

The 2026 Relocation Guide to Northeast Pennsylvania

Everything You Need to Know Before Moving to Pike, Monroe, Wayne & Lackawanna County

HELPING RELOCATION BUYERS MAKE SMART MOVES

Prepared by your Northeast PA relocation specialist — your trusted guide to finding the right community, the right lifestyle, and the right home in one of the fastest-growing relocation corridors in the country.

Why So Many People Are Moving to Northeast PA

Something remarkable has been happening across Pike, Monroe, Wayne, and Lackawanna counties over the past several years. Buyers from New York City, northern New Jersey, and the Philadelphia metro are discovering what residents here have always known: you can have significantly more — more house, more land, more peace, more outdoor recreation — for dramatically less money than what you'd spend in the tri-state metro area. The combination of lower property taxes, a lower overall cost of living, and the explosive growth of remote and hybrid work has opened a door that simply didn't exist for prior generations of buyers.

The Poconos and surrounding Northeast PA communities offer something that's genuinely rare in today's real estate market: lifestyle and value in the same package. Whether you're chasing lakefront living, mountain views, quiet country roads, or a vibrant small-city atmosphere, this region delivers. And with the ongoing flexibility of remote work, many buyers no longer have to choose between a reasonable commute and a home they actually love.



More House, More Land

Your dollar stretches dramatically farther here than in any NJ or NYC suburb.



Outdoor Lifestyle

Lakes, mountains, hiking, skiing — the Poconos deliver year-round adventure.



Remote Work Ready

Hybrid and fully remote roles make distance from the city a non-issue for many buyers.



Lower Property Taxes

PA property taxes are substantially lower than NJ — one of the biggest financial drivers.

Where Buyers Are Coming From

Understanding who is moving to Northeast PA helps paint a picture of the broader relocation trend. The single largest driver of buyer activity in this region is New Jersey — particularly northern and central NJ communities where property taxes have become a serious financial burden and home prices have surged well beyond what many families consider sustainable. These buyers are not downgrading; they're making a strategic move to extract maximum value from their real estate equity while dramatically improving their quality of life.

New York City and the greater NYC metro area represent the second-largest pool of relocating buyers. Many of these individuals spent the pandemic years reconsidering their relationship with urban density and have now made the decision to plant roots somewhere quieter, greener, and more affordable. Philadelphia and its suburban Pennsylvania ring contribute a third distinct buyer segment — often looking for recreational property or a primary home with better school options and more outdoor access. Interestingly, secondary interest from Florida and California-based buyers is also emerging, as remote workers untethered from geography increasingly discover Northeast PA's value proposition.

Primary Relocation Markets

1 New Jersey

Northern & central NJ — the dominant source of relocating buyers fleeing high taxes and home prices.

2 New York / NYC Metro

City dwellers and suburbanites seeking space, quiet, and affordability after years of urban fatigue.

3 Philadelphia / Suburban PA

Buyers seeking recreational property or better value within their home state.

Secondary & Emerging Markets

Beyond the primary tri-state corridor, Northeast PA is attracting growing interest from Florida-based buyers seeking to escape heat and high insurance costs, and California residents who have gone fully remote and are hunting for value in less competitive markets. This national interest is a sign of just how compelling the region's combination of price, lifestyle, and access has become on a broader scale.

ⓘ Northeast PA is now drawing buyer interest from over 15 states — a trend accelerating heading into 2026.

The 4 Counties Explained

Northeast Pennsylvania is not a monolith — each of the four counties in this relocation corridor has its own distinct character, price point, lifestyle appeal, and buyer profile. Understanding the differences is the single most important step you can take before beginning your home search. Buyers who skip this step often end up in the wrong county for their lifestyle, and that mismatch can undermine an otherwise smart relocation decision. Here's a high-level overview of each county, with deeper dives to follow.



Pike County

The growth leader. Vacation-style living year-round, strong demand, and some of the most desirable lake and nature communities in the state. Best for buyers seeking a second-home feel as a primary residence.



Monroe County

The most accessible Pocono area, with strong buyer demand and excellent highway access to NJ and NYC. Best for commuters, hybrid workers, and buyers who want convenience alongside outdoor living.



