just the kind many are seeking for a winter get-away or retirement home.

Just about anything you'd need, want or desire is just short, easy drive away:

- Several supermarkets and a Walmart store are just 8 easy minutes away, and it is only 11 minutes to the Sunset Coast's biggest and best outlet mall.
- Top-flight medical support is only minutes away – including family medicine, all medical specialties and two hospitals – all within 8 to 11 minutes from home.
- The Gulf of Mexico's beaches (if you choose to use them rather than the community swimming pools) is only 23 minutes away. Siesta Beach in nearby Sarasota was recently picked as #1 Beach in America -- and those nearer aren't far behind!
- Top-flight live theaters and state college community enrichment programs are right here. Bradenton's Manatee Players Theater group has won its national competition twice and was selected to represent the United States in competition in Belgium. The local college has many enrichment and entertainment opportunities for you.
- Tourist attractions in town and nearby include
 - the world's oldest living manatee, living in a world-class aquarium and museum and planetarium,
 - a manatee winter retreat at the TECo power plant, just 27 minutes north off I-75, where hundreds of manatees gather to bask in the warm waters during December, January and February.
 - the Ringling Circus museum and Ringling-inspired circus performances nearby,
 - and many, many others (Google "Bradenton Florida attractions")!
- Sports:
 - There are several very good golf courses nearby for the interested, and there is an active golf league in our community.
 - Fishing sites abound in the nearby bay, river and Gulf areas.
 - Bradenton's major league ballpark is 7 miles south, where you can see major league teams as they play Bradenton's Pittsburg Pirates in spring training (go to "<http://pittsburgh.pirates.mlb.com/>");
 - Other major league teams, including New York, Philadelphia, Toronto and Baltimore, also are within easy driving distance during Spring training. Check out their locations at "MLB.com";
 - At the new Nathan Benderson Park Olympic rowing venue and Pentathlon, just 22 minutes south down I-75, you can watch as teams practice and compete;
- It's only two miles on US-41 to the Interstate, giving you easy access to destinations further away.
- Florida's major theme parks are also easily reached from CLV:
 - Tampa's Bush Gardens,
 - Sarasota's Jungle Gardens,
 - Orlando's Disney World, Universal Studios and Sea World,
 - Winterhaven's Legoland,
 - and lots of others.

- Airports are easily accessible by car, including:
 - Bradenton/Sarasota (SRQ), 23 easy minutes away
 - Clearwater/St. Pete (PIE), just 33 minutes up I-275
 - Tampa International (TPA), 40 minutes up I-275

And for those looking for inexpensive international flights, also see:

- Orlando (MCO), 1¾ hours on I-75 and I-4, and
- Fort Myers (RSW), 1½ hours south on I-75
- Four major cruise ports which serve Florida (and the nation) are easily reached from CLV:
 - Tampa's Port Authority's Channelside, 41 minutes up I-75 and the Crosstown Expressway;
 - Cape Canaveral's Cape Canaveral Cruise Port, an easy 2½ hour drive on I-75 and I-4 (and be sure to take an extra day or two to see the Kennedy Space Center there!);
 - Fort Lauderdale's Port Everglades, 3½ hours down I-75 and the Alligator Alley (yes, also stop at Big Cypress Swamp Indian Reservation for an airboat tour of the Everglades!);
 - Port of Miami, 3¾ hours away, also on I-75 and the Alligator Alley.

Is this a “safe” community?

Yes it is. Incidents in our community have been very few and far between. These have been limited to petty theft (like a stolen bike or golf cart). Ours are semi-gated communities, and the final electronic gates are in the planning stages to limit access to only residents, their visitors and service vehicles. Recording video surveillance cameras are placed at the entrance, clubhouses and other sensitive locations.

What about the cost of living in Florida?

Florida is a very low cost state in which to live. That's one reason why we have so many retirees here! Florida makes most of its money off the tourist trade, vacationers and import/export services through our sea ports (Florida is the major SE shipping portal for the US).

