

## Sunny Opportunities in Southwest Florida

Local real estate professionals can achieve more today than ever before.

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Sun, water, and a high quality of life attract vacation home buyers from all over the world to Southwest Florida, especially from Germany. Beate Wunderer, a German-speaking real estate agent in Cape Coral, provides insights into one of the most sought-after markets for vacation properties in the USA.

Southwest Florida is a true paradise, offering beautiful beaches, an abundance of golf courses, and an inspiring lifestyle. The Cape Coral–Fort Myers region is particularly popular and, according to the annual analysis by Florida REALTORS®, it is the most popular area in Florida among German buyers.

One reason for this popularity is certainly Cape Coral's over 400-mile canal system, which has earned the city the nickname "Water Wonderland." Anyone who dreams of owning a house on the water will find ideal conditions here. The region has also become a popular destination for vacationers and real estate investors from German-speaking countries because of its history: As early as 1994, LTU became the first international airline to fly directly to Fort Myers, marking a milestone for tourism.

### What is a REALTOR®?

The term is protected in the United States. It refers to a real estate agent who adheres to a strict code of ethics and regularly participates in continuing education.

Becoming a REALTOR® requires membership in the local REALTOR® Association, Florida REALTORS®, and the National Association of REALTORS®. Many REALTORS® are active internationally, for example, by participating in conferences abroad. I attended the IVD Congress in Munich last year, for example. Such events are excellent opportunities to network with international colleagues and develop partnerships.

### Referral Business: Cross-Border Cooperation

In the US, it is common for brokers to do business together. When we have a customer looking for something outside our region, we contact a local colleague and share the customer's requirements. The referral commission is agreed upon in advance and paid to the referring broker upon successful completion.

### Professional Process for Purchasing Real Estate

Compared to Germany, the process of purchasing real estate is different. In Florida, REALTORS® have access to the Multiple Listing Service (MLS). Buyers and sellers each hire their own broker—as a buyer's agent or listing agent—and agree on the commission amount in advance.

The buyer's REALTOR® drafts the purchase agreement using a standard form created by Florida Realtors® lawyers. Once the contract is agreed upon and signed — which can be done electronically — it is legally binding. The standard contract comprises around 14 pages, supplemented by over 30 additional documents and agreements for special requirements. Southwest Florida offers sunshine and a high quality of life, as well as a professional real estate structure that makes it easier for international buyers, especially those from Germany, to get started.