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NC Tourist Towns Rank Among Highest—and Lowest—in Housing Costs

Housing has become prohibitively costly in many of America's best-known tourist communities, and two North Carolina towns are near the top of the list, according to a new study by The Wyndham Financial Group. However, five others rank among the most affordable.

Among the nation's 50 least affordable tourist destinations for housing, the beach community of Wrightsville Beach ranks 21st and the mountain community of Highlands is 38th. The rankings use a formula based on housing prices, rent levels, and local incomes.

"This is a dangerous situation," says William Hettinger, Wyndham Financial's president and CEO. "Skyrocketing prices of second homes drive up all housing costs, forcing year-around residents to move. Local businesses can't find or keep workers as rents become unaffordable. As a result, communities risk losing the sense of community and quality-of-life that made them attractive in the first place." He emphasized that North Carolina's tourist towns face less of a crisis than those in Colorado, where Aspen, with average home prices over \$4 million, tops the list, followed closely by nearby Snowmass Village.

The Wyndham Financial Group is a Connecticut-based consulting organization that focuses on housing and community development. Hettinger explores the specific issues faced by tourist communities in his new book, *Living and Working in Paradise: Why Housing is Too Expensive and What Communities Can Do About It* (2005, Thames River Publishing, \$21.95).

"Interestingly," Hettinger notes, "the steep rise in housing prices has not occurred in every beach-and-mountain community, even in places that are attracting large numbers of second-home buyers." Of the 250 communities listed, North Carolina boasts five of the 50 most affordable, with typical housing prices under \$140,000. These include the outer banks towns of North Topsail Beach, Nags Head, and Kill Devil Hills, as well as the beach community of Oak Island and the mountain destination of Beech Mountain.

Hettinger points out that some of the nation's most expensive communities are recognizing their problems and taking decisive action. Aspen—with the highest-priced housing—is a good example, as income-based affordable housing is now provided to 64 percent of its residents.

Hettinger's book, *Living and Working in Paradise*, examines in detail the ways in which various communities have begun to address their housing crises, to determine which approaches have the highest rates of success. More information about the book, the housing problems faced by tourist towns, and the full rankings of 250 communities can be found on the Wyndham Financial Web site, <http://www.wyndhamfinancial.com>.

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Notes: Review copies of Mr. Hettinger's book are available on request to journalists and broadcast hosts. Additional media resources, including the affordability rankings presented in various ways, can be found at <http://www.wyndhamfinancial.com/media.html>.