Wayne County

Home to Lake Wallenpaupack and the charming towns of Hawley and Honesdale. Best for buyers seeking authentic lake living, small-town character, and a true lifestyle change.



Lackawanna County

Home to Scranton — a real city with walkability, amenities, arts, and affordability. Best for buyers who want urban convenience at a fraction of metro-area cost.

Pike County Deep Dive

GROWTH LEADER

Pike County has emerged as the crown jewel of Northeast Pennsylvania's relocation boom. Situated directly on the Delaware River border with New Jersey, it offers some of the most direct access to the tri-state metro area of any Pocono county — yet the moment you cross that border, the world feels entirely different. Rolling forested hills, pristine lakes, private communities, and a pace of life that feels genuinely restorative have made Pike County the top destination for buyers chasing a vacation-quality lifestyle on a permanent basis.

The county's growth has been consistent and strong. Home values have appreciated meaningfully over the past decade, yet prices still compare favorably to what buyers would pay for equivalent space in NJ or Westchester. Lake communities are among the most sought-after properties in the county — from Hemlock Farms and Saw Creek Estates to Dingmans Ferry and Milford Borough, each community offers a distinct flavor of Pocono living. Milford, the county seat, is a genuinely lovely small town with restaurants, galleries, and a walkable Main Street that surprises most first-time visitors.

Who Pike County is For

- Buyers seeking lake access or waterfront living
- Remote workers who value nature and privacy
- Buyers converting second homes to primary residences
- Families wanting outdoor recreation as part of daily life
- NJ buyers looking for the shortest possible relocation distance

Key Communities

- Milford Borough — charming, walkable county seat
- Hemlock Farms — gated community, amenities, families
- Saw Creek Estates — recreational, lake access, HOA
- Dingmans Ferry — rural, private, nature-first
- Blooming Grove — wooded privacy with great value

Monroe County Deep Dive

MOST ACCESSIBLE

Monroe County is the heart of the Poconos — and the county that most people picture when they think of Northeast Pennsylvania. It's home to Stroudsburg, East Stroudsburg, Mount Pocono, and dozens of well-established recreational communities. Its defining advantage is access: I-80 cuts directly through the county, putting the George Washington Bridge within roughly 75–90 minutes on a good day, and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area sits right at its eastern edge. For buyers who need to maintain any connection to the NJ or NYC metro — whether for occasional office days or family visits — Monroe is often the natural choice.

The buyer demand in Monroe is real and sustained. The county has been absorbing a large share of the tri-state relocation wave, which has pushed prices up meaningfully from the deeply discounted levels seen a decade ago. That said, buyers can still find significantly more home for their dollar here than anywhere in suburban New Jersey. The recreational infrastructure is exceptional — ski resorts, whitewater rafting, hiking trails, outlet shopping, and a growing restaurant and brewery scene give Monroe a livability profile that goes well beyond weekends.

Best for Commuters

I-80 access makes Monroe the top choice for hybrid workers who need to be in NJ or NYC one to three days per week.

Recreational Infrastructure

Camelback Mountain, Shawnee, Big Boulder — Monroe is surrounded by year-round recreation options at every budget.

Established Communities

From Stroudsburg neighborhoods to private Pocono communities, Monroe has deep inventory across price points.

Growing Amenities

Restaurants, breweries, retail, healthcare, and schools have grown significantly to serve the expanding population.

Wayne County Deep Dive

LAKE + SMALL-TOWN CHARM

Wayne County is, for many buyers, the most emotionally compelling of the four counties. It doesn't have the fastest highway access or the largest inventory, but it has something harder to quantify: genuine character. The county is anchored by Lake Wallenpaupack — Pennsylvania's largest man-made lake and one of the most beloved recreational destinations in the entire region. The towns of Hawley and Honesdale have both experienced meaningful revitalization in recent years, with independent restaurants, art galleries, boutique shops, and a growing creative community that gives them a personality well beyond what you'd expect from small northeastern Pennsylvania towns.

Buyers who choose Wayne County are typically making a deliberate lifestyle decision. They're not optimizing for highway access or big-box retail proximity — they're prioritizing the quality of their daily environment: the view from their porch, the walk to a good coffee shop, the ability to kayak on a weekday morning. Lake Wallenpaupack properties range from modest seasonal cottages to substantial lakefront estates, and the surrounding communities offer private lots, wooded acreage, and the kind of privacy that's simply unavailable closer to the metro. If you have even a moderate degree of remote work flexibility, Wayne County deserves serious consideration.

