The Friendliest Cities in the US, According to Our Readers

The places in the United States that made you feel the most welcome this year.

By Caitlin Morton October 28, 2024

Ron Dylewski/Unsplash

For years, we've asked our readers to vote on the friendliest cities in the US in the Readers' Choice Awards, focusing on where you felt welcome when you traveled. Did an outgoing local go out of their way to give you directions? Was the city easy to navigate? Did you simply get good vibes from the people around you? For our 37th annual Readers' Choice Awards survey, we called on all of you to rank the friendliest cities in the U.S.—here are the 10 cities you loved the most for their people this year.

This gallery has been updated with new information since its original publish date.

8. Charleston, South Carolina

Enjoy full-on Southern hospitality at its finest in Charleston, a small coastal city that has it all. Visitors often come for the historic sites like Fort Sumter and The Citadel—and stay for the impressive culinary scene. Plus, with Kiawah Island and Isle of Palms just outside the city limits, the beach is only a short drive away. But the cherry on top is the friendly community that always makes out-of-towners feel welcome.

7. Columbus, Ohio

Could it be that Columbus is friendly because it's so well-fed? In the past few years, this Midwest hub has emerged as a bonafide foodie destination—it's always been known for its burgers (it was here, after all, that Wendy's first got its start), but its international cuisine is now ready for its close-up. Whether you make a beeline for the overloaded burgers at The Thurman Cafe or decide to try some of the city's Himalayan food, you're sure to be welcomed with a nice Midwest greeting and enthusiastic suggestions for where to eat next.

Ron Dylewski/Unsplash

6. Savannah, Georgia

Earning the top spot among the friendliest cities in the U.S., Savannah made quite an impression on travelers this past year. It's hard to say what exactly makes the locals here so happy. It may be the city's robust, unapologetically Southern food scene. It could also be the slew of independent bookstores and treasure-riddled antique shops. Or perhaps the gorgeous public parks are what keep the pep in people's step. Whatever the reason, one thing's for sure: This historic city in Georgia should definitely be on your list.

5. Mobile, Alabama

If you lived next to Alabama's beautiful, underrated Gulf Coast, you'd probably be a little friendlier, right? That seems to be part of the case with the residents of Mobile, which made its debut on our friendliest cities list this year. This southern port city fell onto many travelers' radars in 2024 when Amtrak unveiled its Gulf Coast service, connecting Mobile to New Orleans (with a string of charming Mississippi towns in between). It's now easier than ever to visit this slice of Alabama—and just in time, as the city has begun respectfully highlighting its past through cultural moments such as the Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park and *Clotilda: The Exhibition*, a landmark show telling the story of the last ship carrying enslaved people through the lens of its survivors.

Getty/Kruck20

4. Greenville, South Carolina

It's hard to say what exactly makes the locals in Greenville so happy. It may be the city's burgeoning farm-to-table food movement, with restaurants like Jianna and Vault & Vator serving up fresh seafood and well-crafted cocktails. It could also be the vibrant arts scene. Or perhaps the craft beer keeps the pep in people's step. But let's not forget about the abundant natural resources here, from the 32-acre Falls Park to the Swamp Rabbit bike trail. Whatever the reason, one thing's for sure: You should definitely visit this South Carolina city on the brink of stardom.

Pavliha/Getty

3. Santa Fe, New Mexico

For the better part of the last century, Santa Fe has been irresistible to creative types (Georgia O'Keeffe lived here, after all) drawn to its impressive natural landscapes and wide open spaces. It continues its artistic legacy today, with nearly 300 art galleries in the adobe buildings that line its streets. The friendly residents aren't just artsy, though—because the city attracts such a diverse range of people, you see it reflected in its dining scene and elsewhere. With an array of excellent chefs, Santa Fe is perhaps known foremost for its New Mexican cuisine, but you can find everything from Mediterranean to Kenyan restaurants.

rterry126/Getty

2. Lexington, Kentucky

Lexington might be the Horse Capital of the World, home to the Kentucky Horse Park and the Keeneland Race Course, but the horses are only one part of the picture. Thanks to its location on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail, Lexington has distilleries (of course) but also spectacular dining to pair with your cocktails. Despite being the state's second-largest city by population, Lexington has a small-town community atmosphere, which we attribute to the friendly locals.

Boogich/Getty

1. Chattanooga, Tennessee

While you may be tempted to bypass Chattanooga in favor of Nashville or Gatlinburg, the fourth-largest city in Tennessee begs travelers to make a detour with its natural beauty, boutique hotels, and adventurous activities. But one of the city's greatest assets is its friendly population. As you pass happy residents kayaking in Coolidge Park, hiking up Lookout Mountain, or shopping their way through Bluff View Art District, you'll be tempted to make a permanent relocation to this charming city in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

Caitlin Morton has been writing about travel for nearly a decade, with bylines in Vogue, Travel + Leisure, AFAR, TripSavvy, Real Simple, and more. She enjoys baked goods, Ireland, orange nail polish, and horror movies. One time she held the door open for Ian McKellen, which is as close to... Read more