



Corbis

By Bill Briggs, contributor

## Introduction

Where are best of the best places? Who really deserves to claim elite status among America's cities? We took five of the leading "best places" lists (those put out by Forbes magazine, Kiplinger.com, Money magazine, Fortune Small Business magazine and Relocate-America.com), merged their rankings and ranked the metros to make our own top 10 list.

Click the arrows above to see our top 10 list of the nation's **best places**.



Eric Thayer /The New York Times/ / Redux Pictures

## No. 10: Des Moines, Iowa

Des Moines -- the capital of the state of Iowa and a major center for the financial services and publishing businesses -- is a city that makes everyone's list.

Not only does the city land in the top 100 lists produced by Fortune Small Business and Relocate-America.com, it also boasts two top-10 placements this year with Forbes and Kiplinger, which cited its friendly, hometown atmosphere with top public schooling and affordable cost of living.



Ben Edmonson / Photo courtesy of Visit Charlotte

### **No. 9: Charlotte, N.C.**

Charlotte, N.C., was chosen as No. 1 in Relocate-America.com's best places to Live in America in 2008 based on the city's employment opportunities. The city was also ranked No. 8 on Fortune's list and No. 37 on Forbes' list.



Corbis

### **No. 8: Austin, Texas**

Austin, the capital of Texas and the nation's 16th-largest city is a top-10 finisher in Kiplinger's best places list this year, but it comes in at No. 47 in Forbes' list. It grabbed the No. 2 ranking from Money in 2006. Kiplinger says Austin and the surrounding region "offer a strong economy, a solid, moderately priced housing market, a growing population and enough natural beauty to justify staying outside."



D. Boone / □ Randy Faris / Corbis

### **No. 7: San Antonio, Texas**

"San Antonio, Texas, bustles as the nation's 10th largest city and the state's biggest tourism draw," notes Relocate-America, which puts San Antonio in the No. 2 spot in its current best places list, while it breaks the top 40 on the current Forbes and Fortune Small Business lists. The city was Money's No. 8 ranked big city in 2007.



Ft. Collins Convention & Visitors Bureau

### **No. 6: Fort Collins, Colo.**

Ranked highly for its income growth and educational attainment, Fort Collins, Colo., is a top fiver in Forbes' list for this year (it ranked highly for job growth), and also in Money's list. And it ranks No. 39 on the Fortune Small Business list.



Getty Images file

#### **No. 5: Omaha, Neb.**

Kiplinger ranks Omaha, Neb., as its No.3 city, pointing out that, despite being famed for its insurance, Warren Buffett and mail-order steaks, businesses in the city are "hiring and recruiting young professionals, especially in finance, health care, information technology and insurance." Omaha is also in Money's top 10 list, 22nd according to Fortune Small Business and 34th according to Forbes. In fact, it's on everybody's radar.



Phoeberourke-ghabrie / World Picture News

#### **No. 4: Houston, Texas**

"Back with a roar after the oil bust of the 1980s, Houston has reclaimed its title as energy capital of the U.S. and added aerospace, technology and medical

companies to the mix, generating more than 100,000 jobs in 2007," gushes Kiplinger, which puts Houston, Texas, as its No. 1 best place (it was Forbes' No. 40 this year and was Money's No. 3 in 2007).



City of Colorado Springs

### **No. 3: Colorado Springs, Colo.**

Colorado Springs, Colo., grabs a No. 5 from Kiplinger this year. "This undercurrent of energy has helped bring Colorado Springs from sleepy spa town to thriving city," Kiplinger said.

The city also wins top-30 honors from both Forbes and Fortune Small Business, and is still riding high from a No. 1 ranking from Money in 2006.



Getty Images file

### **No. 2: Boise, Idaho**

Boise makes Forbes' No. 2 spot and Kiplinger puts it at No. 4 this year, noting

its high proportion of college graduates and abundance of affordable housing.

It was Money's No. 8 in 2006. Boise also is Fortune Small Business magazine's current No. 19, and it comes in at a very close second on this list, holding an edge on the rest of the pack with Raleigh, N.C.



Joseph Sohm / □ Joseph Sohm / Visions of Ameri

### **No. 1: Raleigh, N.C.**

Raleigh, N.C., it seems, is the best place to be in the U.S. right now. It ranks No. 1 in Forbes' 2008 list and was also top in 2007 -- consistent placement among these lists is truly rare. It ranks No. 2 in Kiplinger's list this year ("Raleigh is a work in progress, but 2008 should be the turning point," Kiplinger notes).

The city is also Fortune Small Business magazine's current No. 20 place to "live and launch."

**Sources:** Forbes, Kiplinger.com, Money magazine, Fortune Small Business magazine, Relocate-America.com, Bill Briggs, msnbc.com

Updated: 4:53 p.m. ET June 11, 2008

© 2008 MSNBC.com

URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25064613/from/ET/>