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# LOCAL & GLOBAL LIVING

ISSUE 05



**SEASONAL ESCAPES:  
KEY FACTORS FOR A  
GETAWAY PROPERTY**



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REALTOR®

**WHAT'S YOUR HOME  
REALLY WORTH?**

**John L. Scott®**  
REAL ESTATE

**SCAN TO SEE  
YOUR ESTIMATED  
HOME VALUE!**



## Front of Tear Out Card 1



### VACATION HOME BUYING TIPS

Buying a vacation property is a daunting task. You need to consider location, price, and how often you'll use the space for it to be a worthy investment. Make the process more seamless with our three tips and you'll be relaxing in no time.



## John L. Scott<sup>®</sup>

### REAL ESTATE

**Your Name Here, REALTOR<sup>®</sup>**  
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## Back of Tear Out Card 1



### Stay In Your Price Range

It's fun to daydream about living in luxurious, faraway vacation homes when browsing property listings. But remember to stay realistic with this investment. Establish a budget and stick to it.

### Know The Area

Love a home and tempted to buy right away? Consider renting a home in the area first. This will give you a chance to explore the area and determine if the location is a perfect match for you.

### Do Your Research

Over time, you might decide to rent out your vacation home. Before signing, make sure it's allowed. An agent can help you navigate this process, ensuring you comply with state and county regulations (e.g. homeowners association, city boards).



Dear Bill and Judy,

Each season brings a chance to refresh and reimagine the spaces and experiences that make life beautiful. This edition of Local & Global Living celebrates both, from inspired home updates to adventures that take you around the world.

We begin close to home. “Which Garage Door Is Best for Your Home?” and “Light It Up” show how thoughtful design choices can elevate curb appeal and interior atmosphere alike. “Making a Long-Term Selling Plan” helps you think strategically about your next move, while “Where Classic and Comforting Combine” and “Art for the Soul” explore how timeless style and creativity bring warmth and meaning to every room.

Health and balance shine through in “Healthy Heart, Healthy Life,” and for those dreaming of a seasonal retreat, “Seasonal Escapes: Key Factors to Consider When Buying or Renting a Getaway Property” offers expert insight. You’ll also find joy in simple pleasures: “Must-Have Cleaning Hacks” to simplify daily life, and “Blooming Around the Globe: Must-See Flower Festivals,” a colorful journey through destinations that remind us why travel, like nature, renews the spirit.

As you explore these pages, remember that we are available as your trusted local real estate expert, and through our affiliation with Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®, we are connected to top firms in 70+ countries worldwide. Whether your next chapter is here at home or across the globe, we have the reach and relationships to help you make it happen.

Here’s to living beautifully wherever life takes you.

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REAL ESTATE



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CURTIS-ADAMS/PEXELS

## WHICH GARAGE DOOR IS BEST FOR YOUR HOME?

Choosing a garage door may not seem like an exciting decision, but it can completely affect the appearance of your home. It's the first thing visitors see, so you want it to be both functional and stylish. Though there are many possibilities available, here are three common ones that fit these requirements to a T. *Written by FAITH FIORILE*

### Raised panel

This option is popular among homeowners who prefer a door that is durable and dependable while also offering a traditional look. It's made largely of steel and designed to last, keeping your garage secure and safe. The primary drawback? Steel can dent if hit, and those panels may require a little TLC over time to preserve their beautiful appearance. But if you want a timeless alternative that won't break the bank, this is the one for you.

### Carriage house

For an easy way to add charm and character to your home, consider a carriage house door, which lends an old-world,

**A CONTEMPORARY GARAGE DOOR ACHIEVES A SLEEK, MODERN LOOK THANKS TO ITS GLASS PANELS, CLEAN LINES, AND MINIMALIST STYLE THAT EXUDE REFINEMENT.**

barnlike vibe. With hinges and hardware that scream "rustic elegance," it is perfect for houses with a country or vintage ambience. You can select from a variety of materials, though keep in mind that wood—a classic choice—may be more expensive. Even still, the investment may be well worth it for the great curb appeal it provides.

### Contemporary

On the flip side, a contemporary garage door achieves a sleek, modern look thanks to its glass panels, clean lines, and minimalist style that exude refinement. Just note that it may not provide the best insulation and security depending its material. With the right assets to supplement these downsides, however, this option can be just what you need to make a bold statement.

*At the end of the day, your ideal garage door will be determined by what works best for your home and lifestyle. Whether you want timeless tradition, rustic charm, or futuristic flair, there's one out there that will look great and serve you well.*

# MAKING A LONG- TERM SELLING PLAN

*Written by* MATTHEW BRADY

In life, preparation is a great motivator and stress reducer, especially when a lot is at stake. After all, the more time you have for planning a wedding, purchasing a car, or setting up a fund for your kids' college education, the better. This reality also applies to selling your house. While you don't have to worry about saving like with a home purchase, there are a number of factors that can make a long-term approach ideal. Discover some of the upsides of doing so and how to create an optimal game plan.



### **The benefits**

When it comes to selling in real estate, there's a generally agreed-upon timeline: it's recommended that you live in your home for at least three to five years first, for both fiscal reasons and pragmatic ones. Financially, a home's value will often creep up, or appreciate, during that time span, making it more valuable, while waiting gives you the opportunity to build equity on the property. Both realities can increase your net profit upon selling, even after factoring in fees like closing costs and commissions.

