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America's Best Small Cities in the Mountain West

Katie M. Gilbertson

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, katelin.gilbertson@unlv.edu

Kelliann Beavers

kelliann.beavers@unlv.edu

Caitlin J. Saladino

Brookings Mountain West & The Lincy Institute, caitlin.saladino@unlv.edu

William E. Brown Jr.

Brookings Mountain West, william.brown@unlv.edu

Fatma Nasoz

The Lincy Institute, fatma.nasoz@unlv.edu

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AMERICA’S BEST SMALL CITIES IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST

Cities & Metros Fact Sheet No. 3 | May 2021

Prepared by: Katie M. Gilbertson, Kelliann Beavers, Caitlin J. Saladino, William E. Brown, Jr., and Fatma Nasoz

PURPOSE:

This fact sheet reports the rankings of small cities in the Mountain West, based on perceived desirability for living, visiting, and investment. *Resonance Consultancy’s* “America’s Best Small Cities 2020,” report examines six key metrics: “People,” “Place,” “Product,” “Programming,” “Promotion,” and “Prosperity.”¹ 11 small cities in the Mountain West are ranked within the top 100 in the United States.

ABOUT THE DATA:

Resonance Consultancy utilizes qualitative evaluations and quantitative statistics to compare and rank small cities in the U.S. The advising firm has studied tourism, real estate, and economic development for more than a decade. Moreover, the report combines traditional metrics, such as household income, with user-generated data like Instagram mentions, to produce a comprehensive assessment and ranking for each small city. The “America’s Best Small Cities 2020” report reflects on small cities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Small cities are defined as metropolitan statistical areas with populations between 100,000 and 500,000.² The data on 23 metrics are grouped into six categories:

“People”	“Place”	“Product”	“Programming”	“Promotion”	“Prosperity”
<i>Strength of human capital and diversity</i>	<i>A city’s physical sense of place</i>	<i>Key institutions, attractions, & infrastructure</i>	<i>Experiential pillars based on food, shopping, & nightlife</i>	<i>Number of references & recommendations shared online about a city</i>	<i>Income of citizens, standard of living, & presence of large corporations</i>
1. Educational Attainment 2. Foreign-Born Residents	1. Parks & Outdoors 2. Safety 3. Sights & Landmarks 4. Weather	1. Airport Connectivity 2. Attractions 3. Convention Center 4. Museums 5. Pro Sports Teams 6. University Rankings	1. Culture 2. Dining 3. Nightlife 4. Shopping	1. Facebook Check-Ins 2. Google Searches 3. Google Trends 4. Instagram Hashtags 5. TripAdvisor Reviews	1. Fortune 500 Companies 2. Household Income

KEY FINDINGS:

- Five small cities in the Mountain West cities are ranked within the top 50 nationally: Reno, NV (1st), Santa Fe, NM (3rd), Boulder, CO (7th), Fort Collins, CO (22nd), and Las Cruces, NM (50th).
- Two small cities in New Mexico appear within the top 25 nationally for the category of “People” - Santa Fe (13th) and Las Cruces (21st) - and the category of “Place”- Santa Fe (5th) and Las Cruces (23rd).
- Reno, NV ranks among the top 15 small cities nationally in 4 of 6 categories: “Product” (1st), “Programming” (4th), “Promotion” (8th), and “Place” (18th); despite this, Reno performs poorly in “Prosperity” (59th).

Table 1 displays the overall national rankings of 11 small cities in the Mountain West. Reno, NV achieves the highest rank in the nation (1st) and Logan, UT receives the lowest rank (94th) within the Mountain West. Small cities in Nevada and New Mexico place at, or above the median for overall rank (50th), while small cities in Arizona and Utah all rank

¹ Resonance Consultancy, “America’s Best Cities Report 2020,” 2020, (www.bestcities.org/rankings/americas-best-cities/)

² Ibid

below the median. Reno, NV (1st), Santa Fe, NM (3rd), and Boulder, CO (7th) rank within the top 10 best small cities nationwide in this report when all metrics are considered.

Table 1: Overall “Best Small City” Rankings in the Mountain West

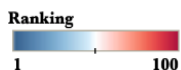
Mountain West Small City	Overall Rank
Reno, NV	1
Santa Fe, NM	3
Boulder, CO	7
Fort Collins, CO	22
Las Cruces, NM	50
St. George, UT	59
Flagstaff, AZ	61
Yuma, AZ	63
Greeley, CO	76
Prescott, AZ	88
Logan, UT	94

*Adapted from “America’s Best Small Cities 2020” by Resonance Consultancy.

Table 2 shows the overall ranking for each of the 11 small cities in the Mountain West appearing among the top 100 small cities in the U.S., as well as rankings in the six categories that comprise the overall rank. The scale is on a gradient: blue indicates a higher rank and performance (closer to 1st); red indicates a lower rank and performance (closer to 100th); white represents the value in the middle (50th). Darker shades of either blue or red indicate a more extreme value. For instance, Boulder, CO ranks 2nd in the “People” category (dark blue), while Prescott, AZ ranks 197th in the “Prosperity” category (dark red). Although all cities included appear within the top 100 for overall rankings, some cities perform below the top 100 in particular categories (e.g., Las Cruces, NM is ranked 245th nationally for “Prosperity,” but high rankings in “People” (21st) and “Place” (23rd) boost the city’s “overall” rank. Reno, NV ranks as the best small city in the nation overall, 1st in “Product,” 4th in “Programming,” and 8th in “Promotion.”

Table 2: “Best Small City” Rankings in the Mountain West, by Category

	Overall Ranking	"People"	"Place"	"Product"	"Programming"	"Promotion"	"Prosperity"
Reno, NV	1	36	14	1	4	8	59
Santa Fe, NM	3	13	5	9	5	14	83
Boulder, CO	7	2	27	64	9	23	24
Fort Collins, CO	22	25	35	62	14	42	38
Las Cruces, NM	50	21	23	48	80	106	245
St George, UT	59	86	7	58	128	69	107
Flagstaff, AZ	61	64	26	105	61	40	66
Yuma, AZ	63	28	11	104	139	80	231
Greeley, CO	76	82	42	129	121	168	31
Prescott, AZ	88	110	15	102	68	110	197
Logan, UT	94	51	45	172	179	177	88



*Adapted from “America’s Best Small Cities 2020” by Resonance Consultancy.