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What Is a Mediterranean House? A Vacation Vibe Right at Home

By Julie Ryan Evans | May 29, 2018



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What is a Mediterranean home? Think iron balconies, terra-cotta roofs, and ornate details that evoke the romance of Spain or Italy—with the advantage that a trip across the Atlantic is not required to soak it all in. Mediterranean homes can be found right here in the United States!

Also referred to as Spanish Modern, Mediterranean houses are found across the country, although they're most common in warm-weather climates that are comparable with the temperate Mediterranean countries'—in California, Florida, and other southern states.

Here's more about Mediterranean homes, and how to decide whether this architectural style is right for you.

Characteristics of a Mediterranean house

A Mediterranean home's most iconic feature is a low-pitched, terra-cotta roof, and the exterior paint is typically a light cream or off-white. The homes can be one or two stories and vary in size, although they tend to be expansive.

They often have swimming pools in the backyard, offering a sense of wide, blue vistas of water, and they come with outdoor living spaces aplenty.



Photo by Sweaney Custom Homes, Inc.

Some common characteristics of Mediterranean homes include:

- Large windows
- Iron balconies
- Open floor plans
- Stucco exteriors
- Ornamental details
- Arches
- Higher, vaulted ceilings
- Lush pool areas
- Courtyard entryways



Photo by Shannon Callaghan Interior Design
Is a Mediterranean home for you?

"These homes have always been popular, especially in lake communities and the suburbs of metropolitan areas," says **Owen Boller**, a real estate agent who covers a two-hour radius around Manhattan. "There are quite a few available for sale."

Boller adds that Mediterranean homes offer an extravagant feel that's attractive to many buyers. And despite their distinctive look and atmosphere, they are surprisingly flexible.

"There are so many details, but you can make a Mediterranean home simple and functional or very formal," says **John Nations**, construction manager for New Pointe Communities in San Diego. "Depending where you live, you can

choose earth-tone colors or lighter colors, like blues and greens, if it's a beachy area.”

On the other hand, Mediterranean-style homes can be expensive to maintain in colder climates, as the high ceilings and large windows often make heating them expensive. Insulation and energy-efficient windows can help, but they too can be costly. The size of these homes, which tend to be larger than others, can also result in higher property taxes, as well as higher maintenance costs.

While they will always have their aficionados, **Kathryn Bishop**, a real estate agent in Los Angeles, says she’s seeing a decline in their popularity.

“Mediterranean homes here were built ad nauseam 10 to 15 years ago,” she says. “Now, [farmhouse](#) and [Cape Cod](#) are the popular new build styles.”

Still, if you crave opulence, it's difficult to beat the way a Mediterranean home can mentally whisk you away to those azure seas.



Photo by John McDonald Company

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