Holding off can also result in a tax benefit since you can avoid paying capital gains tax on any profit you gain from the sale. The general conditions to qualify for this exemption: you must have owned your home for five years, it must have been your primary residence for two of those years, and you can make no more than \$250,000 on the sale (or double that if married).

From a practical perspective, having years instead of months at your disposal gives you ample time to both get a lay of the land and prepare your place for maximum selling potential. When you aren't rushed to get it listed, decisions about which changes you want to make and which you'll forgo. You can also stagger your repairs and updates, making it easier to get them all done and absorb the total cost.



### **◀ CONSIDER CONTACTING YOUR FINANCIAL ADVISER CONCERNING THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX.**

### **How to plan the perfect sale**

A good starting point in determining when you want to sell is to take a bird's-eye view of the current market to get a gauge of your window of opportunity. For example, say you bought your property in 2022 for \$300,000 and realtor.com says its current estimated price is \$375,000,

which fares favorably to similar local homes. Since you'd be at the edge of the three-to-five-year ownership mark, you could realistically consider selling within the next year rather than waiting the full five years to take advantage of your home's present value.

In contrast, if you discover that it's now only worth \$280,000 or that a buyer's market is emerging, it could be a sign to hold off for a few more years or longer. That will give you time to boost your home's value through high-ROI upgrades or for the market to shift in your favor.



## Making home improvements

Once you establish when you may want to go to market, you can start making a thorough checklist of what you could do to improve your home to pique interest down the road. Inside and out, look at your spaces from the critical eyes of a buyer, considering questions such as the following in both the needs and wants categories.

### Needs

- Does the carpet throughout need to be cleaned, stretched, or replaced?
- Is the HVAC unit more than a decade old or the roof approaching three decades?
- Has your landscaping seen better days?

### Wants

- Does the front door cry out or a sturdier, more eye-pleasing replacement?
- Is there faded paint and nail holes that make the home feel too lived in?
- Do the light fixtures give off a 1990s vibe?

Start by making minor repairs yourself, such as adding a fresh coat of paint to your living room or fixing a leaky toilet, while scheduling out the jobs best left for professionals. And remember that this is a race and not a sprint—you don't have to get it all done at once!

*To ultimately determine if the three-to-five-year math adds up for you, it's critical that you consult with your real estate agent, especially about the current and near-future markets and the best potential return on investment. Also consider contacting your financial adviser concerning the capital gains tax. Overall, though, if you are afforded the luxury of taking a long-term approach to selling, the odds are that your stress will decrease while the benefits you receive will only compound.*





# LIGHT IT UP

Written by LAUREN KIM

**When it comes to good interior design,** there are many factors to consider, including style, color, and texture. But perhaps the most important of these by far, especially in the darker and shorter days of winter, is lighting. (Switch off your home's lamps and overhead fixtures on an overcast day or after the sun has set, and you'll see why.) Without adequate light, the beauty of everything in your home, from the artwork to the furnishings, will be dimmed. To improve the function and livability of your home, consider implementing these tips on how to best use lighting to illuminate your spaces.

## **Layer it**

Your home's interior will look its best when you incorporate at least two different kinds of artificial light sources in a space, whether it's ambient, accent, or task lighting.

## ***Ambient lighting***

To strike a good balance in a room, first select an ambient source of light—one that is bright enough to illuminate most of the space. A good choice is overhead lighting, which could include options like a chandelier or recessed ceiling lights. Whatever fixture you choose, its size should be appropriate for the room. A simple way to determine this is to measure the length and width of the room in feet and add those numbers together, the sum of which will tell you the diameter in inches that your light fixture should be.



So if you have a 10-foot-by-12-foot room, the ceiling fixture should be about 22 inches wide.

#### **Accent lighting**

Once you've decided on your ambient lighting, add accent lighting to bring warmth into the space and showcase its special features. For instance, you could add a table lamp to highlight a console table in your living room or set uplights on the floor to put focus on a colorful houseplant collection. And don't forget the corners of your rooms; you could utilize beautiful torchères or table lamps to illuminate these often overlooked areas.



#### **Task lighting**

Depending on the room and how you use it, you may also want to include lighting that can amplify and facilitate the function of the space. Examples include a desk lamp brightening a workspace in a home office and a floor lamp providing light in a reading nook.

#### **Suit your space**

Though each room should have a mix of ambient, accent, and task lighting, which ones work best will depend on the space's unique function, look, and feel. Consider these room-by-room suggestions.



shade, some wall sconces, and one or two bedside lamps for nighttime reading.

#### **Bathroom**

An oversized pendant light in the center of the space can brighten what might be an otherwise dark room. Eradicate shadows by placing a backlit mirror on the wall behind the vanity, and if you have a freestanding tub, draw attention to it by hanging a glamorous chandelier above it.



#### **Living room**

Place a semiflush drum ceiling fixture in the center, layer in an arched reading light over the sofa and a table lamp on a console table, and put a floor lamp in a corner or two to balance the space.

#### **Kitchen**

Recessed ceiling lights can brighten this area, LED strip lights tacked underneath upper cabinets will provide useful task lighting, and a chandelier hung over the kitchen table may lend extra style and ambience.

#### **Bedroom**

Softer lighting will make this room feel cozier, so think about installing an overhead fixture such as a drum flush-mount ceiling light with a linen

#### **Choose hue and brightness**

Another consideration when designing a home's lighting is the type of bulbs you use. These days, the most commonly used ones are LEDs—which are also the most energy efficient. For your main living spaces, pick ones with a warm glow. If you need a bulb for bright task lighting, such as for a laundry or craft room, get one that's about 5,000 kelvins. You can also consider the bulb's lumen rating, which describes its brightness, when buying LEDs.

