

Second homes: Having it all in Sandpoint, Idaho

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By Larry Olmsted Special for, USA TODAY



Natural beauty abounds: Bald Mountain towers over the town of Sandpoint, which sits on Lake Pend Oreille and is surrounded by wilderness, including the Cabinet Mountains. Winters are snowy but summers are warm in this retirement hot spot.

By Chris Bessler, Koekee

Who says you can't have it all? Not fans of [Sandpoint, Idaho](#).

The small town, with a population of about 8,000, has won accolades as a retirement hot spot, an outdoor sports mecca, even one of the top 10 cities

for telecommuting. It serves as the national headquarters for several notable companies, including [Coldwater Creek](#) apparel, attracting a young, vibrant workforce and fueling the local economy.

So what's the big appeal? A combination of stunning natural beauty, excellent year-round outdoor activities and a surprising wealth of art and cultural offerings.

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Sandpoint is located in the Panhandle of northern Idaho and sits directly on 43-mile-long Lake Pend Oreille (pronounced "pond-uh-ray"). Though winters are typically cold and snowy, the summer months are marked by long strings of warm, sunny days. The Selkirk and Cabinet mountains overlook the town, offering options for hiking, climbing and mountain biking. The [Schweitzer Mountain](#) resort, 12 miles away, spans almost 3,000 skiable acres with 92 trails.

Both visual artists and performers make their homes here, and Sandpoint offers a lot of live music. In addition to regularly scheduled art exhibits and art walks, the town is host to one of the largest film festivals in the Northwest, and a major 11-day summer music festival attracts big names.

The Panhandle also is popular for golfers, and outside Sandpoint is a high-profile private golf club, the Idaho Club. There is a public course on nearby Priest Lake, two nationally ranked public courses and two more high-end private clubs a round Coeur d'Alene, less than 50 miles away. Another popular second-home community on a large lake, Coeur d'Alene offers additional dining, cultural and recreational options to Sandpoint buyers.

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"With 111 miles of shoreline, (Sandpoint's Lake Pend Oreille) is considerably bigger than Lake Coeur d'Alene, but there is far less traffic. You often feel like you're alone out there," says Patrick Werry, a real estate agent with Century 21 Riverstone. "There is a large variety of second homes around Sandpoint. You can find anything from a 900-square-foot house for \$220,000 to a 5,000-square-foot home on the lake for \$2.5 million. We have two main options, on the lake or at the ski resort."

A look at three Sandpoint neighborhoods

- Sandpoint. Realtor Patrick Werry says second-home buyers in town are choosing lakefront property, usually in one of two enclaves. Dover Bay sits just outside town, with cottages from under \$230,000 to luxury condos for more than \$1 million. Seasons is the main lakefront condo development within Sandpoint, a short walk to downtown shopping and dining. "It's all new, nothing more than 5 years old and they are still building, with their own fitness center and spa, on the water but close to everything. Prices range from \$500,000 to \$2.5 million."
- Hope. About 20 minutes outside Sandpoint, this small, lakefront community is surrounded by state-owned protected wilderness. "No large developments, just single-family homes for resale," Werry says. "Homes on the water run \$500,000 to \$2 million, and off the water, \$190,000 to \$450,000. It attracts those interested in boating and is definitely a second-home spot for summer, very slow in winter."
- Schweitzer Mountain Resort. "The vast majority are second homes. There are about 700 homes and condos and only 70 full-time residents," says Werry. "There's a wide range, \$100,000 to \$1 million, and the newest option is fractional ownership, \$195,000 for four weeks in a nice, new three-bedroom. There is a lot of ski-in/out property, plus condos in the main village and single-family homes a mile away." The resort offers summer mountain biking, hiking and an equestrian center.

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