

Outside the Box

Alternative Housing Options

By Susan Thaxton

Where do you go when you've decided to sell your home but you're not quite ready for a retirement community? As it turns out, there are quite a few options – some fun, some exotic and some more practical. Let's take a look at three of them.

Tiny Houses

Downsizing takes on new meaning for people who move into a Tiny House. By definition, a Tiny House is 500 square feet or less. While going "tiny" may not be for everyone, there can be some advantages. Tiny Houses are typically built on wheels so they are transportable and they are affordable to own. They also require good organizational skills to prevent clutter which translates into owning less "stuff."

That's the upside. The downside is you have to find a place to (legally) park them. The good news is that the Tiny House movement is planning to develop

Tiny Villages, including one in Sonoma County in Northern California. If you're curious and want to learn more, search "Tiny Houses" on the Internet or watch one of the Tiny House TV shows. You may be surprised at how much you can fit into a tiny space.

Cruise Ships

If you love to travel, why not live on a cruise ship? There are well documented stories about women who became serial cruisers and continuously purchased tickets on their favorite cruise lines over the course of 7 to 14 years! Alternatively, you can now purchase or lease an apartment on board a luxury ship and live on it year round or for a month at a time.

"The World" has been cruising since 2002 and two new ships are in the works to be launched within the next two years, "Alive at Sea" and "The Marquette".

Manufactured Housing: Mobile Homes

If "tiny" isn't your cup of tea but you're looking for a home that's affordable, consider manufactured housing. Specifically, manufactured housing that has traditionally been known as mobile homes.

Even though they have historically been looked down upon, today's mobile home can be luxurious and spacious. I was in one recently that had 3 bedrooms, 2 ½ baths, hardwood floors, stainless steel appliances, granite countertops and a crystal chandelier in the formal dining room.

Many mobile home parks have amenities such as pools, fitness centers and community rooms. Last year, a friend of mine purchased a doublewide mobile home in San Jose for \$60K. He admits it is a fixer-upper but he's proud to own his own home and he reduced his rent from \$2500/month to \$600/month.

While \$60K may be on the low side, the median range for new mobile homes in the Bay Area is around \$290K and the space rent can range from \$600 to \$1200/month. Considering the cost of housing in the Bay Area, if you can get past the stereotyped image, a mobile home may be the best deal in town.

If you're looking, there are mobile home parks throughout the Bay Area with the majority concentrated in San Jose and Sunnyvale. It's also advisable to work with a Realtor who specializes in Mobile Homes or Manufactured Housing. A bonus of living in a mobile home park? You can boast that you live in a gated community!

Susan Thaxton is a Family Advisor with Senior Seasons. She usually helps people find Assisted Living, Memory Care Communities and Board & Care Homes but she also enjoys learning about alternative housing options. If you are looking for senior housing for a loved one, you can reach Susan at 650-571-7362 or susan@seniorseasons.com.

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