

America's Best

Get the Scoop on Some of Our Hottest Cities

America's Best Places to Live

From large cities to small, cultural meccas to quaint art communities, there's something here for everyone. The following are America's crème de la crème, but before packing up and hitting the road, check out the chamber of commerce web sites for each of these towns and let *them* do the boasting.

Listed alphabetically, the top ten are:

Austin, Texas: The Austin Chamber of Commerce describes their community as "*A unique blend of Southern hospitality, cosmopolitan flair, Old West charm and modern sophistication.*" That may sound like some big ol' Texas bragging, but it's the recipe that has consistently landed this southern city on nearly everyone's "Best Places" list. The region is undergoing a growth spurt in both population and business, the cultural scene is strong, the economy solid and income levels are projected to rise over the next decade. One of *Money Magazine's* top three "Best Big Cities" in the year 2000.

Boulder, Colorado: The dot-com collapse took some of the wind out of business in this Rocky Mountain community, but the economy continues to be bolstered by the aerospace and computer industries. Consistently rated one of the best overall places to live and work in the United States, Boulder has a dynamic arts community and, of course, the mighty Rockies as a backyard playground for every outdoor enthusiast.

Burlington, Vermont: The epitome of Vermont charm, Burlington offers numerous cultural activities, a vibrant nightlife and plenty of outdoor recreation-- all nicely framed by a picturesque New England setting. Named as one of the "*50 Best Places to Raise Your Family*" by author Melissa Giovagnoli and rated number six of "*The Best Small Art Towns in America*" by John Villani.

Denver, Colorado: A top twenty-five pick of author David Savageau's "*Places Rated Almanac,*" America's "Gateway to the Rocky Mountains" boasts several professional sports teams, an arts community, a variety of

outdoor recreational activities and the largest city park system in the country with thousands of acres of open space. Mining once drove Denver's economy, now business has diversified into telecommunications, aerospace, biomedical and other high tech sectors, earning it a place high on Arthur Anderson/*Fortune Magazine's* list of "Best Cities for Business."

Fargo, North Dakota: In 1994, the Wall Street Journal called North Dakota's largest city "*one of the best small market communities in which to start a career.*" Since then, the city's clean environment, low crime rate and family friendly atmosphere have garnered Fargo "Best Place to Live and Work" honors from both *Redbook* and *Ladies Home Journal* magazines.

Indianapolis, Indiana: The nation's twelfth largest city has undergone a dramatic revitalization over the past decade, bolstering its strength in the manufacturing, distribution, retail and service sectors. The self-proclaimed "Crossroads of America" was named the "most affordable city over one million people" by the National Association of Homebuilders. Rich in arts and culture, Indy combines "*big city style and Hoosier hospitality.*"

Minneapolis, Minnesota: A booming local economy, continued job growth, superb transportation, great natural resources and a consistently high quality of living have landed this Midwest city on everyone's "Best" list including *Inc. Magazine's* "Best Places to Start and Grow a Company," *Money Magazine's* "Best Places to Live" and author Sandra Gurvis' "*30 Great Cities to Start Out In.*"

New York, New York: Recognized the world over as a center for culture and finance, the city is a hub for broadcasting, theater, fashion, publishing and advertising. The neighborhoods, such as Little Italy, Chinatown and Soho are each culturally and ethnically unique. Of course, the New York experience doesn't come cheap. Start saving.

Phoenix, Arizona: Projected to have the largest job market increase by the year 2005, this robust Southwest city with over 300 days of sunshine a year is currently experiencing a population and employment boom. Despite growing popularity, Phoenix remains affordable-- The National Association of Home Builders has rated Phoenix second among major metropolitan areas in the West for affordable housing.

San Francisco, California: One of the country's most vibrant cities. With 750,000 residents on a 46.6 square mile tip of land, San Francisco has been described as a "cultural medley" that features a strong arts community, world-class restaurants, dramatic landscapes, fabulous architecture and distinctive neighborhoods. Transportation is never a problem thanks to a multitude of cable cars, trolleys and buses-- but drivers should be wary of the city's maze of one-way streets and steep hills. With a median family income of over \$80,000, San Francisco isn't cheap.