For a more tailored option, select dimmable LED bulbs with an LED-compatible dimmer to easily dial their brightness up and down.



Lampshades can also soften lighting and bring in personality and style. If you want a moody look, choose thicker lampshades in dark colors; for an airy appearance, go with light-colored ones. Similarly, clear glass lampshades will allow more light to shine through while opaque ones will cut down the brightness.

#### **Create a focal point**

Light fixtures can do more than just illuminate a space—when chosen wisely, they can also help shape the vibe of the room. For instance, a crystal chandelier can add elegance to a dining room and a traditional Tiffany-style lamp can lend a classic look to a study.

When it comes to selecting the most appropriate fixtures for your home, think of style first. Here are some popular options:

#### **Black and brass metals**

These finishes will look great whether your design style is traditional, midcentury modern, or transitional. And don't be afraid to mix these metals in the same space.

#### **Natural fixtures**

Choosing ceiling lights, lamps, and other fixtures made from sustainable and eco-friendly materials like jute, wood, and glass can add a cozy or rustic look to your home.

#### **Smart lights**

Go with this option if your style is modern or if you'd like to use technology such as a smart home assistant to turn lights on and off or dim them. Most varieties will also allow you to change the color of the light.



# WHERE CLASSIC AND COMFORTING COMBINE

Interview with **DUVÄL REYNOLDS**  
Written by **MATTHEW BRADY**  
Photography by **MW CONCEPTS**



Interior designer **DuVäl Reynolds** explains how he turned a house into a home for a family in Alexandria, Virginia.

## How did your design journey begin?

I actually went to college for neurology but left school and worked in New York for a bit before moving to the DC area. I got a job at the design firm California Closets, where I discovered that I had much more of a knack and passion for design than I had realized. So, while holding a full-time job, I went back to school full-time at night to get my bachelor's degree in interior design. I opened my own firm in 2017.





**Many of your clients are attorneys. How did that happen?**

My firm is in the DC metro area, so it was kind of inevitable, but they also keep finding us. On our website, we talk about our process, not how the final results look, which attorneys appreciate. I also think somewhat like an attorney—I ask a thousand questions, am very detailed and streamlined about everything,

and anticipate well. That’s appealing to clients, especially attorneys, who are very busy, very hands-off, and do not like having to micromanage to get the job done.

**Let’s talk about the Alexandria house, which you dubbed The Meaning of Home. How did it come about?**

One of the clients found us on Instagram—funnily enough,

neither he nor his wife is an attorney. He said one of the things they liked about our work was that we include before photos on our website for each project, which we do to show clients the work we put in and where we can take their homes.

The primary goal for this project was to combine the couple’s aesthetics. He is very traditional, loves color, bling, and “wow” factors, and enjoys

having fun. She favors a modern farmhouse vibe that also focuses on comfort, especially for their children.

**The design is stunning, right from the home’s entrance. Would you explain your ideas for this area?**

In the foyer, where the pulse of the home starts, our first goal was to create effect. It needed to be high impact but

also classic enough that it didn’t need to be redone in a few years. A black-and-white checkered floor achieved just that. In addition, the stair runner is wool, which is durable yet comfortable, softens the space, and is welcoming. For the chandelier, I obviously wanted it to be impressive but gave the piece a silhouette so it wasn’t distracting.

In fact, there’s never really a star or focal point in any room I design; every element stands on its own. In this foyer, the floor is impactful, but so are the walls—which are clad with molding and heavy detail work—and, of course, the chandelier. Even the table by the banister, though it has a chaotic floral arrangement, holds its own weight rather than drawing all the attention in the room.

**The adjacent office is much darker and more traditional. Tell us about your inspiration for it:**

It's the husband's office, so I wanted it to feel like his space. For a masculine touch, we painted the walls a deep blue that was darker than the room's original shade of blue, added molding on every single wall right up to the built-ins, and peppered in leather tones, substantial hardware, and even whiskey glasses—in short, a classic smoking-room vibe. Since he's also an avid reader, I added a Chesterfield sofa for a scholastic touch.

**Would you talk about your choice of colors in the home?**

We absolutely love playing with color. Every project we do usually has a baseline of three colors that run throughout. In this one, there are mostly shades of greens, blues, and browns. One room is fully blue, while the next has accents of blue. And another room has shades of gray with green or blue touches. I wanted each space to have a major color impact but still thread the hues together in ways that aligned with our original foundational aesthetic.

As an example, the wife wanted an amazing kitchen because she's in there so often; I leaned

into comforting modern-farmhouse colors for her. But there are also a few pieces that bring in a very traditional feel for him, such as the antique-brass handles and knobs. So it was very much a blended kitchen.

**Would you explain what wallpaper adds to a project such as this?**

Wallpaper brings a sense of depth and movement that paint cannot. It often creates storylines that spark the imagination, immersing you in the room—you simply cannot get away from it, which I love.

**What were some of the most satisfying aspects of this project?**

Definitely the dining room. Because it was huge, I decided to shorten it by about four feet, despite the wife's nervousness. She wanted it to be used a lot, though, so I suggested a saloon style that feels relatable and accessible for everyone. I feel like we just nailed this room, probably more than any other one I've ever designed, because there were so many things we were trying to accomplish. Even the last window treatment I found, which features unusual cranes, felt so right.

