



*Guest Writer Matt F., Tucson AZ:* When I retired, we sold our empty-nest home and decided to move from the wet, icy East to a warm, dry climate. In the three months before the new owner took over our old house, my spouse and I traveled to many retirement areas in Florida, California and Arizona.

When we found an ideal site in Tucson, Arizona, instead of buying immediately, we took a one-year lease on an apartment. The Desert Southwest was totally new to us then, and we wanted the freedom to go elsewhere if necessary. I recommend that first step for new retirees, to consider several options before making a permanent commitment on buying a home. That first year allowed us to continue to further explore Arizona, as well as travel to other areas.

By the time our lease was up, we had selected a nearby Tucson house. Of course, for those whose financial situation prevents buying or prefer to rent, that option is available in many retired-senior-friendly communities.

One of the more pleasant aspects of our new Arizona home is that our utilities and other living expenses are considerably lower than they were in the icy East. The house is energy-efficient and easy to maintain. The dry, sunny desert around us displays many varieties of soaring cactus, as well as keep our arthritis problems at a minimum. Our front lawn is pebbles with no grass to mow, nor do we ever need to shovel snow.

Compared to the formality of pre-retirement lives and careers, our clothing costs are minimal. The all-year warm, dry Arizona desert weather makes heavy winter gear unnecessary, and inexpensive casual attire is the norm in laid-back Tucson. There's no more daily driving commute to jobs, so our auto maintenance expenses are much less..

Our nearby community center has a swimming pool, spa, gym and social center. As well as those facilities, there are schedules of events, including lectures, games, entertainment, picnics and group trips. We socialize with like-minded seniors, and everything that happens in the community is at an easy, unhurried pace.

With all career years and raising kids behind us, we now enjoy the freedom from schedules and other pressures. We're very grateful for those advantages, and along with many other friendly seniors in Tucson, we demonstrate it in positive ways.

We still travel the world, and when home assist at local hospitals and nursing homes. We participate in charity fundraising drives and visit homebound seniors. At election time, we work at the polls and are always available for other volunteer duties.