Seasonal and year-round residents find prices of food and goods are low, there is no income tax, the sales tax rate is reasonable, property taxes are low and (especially when you are a Florida resident) there is a generous exemption on property taxes.

And very importantly, Country Lakes Villages is a not-for-profit resident-owned co-op community. We operate without the added profit motive of communities owned by for-profit corporations (be sure to check for this as you look at other communities in Florida and elsewhere!). Thus we keep the rates low and are free to make any improvements desired.

What is the climate like there – For Seasonal Residents?

We have a sub-tropical climate here. Your season (October through April) will bring warm, comfortable weather most every day, with low humidity and isolated showers. There are only a very few overnight frosts during the winter, if any. You can golf every day, sip your happy hour cocktail in comfort on your patio or lanai, grow tropical plants and flowers in your yard, and enjoy fresh, locally grown produce at local farmers' markets. Did you know this is the tomato capital of the US? And second only to California for strawberries? And lots of other things grow in abundance here.

For the botanically curious among you, because our proximity to the Gulf we are in Zone 9B where palms, hibiscus, bromeliads, orchids, bamboo, and exotic fruits and nuts (no pun intended) thrive. We even have to be careful of what we plant because things grow so well here! Winter is the dry season here, so few events get "rained out."

Here's some temperature detail:

Table of average temperatures by month (degrees Fahrenheit)

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Annual |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|
| Min | 50.9 | 52.5 | 56.9 | 59.5 | 65.5 | 70.8 | 72.5 | 72.9 | 71.8 | 64.8 | 58.7 | 52.8 | 62.5 |
| Average | 61.6 | 63.0 | 67.2 | 70.7 | 76.4 | 80.6 | 81.9 | 82.1 | 80.8 | 75.0 | 69.2 | 63.5 | 72.7 |
| Max | 72.3 | 73.5 | 77.5 | 81.8 | 87.3 | 90.3 | 91.3 | 91.2 | 89.8 | 85.1 | 79.6 | 74.1 | 82.8 |

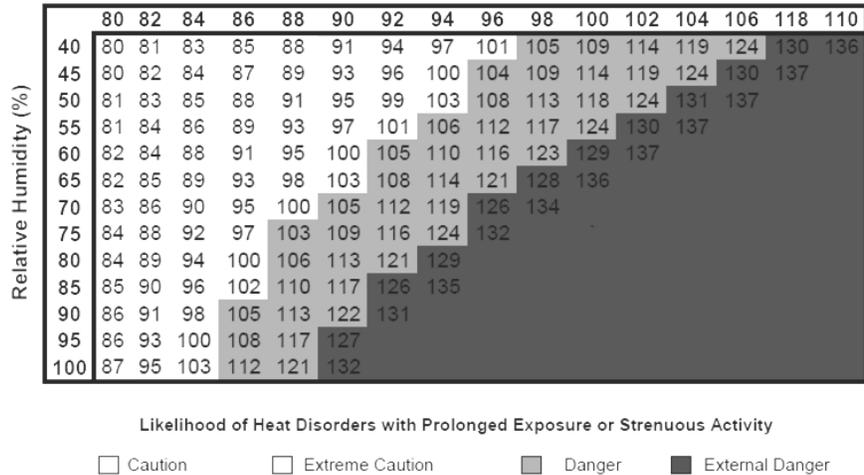
What is the climate like there – For Year-Around Residents?

As you can also see in the table above, it does get warm here during the summer, though not nearly as hot as many other places. But as the old saying goes: "It's not the heat, it's the humidity." Summer is the rainy season, and much of that rain turns to humid vapor in the air here as it does anywhere in the South. Our summertime humidity here generally rises to 70% to 85% in the afternoons, so you can factor that along with the temperatures above.