The wife also said she wanted a "girl's room," which became the living room.



**“I feel like we just nailed [the dining room], probably more than any other one I’ve ever designed, because there were so many things we were trying to accomplish. Even the last window treatment I found, which features unusual cranes, felt so right.”**





“I love the family room with its heavy traditional elements like the coffered ceilings, the gray-patterned rug, and the white fireplace we created along with the soft, rounded sofa that brings a sense of family comfort.”

When we presented the pink sofa and flowery wallpaper for the space, the husband wasn't thrilled, but he trusted us. He then became obsessed with that room! He was shocked at how much of a masculine undertone

it had, which we achieved through some of the furniture silhouettes and color profile choices mixed in with the feminine touches that are blanketed and layered in. I'm happy it worked for both of them. In addition, I love

the family room with its heavy traditional elements like the coffered ceilings, the gray-patterned rug, and the white fireplace we created along with the soft, rounded sofa that brings a sense of family comfort.



**What's the meaning behind the name The Meaning of Home?**

I don't think the clients ever liked their house or felt comfortable in it, but they were adamant about making it a place where they could build

memories with their kids. So I was really trying to emphasize how in a finished home, there's no worry about anything needing to be worked on right away—instead, you're inviting family over and the kids are having sleepovers. This is what the meaning of home is. Home

isn't just about the pretty stuff in it; it's about the memories that start being made as soon as the project is done and enjoying the beauty of family.

**For more info, visit [duvalreynolds.com](https://duvalreynolds.com)**



# ART FOR THE SOUL

Interview with **MARTHA SPAK**  
Written by **ANDRE RIOS**  
Photography courtesy of **MARTHA SPAK**

Celebrated visual artist **Martha Spak** shares the personal take on art therapy behind her paintings and sculptures, revealing the transformative power of art on the mind.

**Tell us about your art background:**

I worked in journalism for years and began painting as my family grew—both my grandmothers painted, and their love for their craft had always resonated with me. I have been creating art for over twenty-five years now and exhibit regularly throughout the country. I love the creative process.

I'm a self-taught artist, and I create paintings and sculptures to convey an uplifting feel. I'm mostly known for my ethereal landscape paintings, but I've recently shifted to doing more abstract work, including a collection of geometric abstracts in harmonious colors.

**What inspires your art?**

The desire to capture a positive feeling. I create art without an overt political statement or message that brings people down; I just want to lift people up and broaden their perspectives. I like to think my art has a calming, nonconfrontational energy.

**What is your art-making process?**

It begins with color and composition—I want to make each color sing. I plan my palette in harmonious hues, lay out acrylic paints, and get the paint on the canvas as quickly as possible.





“ I plan my palette in harmonious hues, lay out acrylic paints, and get the paint on the canvas as quickly as possible. I then start honing the composition by strengthening the direction of the light and, oftentimes, refining the edges with a dry brush.

I then start honing the composition by strengthening the direction of the light and, oftentimes, refining the edges with a dry brush. If I need to narrow the focal point, I will add a hard element, such as diagonal lines or horizontal lines in a heavier paint. Toward the end, I assess my work to make final applications, perhaps adding a little spark to give it a breath of fresh air: a touch of color like turquoise, for instance.

**Would you discuss art's therapeutical value?**

A viewer should be able to stand in front of a work of art and identify something within it that speaks to them, such as a specific color, a familiar landscape scene, or anything else that will make them really feel at ease—and that takeaway should resonate with them long after they leave the art. For example, I'll incorporate color combinations that symbolize aspects of the seasons, a lighted path that guides the eye, or a skyscape that is bright and filled with light. I can still recall artwork from years ago that gave me an uplifting feeling; if my art can have such an impact, I think it'll have done its job.

I've carried this idea of color as a therapeutical concept into many health-care settings. About ten years ago, I had an exhibition at the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Afterward, I came back home to Maryland and thought about how wonderful it was to bring light into



those spaces and impact that audience. I also exhibited in the DC area at Sibley Memorial Hospital and at the National Institutes of Health. This colorful abstract collection was then exhibited at the University of Michigan Medical Center and at the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University.

Art can impact mental health and enhance health-care settings, but anybody could incorporate color or my visuals into their home to enjoy daily. Selections of my work are licensed and available through various retailers, including Pottery Barn and Williams-Sonoma Home.

