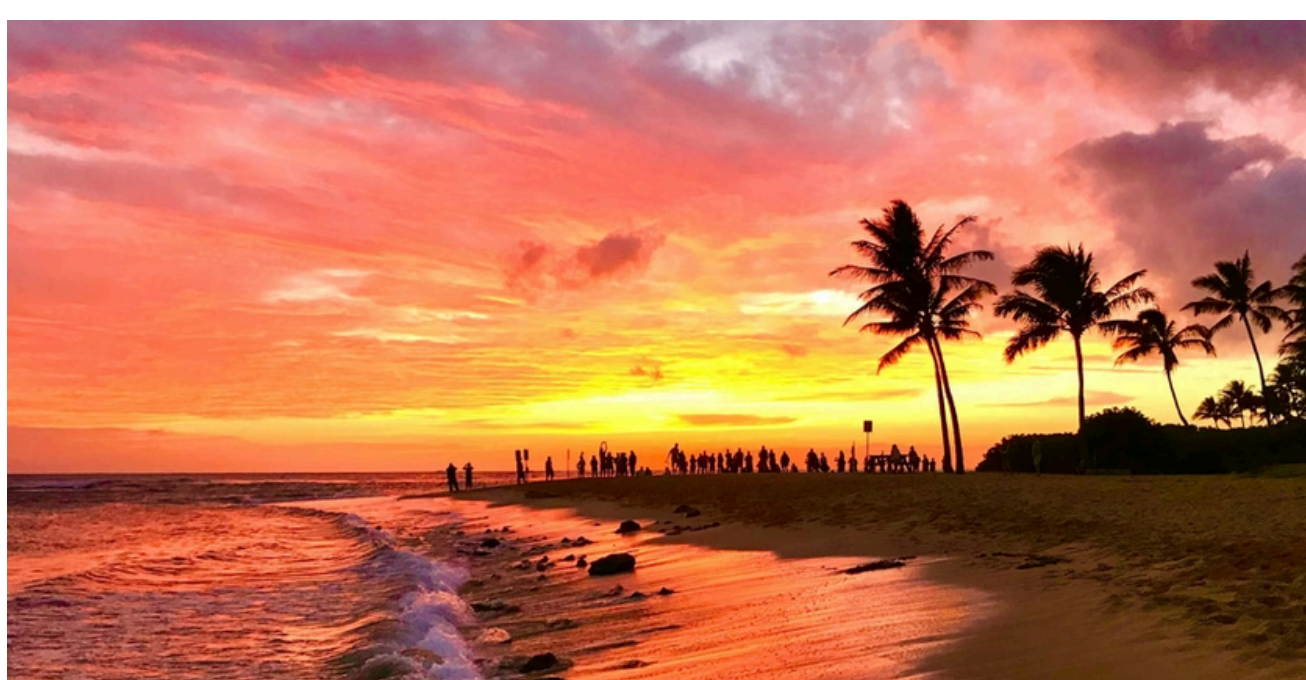


## TRENDS

# How Much It Costs To Buy a Slice of Paradise at the Best Beaches of 2026

BY KIRI BLAKELEY  
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**S**ummer is almost here, and for much of America, that means one thing: heading to a [beach](#).

But with so many of them available—ranging from isolated, unspoiled nature to crowded party venues—how can you choose where to spend those precious summer vacation days?

Fortunately, Dr. Beach—aka **Stephen Leatherman**, who has been reviewing beaches for three decades—has put out his annual ranking of [America's Best Beaches](#) to help you decide.

[Hawaii's Poipu Beach](#), on the island of Kauai, tops Dr. Beach's rankings for 2026. Still, it's not the most expensive beach on the list, with homes there listing at a median price of \$1.4 million in April, according to [Realtor.com](#) data.

The costliest beach in the new rankings is ranked No. 7: **Beachwalker Park** on Kiawah Island, SC, an area with a staggering median list price of \$2.96 million.

No list of the best beaches would be complete without the Hamptons, where homes near No. 5-ranked **Main Beach** in East Hampton, NY, typically list for \$2.8 million.

If you're on the hunt for a more affordable beach house, then the Sunshine State is the place. So long as you avoid billionaire enclaves like [Indian Creek](#) or [Manalapan](#), there are deals to be had.

In Panama City, with a median list price of \$459,450 near the No. 2-ranked beach at **St. Andrews State Park**, you have the best chance of snapping up your own beach abode without busting the bank.

"The top beaches in the U.S. range from relatively affordable spots in the South to pricey destinations in Hawaii and the Northeast," explains Realtor.com senior economist **Hannah Jones**.

"[Florida](#) beach towns benefit from ample inventory and lower prices, while buyers in the Northeast and Hawaii should expect to pay a significant premium. For buyers who want a top-ranked beach without the premium price tag, [Florida](#) is the obvious starting point."

## Considerations before buying a beach home

While beaches can be dreamy, there are some [pitfalls](#) you should be aware of.

"Beach properties come with a different set of considerations than inland homes," **Brittany Skotak** of Douglas Elliman Naples tells Realtor.com. "Insurance, flood risk, building reserves, storm preparedness, deferred maintenance, and carrying costs. Buyers that are not accustomed to these expenses can have sticker shock."

At the most unfortunate end, your beach frontage might erode to the point where your abode is practically [worthless](#) or even puts you in [danger](#).

However, the risk may be worth it. Beach homes can [appreciate](#) higher and faster than inland properties. Realtor.com data shows that [homes on the ocean](#) are priced roughly 29% higher than landlocked homes in the same area.

After all, if they're not making any more land, they are most definitely not making any more shoreline. Inventory is usually constrained.

In Eastham on Cape Cod, for instance, there are 899 properties for sale in the metro area, but a mere 23 in the area immediately surrounding the beach.

But there are ways to get around the price and competition: Skotak recommends going farther inland.

"Some buyers start their search thinking they need to be directly on the beach and then realize being five minutes away gives them more options and often a lot more value," she says.

Provided you choose wisely and do your due diligence, owning a beach home can be not only fun and fabulous, but also a sound financial decision. Here are Dr. Beach's top 10 beaches for 2026:

## 7. Beachwalker Park, Kiawah Island, SC

Median list price: \$2,958,675

Properties for sale in the immediate ZIP code: 81



Leslie Turner represents this \$12.9 million [estate](#) on Kiawah Island in South Carolina. NICK CANN PHOTOGRAPHY

With the highest median price on the list and very scarce inventory, Beachwalker Park on Kiawah Island is limited to those with plenty of funds.

"Kiawah is very pricey and exclusive," **Leslie Turner** of Maison Real Estate tells Realtor.com. "It's hard to get behind the gates" of the community.

Beachwalker Park is the island's only public-access beach, and it is also a protected nesting ground for sea turtles.

Turner suggests accessing the public beach and then using a bike to view the rest of the exclusive, private beaches.