

# Senior Living Expedition

Your roadmap to an extraordinary lifestyle



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By the time you start considering senior living communities, your lifestyle and interests have already changed. Which is fine. Do you really need home maintenance chores and late nights at loud clubs? A community geared toward you can make life easier and happier for you.

Because you're new to this path, you're likely to have plenty of questions. That's what this guide is for. We've organized information you need and answered common questions to help you make your best plan:

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# Senior Living Myth Busters

First step: Take a deep breath and relax. Modern senior living communities offer a world of possibilities, freedom, engagement, support, and expert associates who care about you first and foremost. You'll find options that smash old stereotypes:

## 1. I'll Be Lonely

Not likely. Your social life will almost certainly get a boost when you're surrounded by friendly neighbors who live, play, and dine together.

## 2. I'll Be Bored

Nope. The calendar of classes, excursions, and experiences can keep you engaged every day. Meet friends at happy hour, summit Mt. Everest with EngageVR® technology, get pampered with a massage.

## 3. The Food Will Stink

You'll be asking for seconds. Our culinary leaders have worked in the finest restaurants and create scrumptious meals. Request your favorite dish!

## 4. The Place Will Be Depressing

Senior communities today are bright, active, and friendly. Some say it's like living in a resort.

## 5. I'd Lose My Independence

You get to craft each day the way you want it. The professional team does all the chores, so you're free to soar and explore.

## 6. Nobody Visits

Modern communities are so lively that friends and family love to visit. Of course, you may be too busy to see them sometimes, and that's a good thing.

*I never thought I would find my best friend at age 97.*

Helen O., Watermark resident



# Practical Planning

Even when somebody has planned ahead, deciding when and if to move to a senior community is a big decision. Whether you're thinking about you or for a family member, start by reviewing these areas:

- Financial assets, income, insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans benefits
- Pros and cons of current living situation
- Any assistance needed with health, hygiene, and physical needs
- Issues concerning chores, driving, and other tasks
- Current social life – any sense of isolation?
- Concerns about walking or falling



*Personalized attention helps people pursue passions and stay healthy.*

# The Search Is On

Once you've decided to make the move to a senior living setting, where do you start? Every community has its own culture, amenities, opportunities, and services. You'll want to consider location, finances, and professional expertise. Check any reviews about communities and ask friends for their comments. Visit as many communities as you need to until one feels right.

These 12 tips from the American Seniors Housing Association can help you get started:

## 1. Know What You Need

Make an objective list of necessary services and support, both current and anticipated. Maintaining independence, getting help with bathing and dressing, managing medication, maximizing safety – knowing upfront what's needed can help define budget and choice.

## 2. Establish A Budget

How much can you spend on senior living each month? Many homeowner expenses will be included in monthly fees – meals, utilities, and taxes, for example. As you're planning, be mindful of other resources that can help, such as long-term care insurance or the Aid & Attendance benefit for veterans and their surviving spouses. Don't overlook any resources that can help.

## 3. Determine A Location

The real estate mantra – location, location, location – applies. Is it meaningful to stay close to the current neighborhood? Is proximity to a major medical center most important? Is the location vital for the sake of adult children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Which location is “it”?

## 4. List Desires

Your must-have list should include whatever is non-negotiable in making this move – a community that accepts pets or offers a comprehensive wellness program, for instance. Create a “wish list” with everything hoped for, such as an on-site guest suite for visitors, a fitness center, or an in-house branch of a favorite bank.

## 5. Visit Websites

A community's website should describe services and amenities, the continuum of care available, and life enrichment programs. Some communities also provide general information about successful aging, caregiver support, and senior living. Make a list of the communities you'd like to know more about – or visit.



## **6. Read Online Reviews**

Check Caring.com, SeniorAdvisor.com, and other sites for reviews by residents and families concerning the communities you're interested in.

## **7. Don't Forget About Facebook**

Check out the community's Facebook page. Read the comments. Look at the photos. See what you can learn about lifestyle, residents, activities, programs – even the quality of dining.

## **8. Ask Around**

Anyone who's been through the process – for themselves or on behalf of a loved one – may offer helpful insights. Talk to a trusted family physician, clergy member, friends, family, and colleagues. You may discover ideas you haven't thought about and information you need to know.

## **9. Make Preliminary Contact**

Shorten a long list of potential communities by phoning or emailing. Prepare questions based on needs, desires, and budget. Figure out which communities will be important to visit in person.

## **10. Go Visit**

An in-person visit pays huge dividends. Watch for: How residents and staff interact. The mood of the community. Are residents actively engaged, sitting quietly, or out of sight? Do you see handrails, grab bars, and emergency call systems for safety? Is it clean and up to date? Are you greeted promptly and with friendliness? Most of all, see if a place feels like it could be home. Ask questions, take notes, and consider bringing along a friend or relative so you can compare notes.

## **11. Review and Revisit**

Schedule a new round of visits to your top prospects. Return to each community at a different time than your last visit – even consider visiting evenings and weekends. See what it's like when senior management isn't on site.

## **12. Consult an Attorney**

Mistakes here can be expensive, both financially and emotionally. Retirement community contracts can be long and complicated. So make sure you understand the ins and outs before you sign anything. Get a professional on your side.

# Joys & Benefits of Socializing

Social connections are widely known to contribute to health and happiness. With age, it can become more difficult to get together with friends or meet new people. It's easy to feel isolated, which studies show is associated with decreased cognitive function and more symptoms of anxiety and depression. Senior communities provide a natural antidote.