Lake Wallenpaupack

PA's largest lake — boating, fishing, swimming, lakefront dining. The anchor of Wayne County's lifestyle appeal.

Hawley Borough

Revitalized downtown, destination dining, arts scene, and walkability — a hidden gem of Northeast PA.

Honesdale

The county seat — charming, affordable, and increasingly popular with young families and remote workers.

Privacy & Land

Wayne County offers some of the best value for private wooded acreage in the entire Northeast PA region.

Lackawanna County Deep Dive

AFFORDABILITY + WALKABILITY

Lackawanna County is the outlier in this group — and increasingly, a very compelling one. While the other three counties are primarily rural or semi-rural in character, Lackawanna is anchored by Scranton, a real mid-sized city with a historic downtown, a growing food and culture scene, multiple colleges and universities, a healthcare hub, and genuine walkability that you simply cannot find anywhere else in this relocation corridor. For buyers who want the financial benefits of leaving the metro area but aren't ready to fully embrace rural living, Scranton and its surrounding communities offer a genuinely attractive middle path.

The affordability in Lackawanna County is striking. Home prices in Scranton and its suburbs remain among the lowest of any mid-sized city in the northeastern United States, and property taxes — already lower than NJ across all of PA — are particularly favorable here. Buyers regularly find well-maintained three- and four-bedroom homes in walkable neighborhoods for prices that would seem impossible anywhere in the tri-state metro area. The region has also benefited from infrastructure investment, with an Amtrak station, regional airport, and highway access all within reach. For retirees, healthcare workers, educators, or remote professionals who want urban convenience at a deep discount, Lackawanna County is the most underrated option in this entire guide.

Lackawanna by the Numbers

\$185K

Median Home Price

Scranton-area median — fraction of any metro equivalent

3rd

Largest City in PA

Scranton metro brings real city infrastructure

Who Lackawanna County is For

- Buyers who want walkable urban neighborhoods at low cost
- Retirees seeking healthcare access and city amenities
- First-time buyers needing maximum purchasing power
- Remote workers who want a real city feel without city prices
- Buyers who want to be close to cultural institutions, colleges, and dining

✔ Scranton's downtown has seen significant investment and revitalization — this is a rising market.

Lake Life in Northeast PA

For many relocation buyers, the lake is the dream — and Northeast Pennsylvania delivers that dream more accessibly than almost anywhere else in the Northeast. The region is dotted with beautiful lakes ranging from intimate private ponds to Lake Wallenpaupack's sprawling 5,700 acres. Understanding the lake lifestyle — and what it actually means to live it year-round rather than just on weekends — is essential for buyers considering lake-adjacent or lakefront properties.

Year-round lake living in Northeast PA is genuinely remarkable. Summers bring boating, swimming, fishing, kayaking, and paddleboarding. Fall delivers some of the most spectacular foliage in the country, reflected in glassy water with almost no crowds. Winter transforms lake communities into quiet, peaceful retreats — many lake homeowners describe the off-season as their favorite time of year. Spring brings renewal, the return of migratory birds, and the anticipation of another full season. The "vacation feel every day" appeal that draws buyers to lake communities is not marketing hyperbole — it's the lived experience of residents who wake up to that view every morning.



Summer Recreation

Boating, fishing, swimming, water skiing, kayaking — lakes here support the full range of warm-weather recreation from Memorial Day through Labor Day and beyond.



Winter Serenity

Ice fishing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and peaceful lakeside living make winter on the lake a unique and beloved season for year-round residents.



Fall Foliage

Northeast PA is one of the best places in the country for autumn color — and watching the foliage change from your lakefront home is an experience buyers describe as life-changing.

