



Best Historic Cities to Visit

A PlaceEconomics PresPoll

April 2022

Introduction

[PlaceEconomics](#) and our companion firm, [Heritage Strategies International](#), work at the intersection of historic resources and economics. To inform our own research, but also to provide insights to those working in the field of heritage conservation, we periodically conduct online surveys which we call *PresPolls*. These surveys are conducted using Survey Monkey, a link to which is provided through our direct mail list and through social media.

This poll asked about the best US historic cities to visit. Links to the survey were provided in two of our Facebook pages ([PlaceEconomics](#) and [Donovan Rypkema](#)) as well as on the Facebook page of [Historic Preservation Professionals](#). Additionally, we sent a link to the survey to our US mailing list of more than 6,000.

The survey was open from March 28 through April 4, 2022. One hundred and twenty-two responses were received. The vast majority of both our Facebook friends and our mailing list have at least an interest in and are often vocal advocates for historic preservation. Many of them are professionals in the field in the private, public, or non-profit sectors. While not every respondent to this survey would self-identify as heritage conservation proponent, most would.

The survey included five questions. The first four questions asked the respondents to list the “Best historic American cities to visit” within population categories. Those categories were “Large” (over 500,000); “Mid-Sized” (50,000 to 500,000); “Small” (10,000 to 50,000); and “Small Town” (Under 10,000). The final question read, “What are some great “sleeper” historic towns or cities in America -- ones that you think are under-known and/or underappreciated?”

All five questions were open-ended and the respondents were told they could list up to three cities.

Question 1 -- Best large (over 500,000) historic American cities to visit. (list up to three)

In total 27 large cities were mentioned. The top ten were:

1. Chicago
2. Boston
3. Philadelphia
4. New York
5. Washington
6. San Francisco
7. San Antonio
8. Milwaukee
9. Nashville
10. Louisville

Other cities mentioned by at least two respondents were:

- Atlanta
- Baltimore
- Denver
- Detroit
- Indianapolis
- Kansas City
- Los Angeles
- Memphis
- Portland, OR
- Seattle
- Tucson

Question 2 -- Best mid-sized (50,000 to 500,000) historic American cities to visit.
(list up to three)

In total 70 mid-sized cities were mentioned. The top ten were:

1. New Orleans
2. Savannah
3. Charleston
4. Santa Fe
5. Cincinnati
6. Asheville
7. Portland, ME
8. Alexandria
9. Providence
10. (t) Buffalo
10. (t) Cleveland

Other cities mentioned by at least two respondents were:

- Albany, NY
- Athens, GA
- Birmingham, AL
- Boulder, CO
- Burlington, VT
- Fort Wayne, IN
- Franklin, TN
- Galveston, TX

- Knoxville, TN
- La Crosse, WI
- Lancaster, PA
- Lawrence, KS
- Lexington, KY
- Macon, GA
- Miami Beach, FL
- Mobile, AL
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Richmond, VA
- San Juan, PR
- Sarasota, FL
- St. Louis, MO
- Tulsa, OK
- Winston-Salem, NC

Question 3 -- Best small (10,000 to 50,000) historic American cities to visit. (List up the three)

In total 129 small cities were mentioned. The top ten were:

1. Newport, RI
2. St. Augustine, FL
3. Williamsburg, VA
4. Annapolis, MD
5. Portsmouth, NH
6. Beaufort, SC
7. Madison, IN
8. Natchez, MS
9. Staunton, VA
10. (t) Bardstown, KY
10. (t) Easton, PA
10. (t) Salem, MA

Other cities mentioned by at least two respondents were:

- Auburn, NY
- Cedarburg, WI
- Charlottesville, VA
- Columbus, IN
- Durango, CO

- Eureka, CA
- Fernandina Beach, FL
- Frankfort, KY
- Fredericksburg, TX
- Guthrie, OK
- Harrisburg, PA
- Key West, FL
- Nantucket, MA
- Natchitoches, LA
- Newburgh, NY
- Newburyport, MA
- Paducah, KY
- Saratoga Springs, NY
- Thomasville, GA
- Traverse City, MI
- Winona, MN

Question 4 -- Best small (under 10,000) historic American towns to visit. (List up to three)

In total 162 small towns were mentioned. The top ten were:

1. Cape May/Wildwood, NJ
2. Harpers Ferry, WV
3. Lexington, VA
4. Taos, NM
5. Galena, IL
6. Jonesborough, TN
7. Provincetown, MA
8. St. Genevieve, MO
9. Gettysburg, PA
10. Hudson, NY

