



## 6 Things to Consider Before Buying a Beach Home in Los Angeles

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Properties in [Los Angeles](#)' beachfront communities often attract buyers looking for second homes or [vacation homes](#). While living next to the ocean definitely has its perks, owning a home on the coast isn't without its pitfalls.

From unforeseen [maintenance costs](#) to increased safety concerns and higher sales prices, a beachfront home can often pose challenges to those looking to live on the water. But as Stephanie Younger of Teller Properties puts it, "You're on the beach – you've got to take the bad with the good."

To help you better understand what to expect if you purchase a home on the shore, we asked several [Los Angeles real estate agents](#) who, according to [OpenHouse Realty](#) (a U.S. News partner company), have plenty of experience buying and selling beachside properties. Here's what the agents had to say.

**If you want to save, you'll have to sacrifice.** "Most beach homes are condos, so you're not really getting a whole lot of space for the money you're paying," Keller Williams' Richard Schulman says. Yet waking up to "the California dream" with a view of the ocean seems to be

enough for most beachside residents, many of whom work in [Santa Monica](#) or in nearby Westside. Some buyers are willing to [pay whatever it takes](#) to enjoy the relaxed, beach-going lifestyle.

Some neighborhoods offer more value than others. Younger sells a lot of homes in Playa del Rey, which she says affords a great opportunity for relatively affordable beachfront living. "It's a hidden opportunity, really, in a less highly trafficked area," she says. "And the marina is right next door." Also next door: Los Angeles International Airport, one of the country's most-trafficked airports. Despite the lack of street-side traffic, the sky traffic keeps property values slightly lower.

[Long Beach](#) is another area where deals (beachfront property for under \$1 million, that is) can be found, although residents find themselves a good distance south of LA proper and face-to-face with the Port of Los Angeles, the nation's busiest shipping port.

Taking your search a few minutes off the waterfront while still keeping within walking distance could also score you a steep discount from "ocean view" rates. "The Venice Canals are not exactly beachfront, but they're canal-front. [They're] Just a few minutes from the ocean, and a very picturesque community," Schulman reveals.

**Beachfront living is living in public.** It's not just celebrities who get constant attention outside their beachfront homes. Although you may live steps from the water, the ocean itself is public property, along with a significant portion of coastline just in front of it. "You might own a \$4 million house and have people camping essentially in your front yard," Schulman adds.

The California Coastal Commission – a politically-appointed body which regulates development, supports environmental protections and ensures public access along California's beaches – decides where private property ends and public beachfront begin. The line of demarcation is rather fuzzy, as it's dependent on how high the tide comes in rather than any specific property line. Public holidays and beach season can exasperate this problem for homeowners. "Many people forget that certain holidays are going to create a higher concentration of people coming to the beach. Those times of the year may seem more oppressive to them," Younger warns her clients.

**You'll need to obtain the proper permits.** With more water in the oceans and higher waves on the beaches, sandy beaches are fast becoming ocean floor. It is a worrying trend for environmentalists as well as homeowners. In areas like Malibu, "Erosion is a huge problem. And the water table is just going up," says **Tami Pardee** of Los Angeles' Pardee Properties. As part of an effort to preserve the Southern California coast, all oceanfront property owners have to deal with the California Coastal Commission. Before making any changes to you property, you'll need to check with the CCC to determine whether or not your work requires a permit.

Laws passed in the 1970s ensure that California's beaches are kept in a public land trust, which can make things even trickier if you're looking to renovate an older property or build a brand new structure. "You might not be able to build, and there are regulations on how high you can go when you're near the ocean," says Pardee. CCC regulations will determine whether construction

equipment can come onto your lot during a certain season; the commission can also reject your plans should they threaten to block the public's view of the ocean or if they don't fit the defined aesthetic for the beach.

**Constant maintenance is a must.** Many prospective beachside homeowners overlook the tremendous toll that salt water and humidity can take on siding, pipes and framing materials.

If your home has a [wood frame](#), you should hope that the wood has been treated for moisture resistance, or you may have some serious structural problems. "Re-sanding your wood siding is a constant process," Pardee warns. And because many homeowners overlook these issues, "A good percentage of beach buys are teardowns," Schulman says.

Many beachside homeowners have opted for a modern castle made of stainless steel and glass instead, both of which hold up well against the humidity and the salty air. However, glass should be impact-rated to protect from leakage and high winds, while stainless steel needs to be buffed and shined to remain presentable-looking. Over time, the steel and glass home will prove more durable, but the maintenance cost and time is comparable across all materials.

**Two words: June Gloom.** It's supposed to be summertime, but instead of basking in sunshine, you find yourself shrouded in fog. All Angelenos cope with this strange phenomenon, but beachfront property owners get the worst of it. According to Schulman, "It can take hours for the fog to burn off in June and July," when the summer season of "June Gloom" is at its worst.

Pardee reminds clients not to let the unseasonable season [scare them away](#). "Winter at the beach is the time for locals. I go to the beach every morning, so that's my life. It's more relaxed. It's around 60 all day: it doesn't get that cold, but it doesn't really warm up either."

**Security may not be fun, but it's always necessary.** All of that public space surrounding your beachfront home could lead to some unsavory elements, too. It might be tempting to leave your doors and windows open to let in the cool ocean breezes at all hours of the night, but resist the urge.

"Many homes have inadequate security and fencing," Schulman warns. "There is lots of opportunistic theft, because people make it so easy." Even in coastal areas like Playa del Rey – which sees much less foot traffic than more central beach neighborhoods like [Marina del Rey](#) or [Manhattan Beach](#) – locks and fences are a beach home owner's best friend.

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