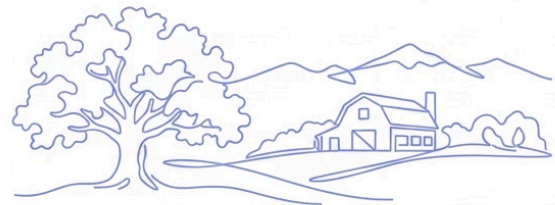
Best Areas by Lifestyle

One of the most common mistakes buyers make is falling in love with a property before they've honestly assessed whether the surrounding area fits their lifestyle. Northeast Pennsylvania offers four distinct county personalities, and the best county for you depends almost entirely on how you actually want to live — not just what looks good in listing photos. Use this guide to honestly match your priorities to the right geography before you begin seriously touring homes.



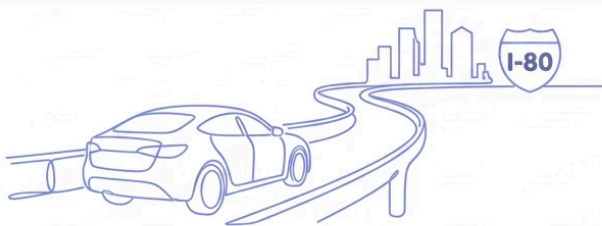
LAKE LIFESTYLE

PIKE & WAYNE COUNTIES (LAKE WALLENPAUPACK)



PRIVACY & LAND

WAYNE & MONROE COUNTIES (RURAL AREAS)



COMMUTER CONVENIENCE

MONROE COUNTY (I-80 ACCESS)



WALKABLE CITY LIVING

LACKAWANNA COUNTY (SCRANTON)

The right answer for your family is the county that matches your primary lifestyle driver — not the county with the lowest price or the most listings. A buyer who prioritizes daily lake access will be frustrated in Scranton, just as a buyer who needs walkable restaurants and a gym will feel isolated in a rural Pike County lake community. Be honest about how you actually live, and let that drive your county selection first.

Cost of Living Comparison

The financial case for relocating to Northeast Pennsylvania from the NYC/NJ/PA metro area is compelling — and for many buyers, it's the primary driver of their decision. The savings are not marginal; they are substantial and immediate. Between dramatically lower property taxes, significantly lower home prices, and a lower overall cost of living, buyers who make this move often find themselves with hundreds or even thousands of dollars per month in additional financial breathing room from day one.

Property Tax Comparison

New Jersey has among the highest property tax rates in the nation — effective rates often run between 2% and 3% of assessed home value annually. Pennsylvania's effective property tax rates in Pike, Monroe, Wayne, and Lackawanna counties typically run between 1% and 1.8%, depending on the municipality. On a \$400,000 home, that difference can amount to \$4,000–\$8,000 per year in tax savings alone. Over a 10-year horizon, that's a genuinely significant financial delta that compounds in your favor.

Monthly Cost of Living Savings

Beyond property taxes, day-to-day costs are meaningfully lower across groceries, dining, services, and entertainment. Buyers relocating from Bergen County NJ or Westchester frequently report reducing their total monthly household expenditure by \$1,500 to \$3,000 while simultaneously living in a larger, better-appointed home. When you factor in eliminated or reduced transportation costs for remote workers, the financial picture becomes even more favorable.

40%

Lower Home Prices

Typical savings vs. comparable NJ suburbs for equivalent square footage and lot size

\$6K+

Annual Tax Savings

Estimated annual property tax savings vs. NJ equivalent on a mid-range home

\$2K

Monthly Savings

Average monthly household cost reduction reported by relocating buyers

What Your Budget Buys

Perhaps the most visceral part of the relocation conversation is the moment a buyer realizes what their existing budget — or the proceeds from their metro-area home sale — can actually purchase in Northeast Pennsylvania. The contrast is striking across every price tier. Whether you're a first-time buyer looking for entry-level affordability or a move-up buyer looking to maximize space and setting, the value equation here is dramatically more favorable than anything available in the tri-state metro.

Entry Level: Under \$300K

In Lackawanna or Monroe County, \$250K–\$300K gets you a well-maintained 3-bedroom, 2-bath home in a walkable neighborhood or established community. In NJ, that same budget buys a condo or a deeply discounted fixer in a compromised location. In Northeast PA, you're buying a real home with a yard.

Higher End: \$600K+

At \$600K and above, Northeast PA delivers genuinely estate-level properties — lakefront homes, custom builds on multi-acre lots, and architect-designed residences that would require \$2M+ in the metro area. This tier represents the most dramatic value proposition of all, and is increasingly drawing equity-rich NYC and NJ sellers who are rolling profits into something truly exceptional.

