

# Moving to the Grand Strand

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Your Comprehensive Relocation Guide

Cost of Living | Neighborhoods | Schools | Lifestyle | Insider Tips

**COLDWELL BANKER SEA COAST ADVANTAGE**

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## SECTION 01

# Welcome to the Grand Strand

The Grand Strand stretches across 60 miles of pristine Atlantic coastline, from the charming fishing village of Little River in the north to the historic Lowcountry beauty of Pawleys Island in the south. This isn't just a vacation destination — it's one of the fastest-growing metro areas in the United States, and for good reason.

With a population that has surged past 500,000 residents, the Myrtle Beach metropolitan area offers an exceptional quality of life that combines coastal living with affordable housing, no state income tax on retirement income, and a welcoming community that draws families, professionals, and retirees from across the country.

Whether you're relocating from the Northeast, Midwest, or anywhere in between, this guide will walk you through everything you need to make an informed decision about calling the Grand Strand home.

## SECTION 02

# Cost of Living

One of the biggest draws for relocating families is the Grand Strand's favorable cost of living. Overall, living expenses here run approximately **7% below the national average**, with housing costs offering the most significant savings.

Expense	Grand Strand	National Avg
Median Home Price	\$325,000	\$412,000
Average Rent (2BR)	\$1,604/mo	\$1,850/mo
Utilities	\$180-220/mo	\$250/mo
Groceries (single)	\$307/mo	\$400/mo
Cost of Living Index	93	100

South Carolina offers additional financial advantages for residents. The state has relatively low property taxes compared to northeastern states, and retirement income including Social Security benefits is not taxed at the state level — a major incentive for retirees choosing the Grand Strand.

SECTION 03

# Neighborhoods & Communities

The Grand Strand is made up of distinct communities, each with its own character and appeal. Here's an overview of the most popular areas for relocating families and professionals.

Community	Overview	Price Range
<b>Myrtle Beach</b>	The heart of the Grand Strand with world-class dining, entertainment, and oceanfront living. Home to Grande Dunes, Market Common, and Kingston Plantation.	\$250K-\$3M+
<b>North Myrtle Beach</b>	A quieter beach town with a strong sense of community. Cherry Grove, Barefoot Resort, and Tidewater Plantation are popular choices for families.	\$300K-\$2M+
<b>Carolina Forest</b>	The Grand Strand's top family community with highly rated schools, master-planned neighborhoods, and easy access to the beach.	\$275K-\$800K+
<b>Pawleys Island</b>	Historic Lowcountry charm with exclusive gated communities like DeBordieu Colony. Known for its laid-back character.	\$350K-\$5M+
<b>Murrells Inlet</b>	The 'Seafood Capital of SC' with the famous MarshWalk, waterfront dining, and family-friendly neighborhoods like Prince Creek.	\$275K-\$1.5M+
<b>Conway</b>	The charming county seat with a historic Riverwalk, lower prices, and a growing downtown scene.	\$200K-\$600K+
<b>Surfside Beach</b>	Known as the 'Family Beach' with a small-town feel, affordable homes, and easy beach access.	\$250K-\$1M+
<b>Little River</b>	Waterway living and fishing culture with newer developments and competitive pricing.	\$225K-\$700K+
<b>Garden City Beach</b>	Affordable oceanfront living with a relaxed vibe and close proximity to Murrells Inlet dining.	\$250K-\$1.2M+
<b>Litchfield</b>	Exclusive golf and beach communities near Pawleys Island with a quiet, upscale atmosphere.	\$350K-\$2M+

SECTION 04

## Schools & Education

The Grand Strand is served primarily by **Horry County Schools**, the third-largest school district in South Carolina with over 45,000 students across 56 schools. The district performs above state averages in both math proficiency (50% vs. 43% statewide) and reading proficiency (57% vs. 52% statewide).

**Top-Rated Schools:**

- HCS Early College High School — Ranked #1 in Horry County
- St. James High School — Highly rated, serves Murrells Inlet and Litchfield
- Carolina Forest High School — Top choice for Carolina Forest families
- Ocean Bay Elementary — Among the highest-performing elementary schools
- St. James Elementary — Consistently strong academic performance
- Forestbrook Elementary — Highly ranked in proficiency scores

Beyond public schools, the area offers several private and charter school options. Coastal Carolina University and Horry-Georgetown Technical College provide local higher education. Families with school-age children often gravitate toward **Carolina Forest** and the **St. James area** for their highly rated school clusters.

SECTION 05

## Climate & Lifestyle

The Grand Strand enjoys a humid subtropical climate with abundant sunshine year-round. Summers are warm with temperatures averaging 83-91 degrees F, while winters are mild at 57-61 degrees F. The region averages around 215 sunny days per year, making it ideal for outdoor activities nearly year-round.

Season	Avg High	Avg Low	Character
Spring (Mar-May)	72-82 F	50-64 F	Mild, low humidity
Summer (Jun-Aug)	87-91 F	72-76 F	Hot, afternoon storms
Fall (Sep-Nov)	70-85 F	48-68 F	Warm, pleasant

Winter (Dec-Feb)	55-61 F	34-40 F	Mild, occasional frost
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Beyond the beach, residents enjoy over 80 golf courses, extensive Intracoastal Waterway boating, world-class fishing, state parks, and a thriving restaurant and entertainment scene.

## SECTION 06

# Getting Around

The Grand Strand is primarily a car-dependent area. Major arteries include **Highway 17** (the main north-south coastal route), **Highway 501** (connecting Conway to Myrtle Beach), and **Highway 31** (the Carolina Bays Parkway, a faster inland route).

Traffic patterns shift significantly with the seasons. Summer months bring heavier tourist traffic, especially near the beach and along Highway 17. Many locals use Highway 31 and back roads to avoid congestion during peak season. **Myrtle Beach International Airport (MYR)** provides convenient access with direct flights to many major cities.

## SECTION 07

# Healthcare & Services

The Grand Strand is served by several major healthcare systems. **Tidelands Health** operates multiple facilities including Tidelands Waccamaw Community Hospital. **Grand Strand Health** (an HCA Healthcare facility) is the area's largest hospital with comprehensive services including a heart center, cancer center, and Level II trauma designation. **McLeod Health** also serves the region with facilities in the Conway and Loris areas.

## SECTION 08

# Insider Tips from Local Experts

**What locals wish they knew before moving:**

- **Visit in January, not July** — See the area as a resident, not a tourist. Winter reveals the real day-to-day lifestyle.
- **Flood insurance matters** — Many areas require flood insurance. Ask about flood zones before buying.
- **Learn the back roads** — Highway 31 and Robert Grissom Parkway will save you hours during tourist season.
- **Join local groups early** — Facebook groups for Grand Strand newcomers are an invaluable resource.

- **HOA fees vary widely** — Especially in golf and gated communities. Factor these into your monthly budget.
- **Rent before you buy** — Consider renting for 6-12 months to find the neighborhood that fits your lifestyle.
- **Hurricane prep is routine** — Locals don't panic, but they do prepare. Learn the evacuation routes.
- **The off-season is the best season** — October through April offers mild weather and the beach to yourself.

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## Ready to make the Grand Strand home?

Contact Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage for expert guidance on finding your perfect community.

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