

## Behavior

# AARP: Tucson is the go-to town for simpler living

Magazine cites low cost, little stress, lots to do

By Jillian Berman  
USA TODAY

Looking to live the simpler life? Look no further than Tucson.

AARP *The Magazine's* Best Places to Live a Simple Life list, out today, bestows top honors on the city of 541,000 in the Arizona desert. Demographers used statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources to evaluate towns and cities on a variety of criteria, says Gabrielle deGroot Redford, the magazine's editorial projects manager.

Once they came up with a list of about 25 cities, editors at the magazine picked the top cities in different areas of the country to make sure that every region was represented.

With the economy struggling and readers looking to spend less

money, Redford says, the editors wanted to compile a list of places with a low cost of living that offered a wide range of activities.

"We decided we wanted to focus on places you could live simply," she says.

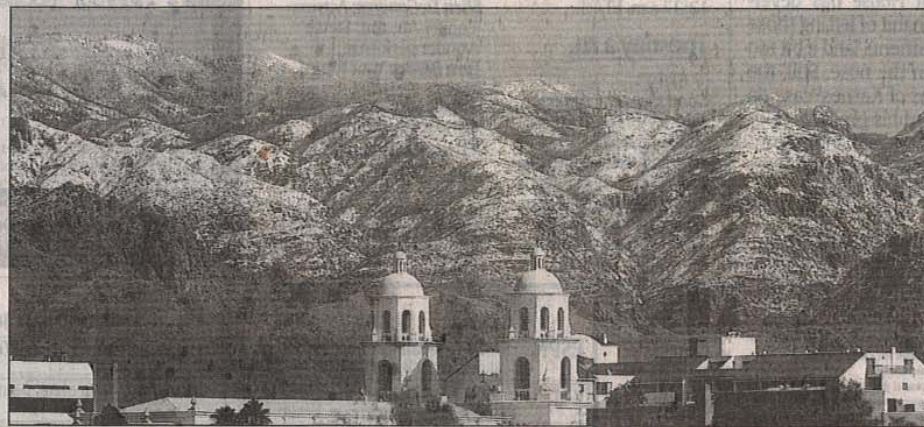
Redford says demographers and editors looked for places that are affordable and still have relatively low rates of unemployment. She added that factors such as the ability to walk and bike to work and the availability

of "outdoor amenities" such as farmers markets and hiking trails also gave cities extra points.

And to make sure life is really simple, the team looked at the stress index of the cities, a measure used by demographers,

which combines "rates of suicide and crime and divorce and depression and other factors that play into how stressed people feel living there," she says.

Another plus: if the city is close to a college or university.



File photo, Arizona Daily Star, via AP

**In Tucson:** Snow on the Santa Catalina Mountains creates a wintry scene behind St. Augustine Cathedral.

## Top 10 places to de-complicate

Want to kick back and enjoy the simpler things? Here's AARP *The Magazine's* Best Places to Live a Simple Life list:

1. Tucson
2. Greenville, S.C.
3. Montpelier, Vt.
4. Logan, Utah
5. Ames, Iowa
6. Northampton, Mass.
7. Lexington/Fayette, Ky.
8. Texas Hill Country
9. Oxford, Miss.
10. Walla Walla, Wash.

"We looked for places with great education, in particular, colleges because colleges tend to offer classes for adults and a lot of amenities," such as lectures and sporting events, Redford says.

That Tucson is home to the University of Arizona helped boost it to the top.

"It's quite an affordable city in part, but it also has a lot going on about it," she says. "There are a lot of ways to enjoy living there."

She adds that residents rave about the city's multicultural feel. "They just feel like it's one of those great melting pots."

Mayor Bob Walkup, the self-proclaimed "mayor of paradise," says he wasn't surprised to hear his city topped the list.

"I believe that Tucson has the highest quality of life of any city in the country," he says.

Tucson's temperate climate and low crime rate make it an ideal place to live, he says.

"It — no kidding — has an abundance of sunshine year round."

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