



The 5 friendliest cities in America

Thinking of moving? Read Barbara Corcoran's picks for the perfect place

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updated 12:13 p.m. CT, Wed., May. 28, 2008

What makes a city friendly? We looked for certain standards like safety, diversity, pedestrian and bike friendliness, as well as the presence of parks and public spaces. Then we looked for something unique, like a place that always has big, fun public events or someplace with a lot of farmers markets. Most importantly, we talked to brokers to get their personal stories of friendliness. (Did you know that people in Nashville will strike up a conversation with you while waiting at a red light?) And finally, we took a look at statistics that help make a place friendly, such as enough hotel rooms to welcome visitors, enough bars to have a robust happy hour, enough tourists willing to visit and, of course, budget-friendly home prices.

Here are some notes, findings and quotes from our five friendliest cities:

San Antonio, Texas: Where they pay it forward

"It is difficult to narrow down a specific story about friendly encounters, because most are around here. Recently, my wife had a flat tire and while she was on the phone calling me, a kind man pulled over and changed her tire quickly, refused her offer of payment, and tipped his hat, wishing her a good day. And a few months ago, my wife and I were trying to move a large chair into our home, with much difficulty, and someone driving by stopped, jumped out, grabbed a side, helped us cheerfully, and after a short, energetic conversation, jumped back in his car and we never saw him again. In San Antonio, many times when you walk into a chain convenience store, it still feels a little like stepping into the corner gas station where our friends are behind the counter and down every aisle." — *Danny Thompson, San Antonio real estate broker*

Did you know?

- More than 26 million people visit San Antonio each year.
- The city has 68 miles of urban hike and bike trails, and more than 11,000 acres of urban parks. The second oldest park in the U.S., San Pedro Park, is in San Antonio.
- The Riverwalk, or Paseo del Rio, is a city park meandering along the banks of the San Antonio River, and it's the heart of the city. You can walk along its picturesque banks, lined with lush local plants, and stop in the riverside restaurants, shops and cafes. There's even a special place to get married on the Riverwalk: Marriage Island.
- The median single-family home sales price is \$150,000.

Denver, Colorado: When your first building is a saloon, you know you're a friendly town

"Denver has the easygoing and friendly nature indicative of the Midwest. Various cocktail parties sport the 'Colorado casual' look, which is everything from sequins and silk to jeans and cowboy boots or stiletto heels." — *Patti Johnson, Denver real estate broker*

Did you know?

- Downtown in the Mile High City is one big, car-free "pedestrian mall" lined with shops, bars and restaurants where locals and tourists alike hang out. There's even a free shuttle bus that runs along the main street.
- Denver is one of only two cities in America with eight professional sports teams.
- The first permanent structure in Denver was a saloon. Talk about hospitality.

- A cultural melting pot, Denver hosts the country's largest Cinco de Mayo festival, the Longs Peak Scottish Festival, the National Gay Rodeo Finals, PrideFest, and it has the Black American West Museum in the historically rich African-American Five Points neighborhood. Its population is 40 percent Hispanic and 10 percent African-American.
- The city also boasts comprehensive accessibility services like wheelchair-friendly trails and accommodations and transportation services for the physically impaired.
- Denver will host the Democratic National Convention this August. For the convention, Bikes Belong will supply the city with 1,000 bicycles to be used in a system similar to that in Paris (credit card access; rates are lowest for short jaunts around the city). Seventy will be left behind as a legacy that Denver plans to grow into a city-wide public transportation system of several hundred bikes.
- The median single-family home sales price is \$223,500.

Davis, California: Bikes and co-housing

"I think one of the things that makes Davis a very friendly city is that we have a lot of moving in and out because of the university. We are always welcoming newcomers to our community. Davis offers a lot of activities for adults and children through recreation programs and clubs, which encourage people to meet each other and develop connections. We also have a very active senior center that provides social connections for our older citizens." — *Carol Coder, Davis real estate broker*

Did you know?

- Named the most bike-friendly town in America by the League of American Bicyclists, Davis was the first place in the nation to build a city-wide system of bike paths.
- Davis is a university town, home to U.C. Davis.
- The population is a mix of farmers, university professors, students, natural food lovers and, of course, bikers. They all come together twice a week at the local farmers markets, where the emphasis is on organic food.
- The Mediterranean climate means residents and visitors can enjoy the outdoors year round.
- The median single-family home sales price is \$539,000.

Nashville, Tennessee: Friendliness is contagious in this music city

"People will strike up conversations with you anywhere and at any time! Whenever we are at a grocery store, a coffee shop, a convenience store, pumping gas or even stopped at a red light, it's not uncommon for someone to say hi and ask how you're doing today. And, if we have our dogs with us, they will always give them a treat and ask about them as well ... so the friendliness even extends to your pets! It's true what they say about southern hospitality. It definitely exists in Nashville!" — *Joe Burton and Shandy Burton, Nashville real estate brokers*

Did you know?

- Music City is home of the Grand Ole Opry and the Country Music Hall of Fame.
- Nashville hosts more than 10 million visitors annually, has 32,851 hotel rooms and more than 50,000 jobs directly related to the hospitality industry.

- The median single-family home sales price is \$180,000.

Madison, Wisconsin: Friends help friends through the snowstorms

"It's pretty hard to walk down the street of any neighborhood without getting a friendly smile or a friendly wave. Madison is a very active town with many bike paths, parks and lakes for residents to enjoy. Having so much in the way of outdoor activities really does get Madison's residents interacting with each other in a fun environment.

Madison gets its share of snowfall every year along with some bitterly cold weather. It's not uncommon to go a week or two without cracking 10 degrees. You might think this would put everyone in a bad mood. It seems to have the opposite effect on many Madison residents, however. This past year, and really every year that I can remember, neighbors have gone way out of their way to help those who need assistance to make it through the winter. Every year there are one or two big snowstorms and even before the snow has finished falling there is the sound of people snow-blowing out the driveway of their house and many of their neighbors', or sights of people helping push cars through the snow of condo complexes, or just checking on their elderly neighbors and friends. My uncle used to fire up the snowplow in the morning and clear out the sidewalks of his whole street." — *John Schroeder, Madison real estate broker*

Did you know?

- There are 15 farmers markets throughout the city.
- Madison ranks No. 1 on Prevention Magazine's list of most walkable cities.
- It's a college town, and the thriving student life at the University of Wisconsin makes the area a vibrant epicenter for music, art and theater.
- State Street is downtown's pedestrian mall.
- The median single-family home sales price is \$217,000.

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