



Where to start when buying your first home?

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Get a dog is what I suggest!

Recently I decided to buy a house. A big decision, but once made, I didn't know where to start. So I thought I would start by just checking out the areas I liked. I have a suburb in mind where I'd like to buy - near the sea where friends of mine recently moved. But I really didn't know what sort of house I wanted - federation weatherboard, sandstone cottage, 1970s brick veneer? So I grabbed my dog, Sukie, and went for a drive. Having a dog is the perfect cover for wandering around the streets peering into gardens and checking out the architecture!

"check out the area"

I parked at the beach and took the footpath between the dunes and the beachfront homes. Great access to the beach, but no views. I headed on into the older area. Lots of cottages of brick, stone and weatherboard, established gardens and most with views over the bay. Probably out of my price range! I headed further up the hill.

"talk to the locals"

Here the homes were dotted with 1960s bungalows: pretty cute. We came across a great off-lead dog park. I let Sukie off her lead and while she played with the other puppies, I had a chance to chat to a local. She had some great advice: she told me about a dodgy builder in the late 1970s and where those houses were, plus she said that up too high on the hill, you cop really awful winds. The schools were all good schools and childcare was available (not that I need those yet!). She even gave me the best coffee spot and a great place for brekky: apparently there's even a movie theatre at the local shopping centre.

"what have the locals done to their homes?"

Armed with all this info and tips, plus the best shortcuts and dog walking areas, Sukie and I headed up the hill. Halfway up we stopped for a breather, or should I say we took a moment to check out the view: impressive! A home up here would be fabulous and keep me fit. We zig-zagged our way back down to the car, checking out the houses as we went. We found the 1970s zone the local told me about, with a few 60s and 80s houses to mix it up. Not the type of home I thought I would like, but with such views and the big picture windows ... I could see myself sitting up there enjoying the views.

"check out the local facilities"

As I walked I started to look at the homes that had been renovated and was amazed at the difference rendering could make. By the time we reached the top of the hill, I knew I wanted a home with a view. But did I want to renovate or buy a home already finished? As we headed back down the hill, I started making mental lists of my next tasks. By the time we reached the quay, found a café that was dog-friendly and served great coffee, I could see myself living here!

"where can I find out what to do next?"

Now I needed to get serious: What could I afford? Best finance options? A "renovator's delight" versus a "move straight in, nothing needs doing"? I really wanted to look inside some of these homes. Fortunately, [Next Address](#) offers tips and advice for all these things and helps me save money - money I can put towards buying my own home rather than lining an agent's pocket!

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