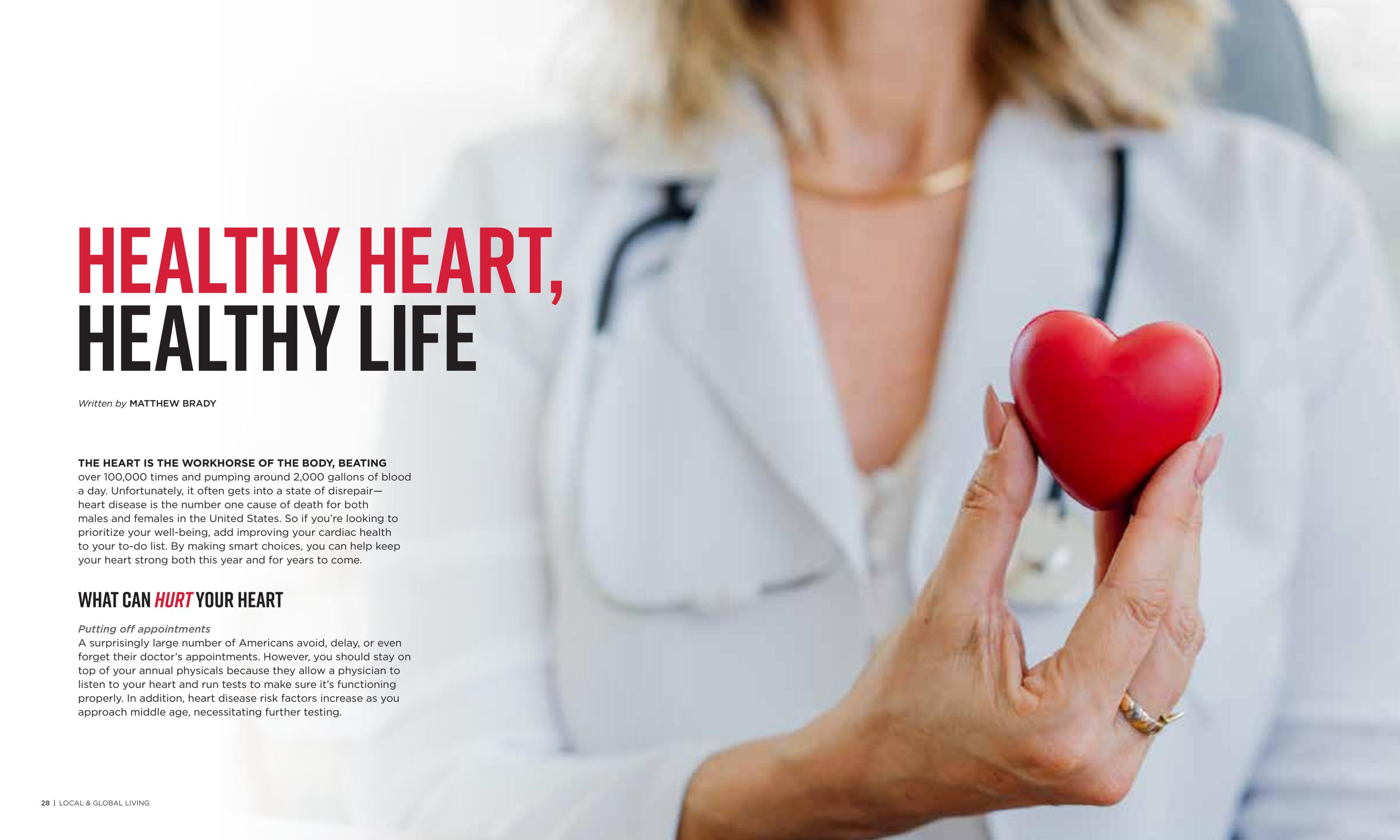
**What's next for your career?**

I am currently doing several site-specific projects, tailoring my art to fit seamlessly in public, private, and corporate settings. I'm also working on new surface designs for wall coverings, floors, fabric, and other merchandise. Whatever comes next, I hope to continue infusing positivity, joy, and harmony into everyday surroundings.

For more info, visit [marthaspak.com](http://marthaspak.com) and follow her @marthaspak



“ Art can impact mental health and enhance health-care settings, but anybody could incorporate color or my visuals into their home to enjoy daily.

A close-up photograph of a female doctor with blonde hair, wearing a white lab coat and a gold necklace. She is holding a bright red, realistic-looking heart in her hands. The background is softly blurred, showing a patient's arm in a blue hospital gown.

# HEALTHY HEART, HEALTHY LIFE

Written by MATTHEW BRADY

**THE HEART IS THE WORKHORSE OF THE BODY, BEATING** over 100,000 times and pumping around 2,000 gallons of blood a day. Unfortunately, it often gets into a state of disrepair—heart disease is the number one cause of death for both males and females in the United States. So if you're looking to prioritize your well-being, add improving your cardiac health to your to-do list. By making smart choices, you can help keep your heart strong both this year and for years to come.

## WHAT CAN **HURT** YOUR HEART

### *Putting off appointments*

A surprisingly large number of Americans avoid, delay, or even forget their doctor's appointments. However, you should stay on top of your annual physicals because they allow a physician to listen to your heart and run tests to make sure it's functioning properly. In addition, heart disease risk factors increase as you approach middle age, necessitating further testing.

### *Disregarding your meds*

Along the same lines, taking your prescribed medicines every day as recommended is vital, especially when it comes to your heart health. To help ensure that you do, invest a few bucks in a pill box, which makes organizing and remembering your meds incredibly easy.

### *Smoking*

Puffing on cigarettes is tied directly to cardiovascular disease. The chemicals inhaled cause damage to blood vessels, which can lead to greater plaque buildup in the arteries, even for those who breathe only secondhand smoke.

So if smoking is a habit of yours, vow to kick it starting today—there are numerous resources and support services available to help.

### *Overimbibing*

While alcohol in moderation is considered acceptable in some health circles, there is still debate about whether even small amounts are dangerous. Too much of it, though, is undoubtedly harmful; it can not only damage your liver but also elevate your cholesterol, insulin levels, and blood pressure, all of which are directly tied to heart issues. (More on those later.)

### *Losing sleep*

Everyone loves a good night's sleep, and so does your heart since dozing allows the organ to repair itself. Even still, people frequently don't get the recommended seven hours minimum nightly, which can impact their hormone levels. This, in turn, can create a domino effect of eating more and feeling greater stress, ultimately contributing to poor heart health. In addition, sleep deprivation and sleep disorders such as sleep apnea—an issue that disrupts both sleep and breathing—have been linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. The most effective way to get more shut-eye? Establish a sleep routine, and avoid devices, meals, and caffeinated or sugary drinks (and even excess water) a couple hours before bedtime.