Mid-Tier: \$350K–\$550K

This is the sweet spot for most relocating buyers. At this price in Pike or Wayne County, you're looking at 4-bedroom homes with private lots, lake community access, quality finishes, and often acreage. In NJ, \$450K in most of Bergen or Morris County is a modest 3-bedroom that needs work. The lifestyle gap is enormous.

Biggest Mistakes Buyers Make

Relocating to a new region is one of the most significant decisions a family or individual will make, and the stakes are high enough that the most common mistakes are worth examining in detail. These aren't hypothetical errors — they are patterns that experienced Northeast PA relocation agents see repeatedly, and understanding them in advance can save you considerable time, money, and frustration. Forewarned is forearmed.

→ Choosing the House Before the Location

Falling in love with a beautiful listing before understanding the surrounding county, township, and community is the single most common relocation mistake. A gorgeous home in the wrong lifestyle environment — too remote, wrong commute, wrong vibe — will leave you unhappy regardless of how beautiful the property is. Always lock in your county and community criteria first, then search for homes within that geography.

→ Ignoring Property Maintenance Realities

Rural and semi-rural properties — especially those with wells, septic systems, long driveways, large lots, or lake access — carry maintenance responsibilities that are genuinely different from suburban homeownership. Budget your time, energy, and finances accordingly, and ask detailed questions about maintenance history before making an offer.

→ Underestimating Travel Distance

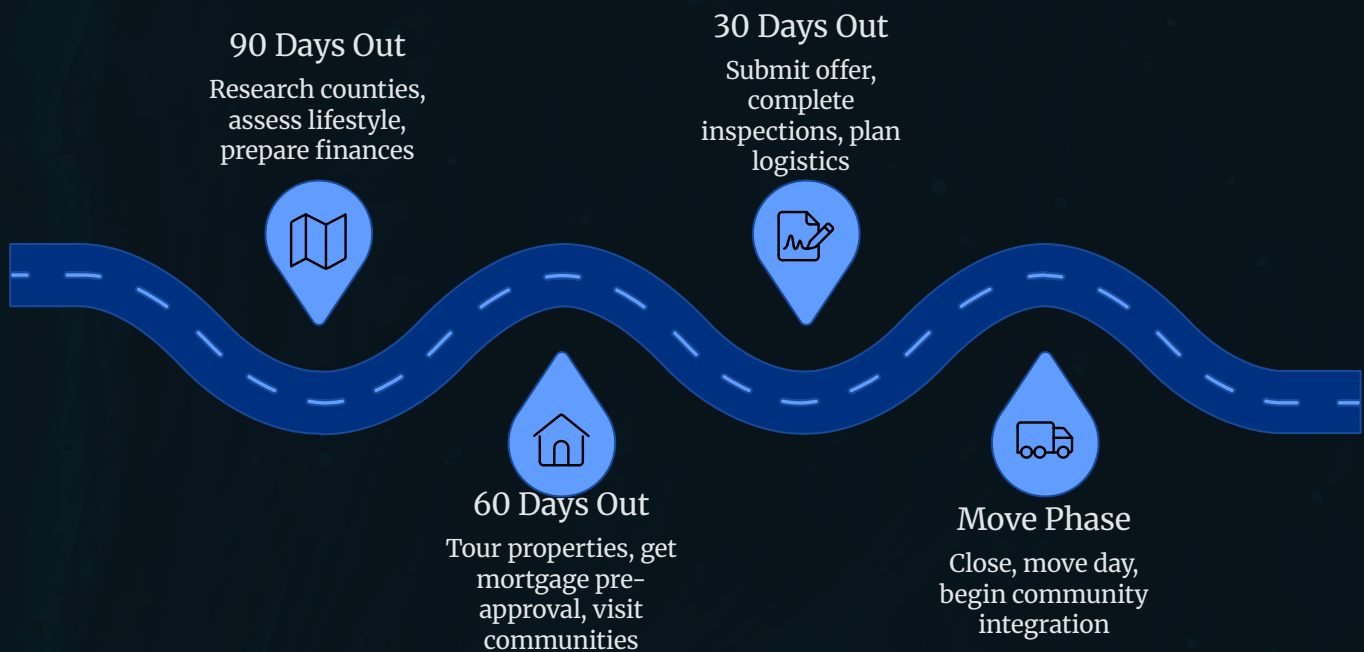
Buyers who visit on a Sunday often misjudge how a commute will feel on a Tuesday morning in January. Drive the route you'd actually need to drive, at the time you'd actually drive it, in real conditions before committing to a location. Rural roads that feel charming on a fall weekend can feel very different after an ice storm.

