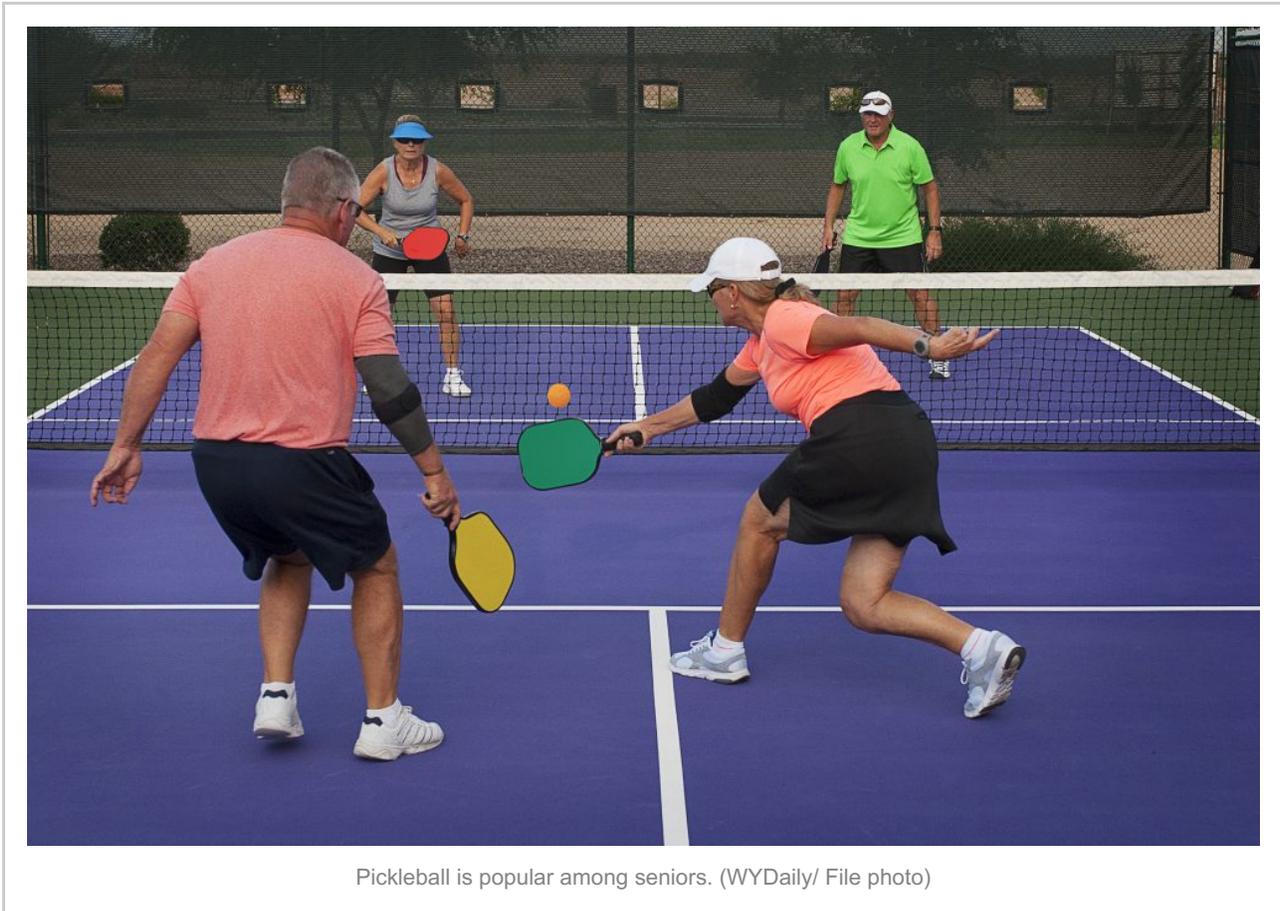


Williamsburg picked as one of the top places to retire in U.S.

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The small-town vibe, the variety of community events and quality healthcare are some of the reasons a national magazine has ranked Williamsburg as a top destination to retire.

Kiplinger, a personal finance and economic forecasting magazine based in Washington, recently ranked Williamsburg as one of the 10 best small and mid-size towns to retire for your health.

Kiplinger's Personal Finance Senior Editor Eileen Ambrose, who wrote the article about Williamsburg, said healthcare was a prominent focus when considering which towns to highlight in the article.

"We had an initial screening, and we were looking for places that had a five-star hospital," Ambrose said.

Williamsburg showed up in their search as Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center was scored a five-star hospital by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. That score was based on health inspections, staffing levels and 16 other quality measures such as resident reports.

Ambrose also took into account other financial considerations of retiring.

“Because we write for a business audience we were looking for a tax-friendly state,” she said.

Seniors do not pay taxes on Social Security in Virginia and can also deduct up to \$12,000 in income annually.

“Some areas on the coast were too expensive, which can deplete a retiree’s budget,” Ambrose added. “It seemed like Williamsburg attracted a lot of people from the East Coast.”

Williamsburg stacks up well when it comes to property tax rates, Ambrose said. The current rate is 60 cents per \$100 in assessed value.

Kimber Smith, president of the Williamsburg Area Association of Realtors and COO of Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Towne Realty, said that the Williamsburg real estate market has options ranging from condos to large, single-family homes.

“Even some people that have the financial means to afford a Kingsmill home don’t always want it,” Smith said. “Some people are deliberately trying to downsize so they might only want a two-bedroom condo. We can take a prospective purchaser around the community and address the price point and their lifestyle needs.

“It’s about them picking what fits them,” he added.

That smorgasbord of options was another criteria that factored into Kiplinger’s ranking, Ambrose said.

Small-town feel

When Ambrose reached out to Williamsburg city spokeswoman Lee Ann Hartmann about what there was to like about Williamsburg, Hartmann said she had no difficulty answering the question.

“For me, it wasn’t even a sales pitch,” Hartmann said. “It was an easy inquiry to help her with.”

Hartmann said she highlighted the area’s events and attractions, such as Summer Breeze Unleashed Concert Series, Second Sundays, the Williamsburg Farmers Market, programming at the Williamsburg Regional Library and events at William & Mary.

William & Mary allows citizens aged 60 and over to audit classes for free, Kiplinger pointed out.

When Ambrose came to visit Williamsburg she interviewed retirees and asked them what it was like to live here. She said they told her they were glad to have many options when it came to finding things to do.

An important aspect of healthy living for seniors is remaining active, and Ambrose said hiking trails in the Williamsburg area and its overall friendliness to pedestrians can offer retirees ways to stay healthy.

Popular attractions such as Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens and Water Country USA were also draws for grandparents looking for a place to retire.

“Those things would appeal to grandparents who want to entertain their grandkids,” Ambrose said.

Williamsburg is also not far from other hotbeds of activity such as Richmond, Virginia Beach and the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

Hartmann and Smith agreed that Williamsburg’s small-town charm is not lost on those searching for a community in which to retire.

“There are, and have been for decades now, people that come to Williamsburg for the express reason to retire,” Smith said. “I think there are a lot of things about the community that resonates with them. One of them is that it still feels like a small town.

“While we’ve grown a lot over the years, we still have a small town feel,” he added.

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