

Living in Coastal OC

A LOCAL'S HONEST GUIDE · 2026

What Is It *Really* Like to Live in San Clemente, California?

Spanish village charm meets surf town soul.



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FEBRUARY 2026 EDITION

WELCOME

San Clemente at a Glance

San Clemente has approximately 64,000 residents across 20 square miles, making it the largest of the five South Coastal Orange County cities by geography. That size is part of what creates so much variety in neighborhood character and lifestyle from one pocket to the next.

Based on the most recent Orange County REALTORS data, the December 2025 median sold price for a single-family home in San Clemente was \$1,902,500. The full year range ran from \$405,000 on the lower end to \$10,100,000 at the top — one of the widest spreads in South Coastal OC.

San Clemente has genuine entry points at multiple price levels, along with strong luxury inventory for buyers seeking something at the higher end of the coastal market.

RESIDENTS

~64,000

CITY AREA

20 mi²

MEDIAN HOME PRICE (DEC 2025)

\$1.9M

Neighborhood Comparison

San Clemente's neighborhoods are more varied in character than their footprint suggests. The table below is a starting framework before you begin touring.

NEIGHBORHOOD	PRICE RANGE	BEACH ACCESS	WALKABILITY
Downtown / Pier Bowl	\$1.2M–\$5M+	Direct, walkable	Very High
SW San Clemente	\$1.5M–\$8M+	Short walk or drive	Moderate–High
Talega	\$900K–\$2.5M	10–15 min drive	Low–Moderate
North San Clemente	\$800K–\$3M+	10–20 min drive	Low–Moderate
SE San Clemente	\$1M–\$4M+	Close to beaches	Moderate

Approximate 2025 conditions. Individual properties vary based on lot size, condition, location, and finishes. Source: Orange County REALTORS.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Is San Clemente better as a full-time residence or a second home?

A. San Clemente works well for both, but the neighborhood choice matters depending on your use case. Full-time residents tend to prioritize the Pier Bowl, Southwest San Clemente, or Talega depending on their lifestyle. Second-home buyers often gravitate toward walkable coastal pockets close to the beach and downtown where the city's energy is most accessible on visits.

Q. How are the schools in San Clemente?

A. San Clemente is served by the Capistrano Unified School District, which covers most of South Orange County. School quality and options vary by neighborhood within the city. Families typically evaluate schools alongside neighborhood choice rather than separately. The Capistrano Unified School District website provides current school boundary and program information.

Q. Is San Clemente walkable?

A. Walkability varies significantly by neighborhood. The Pier Bowl and downtown areas offer genuine walkability to beaches, restaurants, and the coastal trail. Talega and North San Clemente are more car-dependent for daily needs. If walkability is a priority, the neighborhood conversation should happen before the property search begins.

Q. How does San Clemente compare to Dana Point for buyers?

A. Dana Point centers around its harbor and has a slightly more polished, compact coastal town feel. San Clemente feels more like an authentic beach town with a broader price range, more varied home styles, and a stronger surf culture. Both cities have excellent lifestyle, and the right choice depends on which daily environment resonates more with how you want to live.

Q. What is the commute like from San Clemente to Los Angeles?

A. San Clemente is approximately 65 to 70 miles from downtown Los Angeles. In light traffic the drive runs roughly 60 to 75 minutes. During peak commute hours — particularly northbound in the morning and southbound in the evening — that can extend considerably. Many buyers in San Clemente work remotely full time or maintain hybrid schedules that make the distance manageable.

Q. Is now a good time to buy in San Clemente in 2026?

A. The San Clemente market in 2026 reflects the broader South OC dynamic: limited inventory in desirable pockets, sustained buyer interest, and pricing that is sensitive to location and condition. Well-priced properties with strong lifestyle attributes — ocean views, walkability, or established character — tend to move with conviction. The more relevant question for most buyers is whether the timing aligns with your personal situation and goals.

Is San Clemente the *right city* for you?

That conversation is genuinely different for every buyer. San Clemente fits some lives beautifully and others poorly. Let's figure out which yours is.

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Decades of South Coastal OC experience, distilled into honest guidance. From the pier to the bluff trail — this is the market I know best.

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