Living in a community creates opportunities to meet people every day. Socializing and a more active lifestyle become the norm. People gather for meals, take classes together, play bridge, go on group excursions, talk about their lives, and simply enjoy one another. The results? Everything from greater self-confidence to increased empathy, renewed sense of purpose, and better heart health.

## What The Studies Show

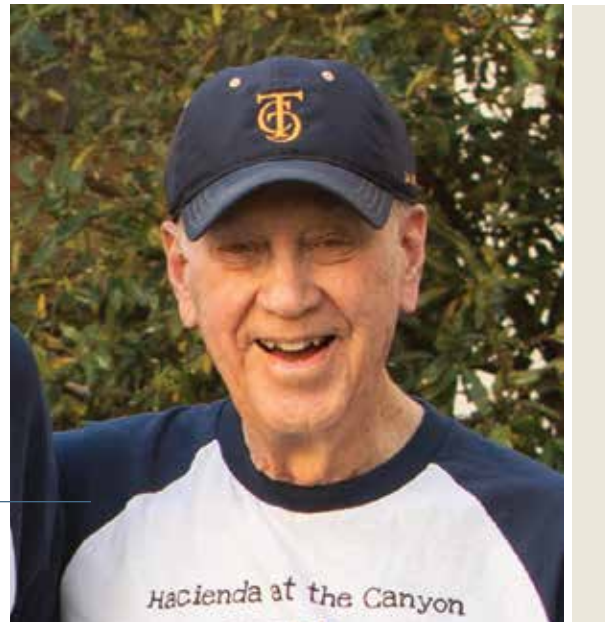
Learn more about the impact of socializing:

[whereyoulivematters.org](http://whereyoulivematters.org)

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*It's easy to make new friends here. Knock on any door and an interesting person will answer.*

John D., Watermark Resident



# It's All About You

Wherever you choose to live should feel like home to you. As you visit different senior communities, think about what makes you smile most: Do people seem friendly and engaged? Is the atmosphere lively and comfortable? Modern and clean? While it's essential to have the amenities and services you require, it's just as important to feel like you fit in. After all, you won't be living among strangers for long. In a positive setting, new neighbors become friends who feel like family.

When residents and associates care about one another, a community thrives. Personal and professional relationships create mutual trust and compassion. Each person feels empowered to pursue interests, discover new passions, and continue to grow. Consistency is spiced up with spontaneity. So a painting class might erupt into a dance party, or a book club meeting could become a group outing. And whether you're highly sociable or cherish your solitude, everyone at every level of care should feel accepted and appreciated.

At Watermark Retirement Communities®, our founders David Freshwater and David Barnes envisioned enhanced senior living more than 35 years ago. We live by these words every day:

*We believe in the power of the human spirit. We believe every person – no matter where they come from, how they look, what they believe, who they love, what they can do, or how old they are – deserves a life filled with purpose, possibility, and joy.*

We hope you find a senior community that feeds your soul and encourages you to live life to the fullest.

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*My mother lived here ... I love living here! They have so many activities. It's like my mother used to say – if she was in her apartment alone, it's because she wanted to be.*

Kaye H., Watermark resident









# Tips for Caregivers

The lawn's a mess. The house is cluttered. You notice bills piling up and unfilled prescriptions. These are signs that it's time to have that important talk with your loved one. It's a delicate subject. Seniors often resist the notion that they can't do everything the way they once did.

Approach the topic with love, not criticism. Include other family members, and find out about options in advance. As a caregiver, your circumstances, availability, and emotional resources will be key factors to consider.

The great news is that modern senior living communities are nothing like they were 50 years ago. Most people's lives are improved as soon as they move in, engage in community life, and have the support they need. As a caregiver, you'll experience peace of mind from knowing that your loved one lives in a safe and caring environment, and that your relationship remains strong.

## **Does Your Loved One Need Help**

Check out these 10 signs:

<https://www.wherelyoulivematters.org/10-signs-your-aging-parent-may-need-help/>

## **Broaching The Subject**

How to start positive conversations about senior living choices:

<https://www.wherelyoulivematters.org/tackling-the-topic-tips-for-adults-talking-to-their-parents-about-senior-living-choices/>

# Moving Made Easy

How do you pack up and leave a home filled with memories and treasures? While downsizing can sound scary, you probably have plenty of stuff you don't need. The trick is to keep the best and leave the rest. It's called "rightsizing." And you'll have help along the way.

Senior communities have knowledgeable team members who help residents every day as they prepare for and make big moves. Local companies also cater to seniors. You can attend workshops on moving and get hands-on assistance to make the whole process as painless as possible.

## **Declutter**

No, you don't need those old phone bills or that shirt that never fit right. Shred, toss, or give away anything obvious that just takes up space.

## **Take Your Time**

Don't try to pack all at once. Limit yourself to an hour or two a day. Play music, take breaks, make it as stress-free as possible.

## **Keep a List**

There's a lot to do, and making a list will keep you organized. It takes less time to write it down now than to go back later for something you forgot.

## **Distribute Keepsakes**

Tell any family members that it's time for them to collect school trophies, prom dresses, and other items you've kindly been storing for them.

## **Key Documents**

Assemble all deeds, wills, medical records, birth certificates, passports, and other vital documents. Keep them all in one place, and let family members know where they are.

## **Keep What Matters Most**

Pick your favorite artwork, easy chair, travel mementos, and such to make your new apartment feel like home. Take pictures of the rest and enjoy your memories.



We at Watermark Retirement Communities® wish you the best of luck as you explore the possibilities available to you. Ask questions, talk with family, and let us know if we can help you with any information you might need. Visit senior communities in person to find one that feels like home. You'll know when it's right!