→ Not Understanding Lifestyle Differences

Life in Northeast PA is genuinely different from life in the NYC/NJ metro. That's mostly a wonderful thing — but it requires honest self-assessment. If you depend on same-day delivery, walkable errands, dense restaurant options, or specific cultural amenities, make sure your chosen community can realistically support those needs before you sign a contract.

Your Relocation Timeline

A successful relocation to Northeast Pennsylvania doesn't happen overnight — and buyers who approach the process with a clear, structured timeline consistently have better experiences than those who rush or drift through it. Whether you're planning a move 6 months out or already in active search mode, understanding the key phases of the relocation process will help you move with confidence and avoid the costly mistakes that come from acting before you're truly ready. Here's a proven framework built around the final 90 days before your target move date.



The most important phase is the first one — the research and planning stage. Buyers who invest real time in understanding the four counties, defining their lifestyle priorities, and getting their financing structured before they tour a single property move faster, make cleaner offers, and experience significantly less stress during the transaction phase. Use the earlier sections of this guide to complete your research phase before stepping foot in a property.

Lifestyle Fit Worksheet

Before you tour a single property, take the time to honestly answer these questions. Your answers will point you toward the right county, the right community type, and the right price tier — saving you time, preventing costly mismatches, and giving you the clarity to move decisively when the right home appears. There are no wrong answers here; there's only the honest truth about how you and your family actually want to live.

Define Your Priorities

1

Budget

What is your realistic all-in purchase budget, including property taxes, HOA (if applicable), and maintenance reserve?

2

Commute vs. Remote

How many days per week must you physically be somewhere? What's the maximum one-way drive time you can sustain long-term?

3

Lake vs. Town

Is water access essential, or would you prefer walkability and community amenities over a lake view?

Refine Your Match

1

Family vs. Retirement

Are school quality and family amenities the priority, or are you optimizing for peace, privacy, and leisure in a later life stage?

2

Privacy vs. Convenience

Would you rather have 3 acres and no neighbors in sight, or a neighborhood where you can walk to coffee and know your neighbors?

3

Your County Match

Based on your answers: Lake + privacy → Pike/Wayne. Commute + convenience → Monroe. City + walkability → Lackawanna.

Ready to Find Your Perfect Match?

You've done the research. You understand the counties, the lifestyle trade-offs, the cost of living advantages, and the relocation timeline. Now it's time to take the next step — and we're here to make that step as clear, confident, and exciting as it should be. Relocating to Northeast Pennsylvania is one of the best financial and lifestyle decisions thousands of families from the NYC/NJ/PA metro area make every year. Let's make sure your move is the right one, in the right community, at the right price.

Get Your Custom Town Match

Tell us your lifestyle priorities, budget, and commute needs — we'll identify the specific communities and county that fit you best. No generic advice, no pressure. Just an honest, expert match.

Schedule a Relocation Call

A 30-minute call with a Northeast PA relocation specialist who knows every county, community, and price tier in this guide. Get your specific questions answered and a clear next-step plan.

Download the Full Toolkit

Get the complete 2026 Northeast PA Relocation Toolkit — including the county comparison worksheet, cost of living calculator, and curated community profiles for Pike, Monroe, Wayne & Lackawanna.

Your move to Northeast Pennsylvania starts with one conversation. Let's have it — and let's make sure you land exactly where you belong.

Tom Olsewski

REALTOR® | Relocation & Retirement Specialist

Serving Northeast Pennsylvania Lic-RS376466

Serving North New Jersey Lic-2561002

(570) 228-8194 - Cell

(570) 526-2800

www.DiscoverPAhomes.com

tom@DiscoverpaHomes.com

Instagram: @DiscoverPAhomes | YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@NEPALiving>

"Calm. Professional. Trusted."