### *Stressing out*

Between dealing with work, bills, traffic, and even other people, stress is an unavoidable part of life. The key is to manage it—if you don't, it can lead to not only high blood pressure but also the aforementioned loss of sleep and unhealthy coping mechanisms like smoking and excess drinking. Instead, try better alternatives such as breathing techniques and meditation.

## HOW TO **HELP** YOUR HEART

### *Know your family history*

Did your grandmother have type 2 diabetes? Does your father have high blood pressure? If so, then you are more likely to





eventually have heart problems yourself. Although you can't do anything about genetics, you *can* take steps to mitigate their impact on your health.

***Remember your ABCs (and D)***

A common mnemonic used for heart health in the medical field, the ABCs stand for aspirin, blood pressure, cholesterol, and smoking (as discussed previously). Regarding the first, taking aspirin daily may help those who have had strokes or are at high risk for cardiovascular disease; however, check with your doctor first about whether it's a safe regimen for you.

Meanwhile, blood pressure and cholesterol numbers are some of the most important ones to monitor since there are often no symptoms when either is high. Make sure to get these checked routinely—your blood pressure at every annual visit and cholesterol at least every four or five years. And because the former is the top risk factor for both heart attack and stroke, stay on top of yours by consuming less sodium and possibly even buying an at-home blood pressure machine.





A final note: if there were a D here, it would be diabetes. Elevated blood glucose levels can lead to heart disease, so ask your doctor about your fasting glucose and A1c when you discuss the ABCs.

***Watch your weight***

This makes sense on the simplest level: carrying additional fat means that your heart must work harder every day. Pay particular attention to your waist since extra fat here can be more harmful. Waist circumferences of over 40 inches for men and over 35 inches for women have been shown to increase the chances of heart disease. In addition to monitoring your numbers, make sure to stay active and follow a healthy diet. To assist with the latter . . .

***Skip the salt, sugar, and saturated fats***

Start by minimizing processed foods, which can contain high amounts of salt, sugar, and unhealthy additives. Also cut back on red meats, fried foods, and pastries since they are usually loaded with saturated fats and thus raise artery-clogging LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. While shopping for food, opt for leafy greens and other veggies, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins and keep

an eye out for the Heart-Check mark; this verifies that the product meets the American Heart Association’s requirements for being heart healthy.

***Move more***

A beneficial amount of activity doesn’t require a full-fledged workout every day. Experts recommend getting in at least 150 minutes of moderate activity per week, plus two muscle-building exercises if possible. The upsides are clear: the more you get your blood pumping, the more likely your arteries will remain wide and flexible to avoid plaque buildup and the stronger your heart will be.

***There’s no better time than the present to plan how you’ll prioritize your cardiac self-care. This guide lays a solid foundation for heading down the path to a healthier lifestyle, but also be sure to talk to your doctor, who can give you individualized advice for improving your heart health.***



# BLOOMING AROUND THE GLOBE: MUST-SEE FLOWER FESTIVALS

**EACH** SPRING, NATURE BECOMES THE WORLD'S MOST GIFTED ARTIST—PAINTING HILLSIDES, GARDENS, AND ENTIRE CITIES IN VIBRANT HUES. ACROSS CONTINENTS, FLOWER FESTIVALS CELEBRATE THIS FLEETING BEAUTY WITH A MIX OF CULTURE, CREATIVITY, AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT. FROM SWEEPING TULIP FIELDS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST TO EUROPE'S GRAND FLORAL PARADES AND ASIA'S ARTFUL BOTANICAL DISPLAYS, THESE EVENTS INVITE TRAVELERS TO SLOW DOWN, BREATHE DEEPLY, AND RECONNECT WITH THE WONDER OF THE NATURAL WORLD.



Here are five flower festivals that deserve a place on your travel calendar, each offering a unique way to experience the season in full bloom.

## 1 SKAGIT VALLEY TULIP FESTIVAL WASHINGTON STATE, US



An easy drive north of Seattle, Washington's Skagit Valley offers one of the most breathtaking floral displays in North America. Each April, endless rows of tulips, from crimson to coral to buttery yellow, stretch across the valley's fertile farmland.

The Skagit Valley Tulip Festival isn't confined to a single venue; it's an immersive driving (or cycling) route through charming country roads lined with boutique farms like Roozengaarde and Tulip Town.

Visitors can wander through meticulously planted display gardens, enjoy wine tastings, and browse artisanal markets showcasing local honey, lavender, and hand-thrown pottery.

**TRAVELER TIP:** Plan a weekend stay at a cozy inn in La Conner or Mount Vernon, and dine on Pacific Northwest seafood paired with local Chardonnay. Time your visit for mid-April, when the blooms and the light are at their most spectacular.



## 2 FERIA DE LAS FLORES MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA



Each August, Medellín—the “City of Eternal Spring”—comes alive in a kaleidoscope of color for the Feria de las Flores (Festival of Flowers). This ten-day celebration pays homage to Colombia’s floral heritage and the *silleteros*, local flower farmers who handcraft towering arrangements and carry them in a proud parade through the city’s streets.