What is a typical summer day like? Well, typically during the summer months our mornings are comfortable and conducive for doing our outdoor work. Temperature and humidity build in the afternoon, so we turn to doing our indoor projects in the air conditioning. When the rains fall in the late afternoon we enjoy being out on the lanai, listening to its relaxing sound as it cools down everything for the evening.

So what's the "feels like" temperature?

Here's NOAA's National Weather Service heat index chart:



Yes, it feels warm. But going from an air conditioned building or house to an air conditioned car (and vice versa) is a whole lot more comfortable than going from a cool, under-heated building to an icy car, especially when you have to scrape ice or shovel snow before you can move! (At CLV, snow removal is included in our services.)

Florida is characterized by its many microclimates (small areas of similar weather conditions). We are fortunate enough to live in a small microclimate near the coast where we avoid frosts in the winter, benefit from the on-shore breezes in the summer afternoons and avoid the thunderstorms which form where these breezes meet hot rising air inland. Go just 3 miles east of us, just on the other side of I-75, and there you will find many more frosts and freezes during winter and more frequent and heavier thunderstorms in the summer.

And, yes, we do watch forecasts carefully for tropical storms and hurricanes. Though geography here is such that none have hit here in many years -- you never know. It has happened. We keep vigilant, though not paranoid. If bad weather looks like it might be coming close we load our valuable papers and irreplaceable items in our vehicles and go somewhere else for a couple of days on a "mini-cation" to relax and avoid any possible threat.

What is a "Manufactured Home?"

This answer requires a little bit of history. Following WW-2, Florida became a favorite destination for vacation travelers. They arrived first in their tents and small campers. With time the campers became larger and larger "travel trailers." Soon some left their trailers here, storing them over winter in trailer parks.

Some even took the wheels off, and then some thought: "These ought to look more like homes." The industry responded with the "mobile home" which became very popular as Florida (and other areas) to the growing seasonal vacationers.

Finally, lots of people decided they wanted to make Florida their permanent residence, but at a reasonable price. Again the industry responded, this time by constructing conventional homes in sections (think "prefabricated homes") and

transporting them to the owner's site, towing them on special purpose trucks similar to what you may have seen when we move a building up North. The trucks are then removed and the home placed on a permanent foundation.

In this way these factories were able to work year around, use tighter construction specifications and very carefully control tolerances. Furthermore, the skilled laborers could concentrate on building a product without the workers' quality being debilitated by the heat and humidity of the summer climate. Our homes are custom built in sections, then the sections transported and assembled on site.

Though they may still be called "trailers" by the old timers, or commonly but erroneously called "mobile homes" today, they are no more "mobile" than a site-built house. They are in fact "manufactured homes," -- manufactured to standards more exacting than many site built "stick" houses. However, the communities of manufactured homes are still often called by their holdover name of "parks."

We'd like to get a "feel" about CLV – do you have a web site?

Yes we do. Go to "<http://www.CountryLakesVillages.com>" for information. Here you will find more information about our community life, maps of our communities, pictures of activities, pictures of our clubhouses and their amenities, our current calendar of events, minutes of past meetings, our rules and regulations and other information. Lots of information!

And if you still have unanswered questions, there is contact information to get you to people in our community that can answer them!

Is there a list of homes for sale in Country Lakes Villages?

Yes there is. Again, go to <http://www.CountryLakesVillages.com>. There you will find links to real estate agencies, each of which list locations, prices and detailed information about the homes currently available in our communities.

Is there any way to "try out" living in Country Lakes Villages?

Well, yes there may be. If you are not really ready to make your decision, you may be able to come and live here in CLV for a few months. There are a (very) few homes owned by CLV residents which they rent out by the month. Rentals are not handled by our Co-op or office. You may get some leads by talking with a resident you may know and/or visiting the club houses and looking at the bulletin boards. You would then talk directly with the individual owners. Again, CLV does not handle rental properties itself.

After you have experienced our lifestyle and community for a couple of months we're sure you'll know what a wonderful place we think this is!