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Up, up and away: Hot-air balloons float over the Deschutes River with the Cascade Mountains in the background near downtown during Balloons Over Bend, one of the city's annual festivals.

By Jason Mitchell

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Life on Vacation: Bend, Ore.: The great outdoors beckon in 'the new Boulder'

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LIFE ON VACATION

Life on Vacation is a weekly look at the second-home market.

Best for: Year-round outdoor-sports fans.

Claim to fame: Benders take the outdoors - and their beer - seriously: 71 parks, 48 miles of trails and four microbreweries.

Don't miss: The annual Bend Film Festival in October.

Getting there: Airport in Redmond, Ore., is 10 minutes away with flights to major Western cities.

Tourism information: visitbend.com

By **Larry Olmsted**, Special for USA TODAY

Bend's popularity as a second-home destination may be short-lived. Many buyers lured here by the small city's outdoor living, natural beauty and mild weather are finding their vacation homes too good to be true and are relocating as full-timers.

That's what happened to outdoor journalist Tim Neville, whose visits led him to move from Santa Fe. Neville describes Bend — with its easy access to an array of outdoor activities, including skiing, biking, white-water rafting and kayaking, hiking, golf and world-class fly-fishing — as "the new Boulder," a reference to Colorado's athletic mecca. The "Bend side (of the Cascade Mountains) has all the fun associated with the Pacific Northwest, but without the rain," he says.

Mount Bachelor, one of the Northwest's top ski resorts, is just 22 miles from downtown, and the city is surrounded by volcanic peaks. Mount Bachelor averages more than 300 inches of snow a year, but Bend gets just 22. The city also sits on the Deschutes River, which is popular with anglers.

Realtor Virginia Ross of Coldwell Banker, who has lived in Bend for 15 years, relocated from another top second-home destination: Oahu. "There is great recreation out just your front door all year long. I was so happy to go from palm trees to juniper trees. Seasons were a change for which I am thankful each day."

Bend also offers good values. The city of about 65,000 is relatively young. Its first incarnation as a lumber town ended with an industry slump in the 1980s, leaving it with a district of old mill buildings near downtown, which now are being converted to dining and retail. Downtown is small, and much of the city is within walking distance of the main commercial area. Sprawl is virtually non-existent, and Bend is split into east and west sides with downtown on the east.

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ON THE MARKET



Enlarge

Butterfly Multi-media Design



Enlarge By Tanya Tonge, Coldwell Banker Bend

This ranch house is located in the gated Fall Creek neighborhood.

Midrange price: \$639,000

Bedrooms: 2

Bathrooms: 2½

Size: 2,202 square feet

Features: Designed for dining with chef's kitchen, three eating areas, enclosed courtyard with fountain and gas fireplace, two indoor fireplaces, formal library/office, large deck, two-car garage.

The most desirable residential neighborhoods are on the west side, which borders the Deschutes National Forest. A bit farther out, many of the new residential resort communities resemble upscale private golf communities elsewhere but with lower prices than their counterparts in even the most rural parts of Montana and Idaho.

A look at three Bend neighborhoods

Broken Top. Five minutes from downtown, this west-side neighborhood has about 350 houses, 40% of them second homes, which share pools, tennis courts and other amenities. Houses in the non-gated Parks section run \$349,000-\$700,000. More popular is gated Fall Creek, where most houses are \$499,000-\$699,000.

NorthWest Crossing. This large planned neighborhood on the west side is being built under a 20-year master plan with an emphasis on energy efficiency. About a third of the projected 1,200 houses have been built. The pedestrian-friendly neighborhood includes parks, stores, restaurants and schools. Town houses run \$359,000-\$479,000, and free-standing houses are \$450,000-\$900,000. www.northwestcrossing.com

Pronghorn. Outside Bend to the east, this is quickly emerging as the highest-profile private golf community in the region. Pronghorn features courses by Jack Nicklaus and Tom Fazio, along with restaurants, spa, shops, and plenty of outdoor recreation. Real estate offerings include custom homes and villas, lots and a fractional residence club. Prices range from \$164,800 for a one-twelfth fractional ownership to \$3.7 million for the priciest custom estate homes. Pronghornclub.com

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