

America's Best Small Cities on the Rise

(Courtesy of Lauren Dana, SMARTERTRAVEL)

The United States is home to tons of incredible cities, though some are much more crowded than others. Travelers looking for a more off-the-beaten-path escape should consider visiting one of these eight up-and-coming American cities, all of which offer something for every type of traveler.

Fredericksburg, Texas

This central Texas city is less than a two-hour drive from bustling Austin. Start your trip with a scenic drive along Texas Highway 290 (AKA [Wine Road 290](#)), which winds through stunning wineries and vineyards. After, get a taste of Fredericksburg's fascinating German roots at [The Auslander](#) (schnitzel, anyone?)

[Main Street](#), which is located in the heart of Fredericksburg's thriving downtown area, is well worth a stroll. For more shopping opportunities, make your way towards the [Warehouse District](#), which draws folks from all over for its abundance of antique shops. Meanwhile, [Marktplatz](#) (Market Square) is a great gathering spot since it hosts concerts, festivals, and more community-oriented events. Here, you'll also find [Vereins Kirche Museum](#), an octagon-shaped building boasting historical artifacts that highlight Fredericksburg's past. Pro tip: Try to plan your visit around springtime, when the area is teeming with beautiful [wildflowers](#).

Rochester, New York

The lakefront city of Rochester is famous for its 12,000-plus acres of parkland and ample outdoor recreation opps (think: skiing in the winter, hiking in the spring, paddling in the summer, and so on). Additionally, as the third-largest city in New York, there's no shortage of things to do. The [George Eastman Museum](#), the world's oldest museum dedicated to photography—named for George Eastman, who invented the Kodak camera in Rochester—is a must-visit. Art enthusiasts will also appreciate a stroll through the [Rochester Contemporary Art Center](#), [Memorial Art Gallery](#), [Rochester Art Center](#), and [Rochester Museum of Fine Arts](#). Similarly, history buffs can check out the [Susan B. Anthony Museum & House](#), where the famed civil rights leader called home for decades. Cap off your adventures by digging into the city's signature "[Garbage Plate](#)" dish, an eccentric combination of meat (usually a hamburger or cheeseburger), fries, beans, and/or macaroni salad. Wash it all down with a beer from one of many craft breweries, including [Swiftwater Brewing Company](#), [Roc Brewing Co.](#), and [Nine Maidens Brewing Company](#).

Greenville, South Carolina

Greenville is chock-full of Southern hospitality—plus loads of fun and fantastic food. The up-and-coming city, which is just over an hour from trendy Asheville, is nothing short of spectacular. The 10-block [downtown](#) area features plenty of green space, including the famous [Falls Park on the Reedy](#). This 32-acre oasis is complete with colorful flowers, scenic walking paths, and, of course, the iconic Reedy River Falls. Art enthusiasts can also embark on a [self-guided walking tour](#) of the city's colorful murals and sculptures. Once you work up an appetite, make your way to one of the city's 1,000-plus restaurants. Treat tastebuds to something special, such as innovative Latin-American fusion at [Asada](#),

Belgian staples at [Trappe Door](#), classic BBQ at [Home Team BBQ](#), and beloved comfort food at [Sassafras Southern Bistro](#).

Knoxville, Tennessee

There's more to Tennessee than Nashville (sorry, Music City!). For a more off-the-beaten-path escape, head to Knoxville. This bustling college town is home to the University of Tennessee and offers everything from authentic Southern cuisine to exhilarating outdoor adventures. Start with a stroll through the [Market Square](#) area, which is dotted with shops and restaurants housed in 19th century-era buildings.

Noteworthy shops include [Earth To Old City](#) and [Fizz](#), while mouthwatering eats can be found at [Cafe 4](#) (don't miss the fried green tomatoes). Meanwhile, the [Old City](#) neighborhood offers more of a hipsterfied vibe, with quaint coffee shops, trendy restaurants, and one-of-a-kind boutiques. History buffs can visit the [East Tennessee History Center](#) or the [McClung Museum of Natural History & Culture](#), while art lovers can spend an afternoon wandering around the [Arts District](#), which is dotted with galleries. Lastly, enjoy some fresh air at [Urban Wilderness](#), where paddling and climbing are both popular.

San Luis Obispo, California

San Luis Obispo—or SLO, as the locals call it—is situated along California's stunning Central Coast. Oenophiles will especially love it here: The destination (and its surrounding area) is home to over 200 (!) wineries. A few of our favorites include urban winery [Stephen Ross Cellars](#), [Filipponi Ranch](#), and [Tolosa](#). If you need a break from the vino, get your culture fix by visiting the historic [Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa](#), which dates back to the 1700s. Additionally, travelers can head downtown to check out the eccentric [Bubblegum Alley](#), which — you guessed it—is covered with chewed-up bubble gum. Food options also abound, from sweet treats at [Cowboy Cookie & Ice Cream](#) to savory seafood staples at [Ciopinot Seafood Grille](#).

Charlotte, North Carolina

Charlotte, nicknamed Queen City, is one of the most up-and-coming southern cities, and it's easy to see why. [Uptown Charlotte](#), the city center, is a modern metropolis. The neighborhood is teeming with must-visit attractions, such as the [NASCAR Hall of Fame](#) and the [Levine Museum of the New South](#). You can also choose from an array of innovative eateries, including locally roasted coffee at Coco and the Director, elevated southern fare at [Stoke Charlotte](#), and elegant French cuisine at [La Belle Helene](#). Beer lovers can also enjoy a pint at one of the city's dozens of breweries, including [NoDa Brewing Company](#), [Birdsong Brewing Co.](#), and [Sycamore Brewing – Brewery & Beer Garden](#).

Winter Park, Florida

Escape the bustling crowds of Orlando and head seven miles north to tranquil Winter Park. The greenery-filled city offers plenty of outdoor space, from the stunning sculpture gardens at [Albin Polasek Museum & Sculpture Gardens](#) to the 11-acre [Central Park](#) (no, not *that* one), which features a rose garden and beautiful fountains, to the waterfront [Kraft Azalea Garden](#).

You can also indulge in some retail therapy along [Park Avenue](#), where you'll find more than 130 shops, cafes, and museums. At the [Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art](#), you can admire the

world's most comprehensive collection of works by artist and designer Louis Comfort Tiffany, the son of Tiffany and Company founder Charles Lewis Tiffany.

Overland Park, Kansas

Overland Park is Kansas' second-most populous city. Plus, it's located right outside Kansas City (about 20 minutes away by car!), making it incredibly easy to get to. In "The Park," travelers can expect everything from trend-forward clothing shops to drool-worthy BBQ (burnt ends, anyone?), plus a heaping side of culture, history, and outdoor attractions.

The city's [downtown area](#) feels like a tight-knit town with 300-plus locally owned small businesses waiting to welcome you. A few of our favorites include [The Tasteful Olive](#), [The General Store & Co.](#), and [Ensemble](#). Then, satisfy your sweet tooth at [Upper Crust Pie Bakery](#), [LaMar's Donuts and Coffee](#), or [Best Regards Bakery & Cafe](#). Alternatively, feast on delicious BBQ at [Brobecks BBQ](#) or [Q39 South](#). You can also enjoy the thriving arts and culture scene via local attractions like the [Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art](#), the [Museum at Prairiefire](#), and [InterUrban Arthouse](#). Craving some fresh air? Make your way to the [Overland Park Arboretum and Botanical Gardens](#), which spans over 300 acres.