

## Life on Vacation

A weekly look at the second-home market

Sedona, Ariz.

# Sedona's hot on the trail of second homes

By Larry Olmsted  
Special for USA TODAY

If you visit Sedona — and some 3 million people do each year — make sure to send postcards home. After all, this city is named for Sedona Schnebly, the wife of its first postmaster, who arrived in the central Arizona town in 1902 — and there's plenty of natural beauty to write about.

Sedona is famous for its stunning formations of red rocks, and it sits on the southwestern edge of the Colorado Plateau, a geological formation that runs through five states. Here the limestone and sandstone are at their most vivid, and the city, just 19 square miles, is surrounded by protected

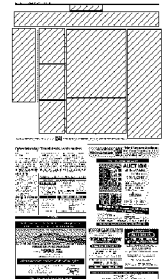
lands, including the Coconino National Forest and two wilderness areas. Sedona sits at the entrance to Oak Creek Canyon, and dozens of smaller canyons surround it.

"Many of the homes back up to the National Forest and all that it entails, hiking, mountain biking. Being outdoors is a big deal here," says David Levin of Russ Lyon Sotheby's real estate. That's assisted by the 330 annual days of sun, and a climate milder than much hotter Phoenix and Tucson, as Sedona sits at 4,500 feet.

Between its natural beauty, outdoor opportunities and favorable climate, Sedona is hugely popular with visitors, attracting nearly 300 tourists for every one of its 10,500 residents, as well as retirees and second-home

owners. "It's always been a second-home market," says Levine. "It's a sophisticated small town with a high quality of life. We don't have any Wal-marts or big shopping centers, but there is a large arts community, musicians, sculptors, painters and a lot of galleries."

Most of the housing market consists of single family homes, averaging \$550,000 to \$600,000, Levine says, although there are some town homes and condos around \$200,000. The housing downturn has reduced \$2 million homes to \$1 million and \$1.5 million, and houses that once cost over \$1 million are now \$800,000 to \$900,000, he says.





Sedona Chamber of Commerce

**Place to hike:** The scenery of the wilderness and red rock geological formations surrounding Sedona are its biggest attractions. There are hundreds of miles of hiking trails.

## A look at three Sedona neighborhoods:

- ▶ **West Sedona.** This area has the bulk of the city's services, movie theaters and shopping, and is among the most expensive areas, says real estate agent David Levine. The gated Casa Contenta community is popular for second homes because of its turnkey maintenance, he says. At the northwest edge lies Boynton Canyon, home to Enchantment, a renowned luxury spa resort that includes a residential community of 40 exclusive homes. A new spa-focused phase, the Villas at Mii Amo, is being developed, with homes costing about \$2 million to \$3 million each (villasatmiiamo.com).
- ▶ **Uptown.** With prices equal to West Sedona, this area is more residential. At the entrance to protected Oak Creek Canyon, Uptown is very close to the surrounding wilderness and red rock landscape. "There are so many trails you could hike every day for a year without repeating," says Levine. There are some two-bedroom condos available from the mid-\$200,000s.
- ▶ **Village of Oak Creek.** This village to the south of Sedona is more of a neighborhood than a suburb, except that prices are 10%-15% less and property taxes are slightly lower. It attracts more full-time residents because of its excellent school system. It is also the least-expensive area and has the city's top golf course community, Sedona Golf Resort, popular with vacation-home buyers.



Enchantment Resort

**On the market:** Designed in Hopi Indian style, in a spectacular location, this is the only one of the 40 custom homes within the Enchantment Resort community for sale.

**High price: \$2,950,000**

- ▶ **Bedrooms:** 3
- ▶ **Bathrooms:** 3½
- ▶ **Size:** 4,226 square feet
- ▶ **Features:** Domed roofs, vaulted ceilings, oversized windows and exposed beams throughout. Formal dining room, gourmet kitchen, living room, sitting room, double-sided fireplace, deck, private pool with waterfall and hot tub. One bedroom and bath in separate guest casita.

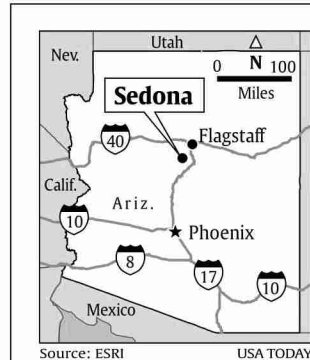


By David Levine, Russ Lyon Sotheby's

**On the market:** This custom home is built in Santa Fe Pueblo architecture and located in the Village of Oak Creek with surrounding views of the red rocks.

**Midrange price: \$749,000**

- ▶ **Bedrooms:** 3
- ▶ **Bathrooms:** 2½
- ▶ **Size:** 2,650 square feet
- ▶ **Features:** High ceilings, open floor plan, kitchen with stainless steel appliances, fireplace, 2 courtyards, and 3-car garage.



### **Best for**

Hikers, nature lovers  
and artists.

### **Claim to fame**

Its many vortexes (sites  
supposedly funneling energy)  
and the new-age adherents  
they have attracted have earned  
Sedona the nickname  
"Spiritual Disneyland."

### **Don't miss**

A hot-air balloon over or  
Jeep tour through the red-rock  
countryside.

### **Getting there**

Most people use Phoenix's Sky  
Harbor Airport, about three  
hours away. Flagstaff has a small  
airport 30 miles away.

### **Tourism information**

[visitsedona.com](http://visitsedona.com)