The event is a cultural immersion: fireworks light up the skyline, music spills from open-air stages, and markets brim with

orchids, roses, and native blooms found nowhere else on earth. Medellín’s hillside neighborhoods are fragrant with celebration, while its art galleries and cafés buzz with travelers soaking in the energy.

**TRAVELER TIP:** Stay in El Poblado, a chic neighborhood filled with boutique hotels, rooftop bars, and lush courtyards. Pair the festival with a side trip to nearby Guatapé for vibrant lakeside scenery and handcrafted Colombian design.



## 3 HANAMI JAPAN



Few natural events capture the world’s imagination like Hanami, Japan’s centuries-old tradition of celebrating cherry blossoms. Each spring, usually from late March to early April, delicate pink petals blanket cities, parks, and temples—symbolizing renewal and the fleeting beauty of life.

In Tokyo, crowds gather under the blooming trees of Ueno Park and along the Meguro River, where lanterns glow at dusk. In Kyoto, the blossoms frame ancient shrines

and the Philosopher’s Path, creating postcard-perfect scenes that feel timeless. Many families and travelers alike mark the occasion with picnics beneath the blossoms, a custom that turns nature into a celebration.

**TRAVELER TIP:** Peak bloom varies by region. Plan early, and consider traveling north from Tokyo to Hirosaki or Sapporo as the season progresses. Stay in a *ryokan* (traditional inn) for an authentic and serene spring experience.

# 4

## FLORIADE CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA



As spring arrives in the Southern Hemisphere, Australia's capital celebrates with Floriade, a dazzling floral event held from mid-September through mid-October in Canberra's Commonwealth Park. Over one million blooms create a sweeping tapestry of color, shaped into intricate geometric patterns and creative designs that shift themes each year.

By day, visitors wander through tulip-lined pathways and attend horticultural talks and wellness workshops. By night, Floriade NightFest transforms the park with artful lighting, live jazz, and pop-up bars serving local wines and small plates. The atmosphere is festive yet sophisticated, a celebration of creativity, community, and the relaxed Australian lifestyle.

**TRAVELER TIP:** Base yourself in a boutique hotel near Lake Burley Griffin, then extend your trip to explore the Canberra wine district or the coastal charm of Jervis Bay.



# 5 CORSO ZUNDERT ZUNDERT, NETHERLANDS



Every September, in this small Dutch town near the Belgian border, flowers take on architectural form. The Corso Zundert—the world's largest flower parade—showcases extraordinary moving sculptures made entirely of dahlias.

Each float, often towering over 30 feet tall, is crafted by dedicated local volunteers who spend months cultivating millions

of blooms. The result is a breathtaking procession of artistry, engineering, and community pride, a cultural phenomenon where flowers quite literally come to life.

**TRAVELER TIP:** Book accommodations early; Zundert fills quickly during parade weekend. Combine your visit with a stay in Amsterdam or a tour of the Keukenhof gardens if you're traveling during tulip season.

### The art and allure of floral travel

Beyond their beauty, flower festivals reveal something profound about the places that host them. Each one reflects the local rhythm of life—the climate, the craftsmanship, and the culture that make it unique.

For travelers, these festivals offer experiences that go beyond sightseeing. They invite you to immerse, linger, and savor, to picnic under cherry trees, wander between tulip rows at golden hour, or sip a glass of wine while watching fireworks burst over a garden in full bloom.

They also shape local economies and communities. Cities that host major floral events often experience renewed energy, attracting tourism, supporting artisans, and inspiring a deeper connection between people and their landscapes.

### Follow the world in bloom

From the tulip trails of Washington State to the dahlia parades of the Netherlands, these destinations prove that beauty transcends language and geography. Each festival is a reminder to travel not just to see, but to feel—to let color, scent, and atmosphere awaken the senses.

So pack a camera, lace up your walking shoes, and plan your travels by the seasons. Because when the world is in bloom, there's no better time to explore it.

# SEASONAL ESCAPES:

KEY FACTORS FOR A GETAWAY PROPERTY



**There's something timeless about the idea of escaping—not from life, but to it. Whether it's the pull of the ocean, the calm of the mountains, or the energy of a bustling city, a getaway home offers the chance to reset your rhythm, reconnect with what you love, and make every season more memorable.**

In today's world of flexible living and remote work, more buyers and renters are seeking second homes or seasonal retreats tailored to their lifestyles. But before you pack your bags for that dream destination, it's worth taking a thoughtful look at what makes a getaway property not only inspiring but also practical, enjoyable, and enduring.

## **1/ Lifestyle first: know what you're escaping to**

The perfect getaway starts with clarity on what kind of escape you're seeking. Are you drawn to the sound of waves and ocean air or the quiet of pine forests and starry skies? Do you envision family gatherings by the lake or solo weekends in a walkable village filled with cafés and galleries?

Your seasonal home should reflect *how* you want to spend your downtime, not just where.

- For the wellness minded, mountain or desert properties offer natural serenity and access to hiking, biking, and fresh air.
- For sunseekers, coastal homes can provide year-round warmth and a ready-made sense of relaxation.

- For culture lovers, historic towns and vibrant cities offer theater, art, and dining within easy reach.
- For family traditions, a cabin near ski slopes or a lakeside retreat can become the backdrop for cherished memories that span generations.

Defining your why helps refine your where.

## 2/ Rent or buy? Matching your goals to your commitment

For many, the first step toward a second home begins with renting seasonally. This allows you to experience an area across different times of year, testing how it feels during the height of summer or the quiet of winter. It's also a smart way to gauge community culture, amenities, and travel convenience before making a long-term investment.

When you're ready to buy, your goals should guide your decision:

- **Personal use**

If it's a place you'll visit often—for weekends, holidays, or extended stays—look for proximity to airports, hospitals, and dining, as well as easy maintenance and security features.

- **Investment potential**

Properties in popular vacation markets can generate rental income when you're away. However, local regulations, seasonal demand, and management logistics vary widely.

- **Future retirement plans**

Many buyers choose a getaway home with an eye toward eventual full-time living, making location, accessibility, and health-care options more important over time.

An experienced real estate professional can help you evaluate each option's



The perfect getaway starts with clarity on what kind of escape you're seeking.

financial and lifestyle implications, ensuring that your getaway fits seamlessly into your long-term vision.

## 3/ Climate and seasonality: timing is everything

Each destination has its high season and its quiet charm in the offseason. Before purchasing or signing a lease, stay in your chosen area at different times of year. You may find that the "shoulder seasons" offer the perfect blend of beauty and tranquility.

Climate also affects maintenance and comfort. A mountain home may require snow removal and winterizing, while a coastal property often demands attention to humidity and storm preparedness. If you're seeking year-round enjoyment, consider locations with mild climates and diverse activities that adapt beautifully from season to season.

## 4/ Community and connection: more than a place to stay

A true getaway is about belonging as much as it is about retreating. Seek destinations that match your personality—places where you can form meaningful connections and feel a sense of ease each time you return.

- In resort areas, look for properties that provide concierge services, wellness amenities, or member clubs that foster connection.
- In charming small towns, explore local farmers markets, cultural festivals, and neighborhood traditions that make you feel part of the community.
- In international destinations, access to English-speaking services, reliable transportation, and safety are key considerations.

Your real estate professional, especially one with connections through

Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®, can connect you to local experts who know these markets intimately. Their insight goes beyond property listings, encompassing the lifestyle, culture, and rhythm of everyday life in each location.

**5/ Design and comfort:  
making it truly yours**

A seasonal home should feel distinct from your primary residence—a place that instantly signals you’ve entered another chapter of your life. Whether it’s a modern beachfront villa or a cozy mountain cottage, the best getaway properties reflect their surroundings through thoughtful design and materials.

Consider easy-care finishes, ample natural light, and indoor-outdoor flow. For rentals, look for furnished options that evoke a sense of place, from coastal textures and neutral palettes to rustic wood accents and cozy fireplaces.

The key is balance: your getaway should feel elevated but effortless, elegant yet comfortable—a home designed for living well.

**6/ Accessibility and ease:  
the art of the return**

The best retreat is one you can actually reach and enjoy often. Evaluate travel logistics carefully:

- Is it within a few hours’ drive or easily reached by direct flight?
- Are there convenient transportation options for guests?
- Does the property offer low-maintenance ownership (such as HOA-managed communities or reliable caretakers)?

These details can be the difference between a home you visit once a year and one that becomes part of your lifestyle.

**Your partner in the process**

Ultimately, finding the right getaway property—whether to rent or to own—is about aligning your dreams with the realities of the market. That’s where a trusted, experienced real estate professional becomes invaluable.

A skilled agent understands the nuances of second-home ownership, local rental regulations, and finding hidden gems within each community. And when you work with a member of Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®, you gain access to a network of top independent firms in 70+ countries, meaning your local expert can connect you seamlessly to trusted professionals wherever your next seasonal escape may be.

**A life in every season**

From snow-dusted chalets to oceanfront terraces and desert hideaways, a getaway home offers more than a change of scenery. It’s a gateway to a richer way of living. With the right insight, preparation, and partnership, your next seasonal escape can be both a wise investment and a personal sanctuary, a place where every return feels like coming home.



# MUST-HAVE CLEANING HACKS

Written by ALLISON GOMES



In the age of social media, it seems like there's a hack or a tip for just about everything—including cleaning. Whether you're looking to save time and money or just make the process more efficient, these clever ideas and tricks from TikTok can help keep your home spotless.

## ELIMINATE STAINS

All you really need to remove a stain is a can of shaving cream. When you get makeup, coffee, or food on your shirt or pants, just spread a little of it across the stained area and let it soak into the fabric for twenty to thirty minutes. Then give it a scrub with your fingers, and rinse the area with cold water. The stubborn stain should be gone.

## REMOVE STICKERS WITH TAPE

If you've ever been frustrated trying to remove a sticker from a newly purchased item, there's a simple solution that can save you time and effort—a piece of tape. Start by pressing the tape securely over half the sticker. Then

swiftly pull up the half that's not stuck to the sticker, and voilà: the sticker should come off smoothly without leaving any residue behind.

## STEAM-CLEAN YOUR MICROWAVE

Make this appliance sparkle by heating a water-filled microwave-safe bowl in it for at least three and a half minutes or until the water starts boiling and creates steam. This will loosen the food particles and grime, allowing you to easily wipe it all out with a wet cloth.

## STRIP YOUR TOWELS

Stripping—the process of removing built-up dirt and grime—is a great method to revive your towels. First, fill your tub with hot water and add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup each of Borax and washing soda as well as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of powdered laundry detergent, and stir everything to make sure the cleaning solution is evenly mixed. Completely submerge your towels, and let them soak for about four hours, stirring occasionally to better release the buildup. Then wash as normal, and you'll be left with noticeably cleaner towels.



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