Other cities mentioned by at least two respondents were:

- Apalachicola, FL
- Astoria, OR
- Bar Harbor, ME
- Doylestown PA
- Eureka Springs, AR
- Gaylord, MI

- Georgetown CO
- Granite Falls, MN
- Halifax NC
- Hingham MA
- Hot Springs SD
- Jacksonville OR
- Jekyll Island, GA
- Jerome, AZ
- Jim Thorpe, PA
- Junction City, AR
- LaGrange, KY
- Lake Placid, NY
- Leavenworth, WA
- Lewes, DE
- Littleton, NH
- Lockhart, TX
- Margaret, TX
- Marshall, MI
- Maysville, KY
- Mendocino, CA
- Middleburg VA
- Mount Dora, FL
- Nantucket, MA
- New Castle, DE
- New Harmony, IN
- Ocean Grove, NJ
- Old Mesilla, NM
- Peabody, KS
- Perryville, KY
- Ponchatoula, LA
- Prattville AL
- Rensselaerville, NY
- Sag Harbor, NY
- Skaneateles NY
- South Haven, MI
- St Francisville, LA
- Telluride, CO
- Virginia City, NV
- Williams, AZ
- Woodstock, VT

Question 5 -- What are some great "sleeper" historic towns or cities in America -- ones that you think are under-known and/or underappreciated? (List up to three)

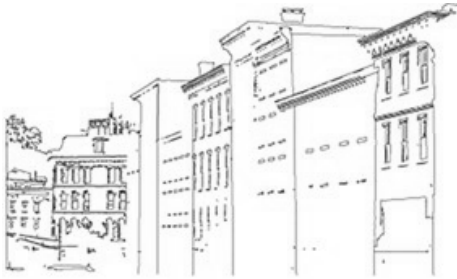
A total of 156 towns and cities were mentioned. The places mentioned most often were:

- Baltimore, MD
- Beaufort, SC
- Columbus, IN
- Detroit, MI
- Madison, IN
- Natchitoches LA

Because these were "Sleeper" towns and cities, all the places that received at least one mention are listed, alphabetically, below:

- Abita Springs, LA
- Ann Arbor, MI
- Ardmore, PA
- Aspen, CO
- Augusta, GA
- Augusta, KY
- Bakersfield, CA
- Baltimore, MD
- Bayfield, WI
- Beacon, NY
- Beaufort, SC
- Bisbee, AZ
- Bluffton, SC
- Boise, ID
- Buffalo, NY
- Burlington, VT
- Butte, MT
- Calistoga, CA
- Calumet, MI
- Cape Girardeau, MO
- Cape May, NJ
- Capitola, CA
- Casselberry, FL
- Castilian Springs, TN
- Chattanooga, TN
- Chestertown, MD
- Cheyenne, WY
- Chicago, IL
- Cincinnati, OH
- Claremont, CA
- Clarkston, GA
- Clarksville, GA
- Clayton, NY
- Cleveland, OH
- Columbus, IN
- Columbus, MS
- Concord, NH
- Cortez, CO
- Council Grove, KS
- Covington, LA
- Cumberland, MD
- Danville, VA
- Darien, GA
- Deadwood, SD
- DeFuniak Springs, FL
- DeLand, FL
- Denton, TX
- Detroit, MI
- Dover, Delaware
- Dubuque, IA
- Duluth, MN
- Easton, MD
- Eastport, ME
- Ennis, MT
- Erie, PA
- Essex, NY
- Eureka, CA
- Eureka Springs, AR
- Excelsior Springs, MO
- Fort Collins, CO
- Fort Wayne, IN
- Fort Worth, TX
- Franklin, TN
- Frederick, MD
- Fredericksburg, TX
- Geneva, NY
- Georgetown, CO
- Georgetown, SC
- Green Bay, WI
- Greenwich, NJ
- Grosse Isle, MI
- Hamilton, NY
- Hammond, LA

- Hammondsport, NY
- Harrisburg, PA
- Helper, UT
- Hernando, MS
- Honolulu, HI
- Houghton, MI
- Isleton, CA
- Jim Thorpe, PA
- Jonesborough, TN
- Knoxville, TN
- La Conner, WA
- La Grange TX
- Lake Worth, FL
- Lancaster, PA
- Las Vegas, NM
- Lawrence, KS
- Lebanon, OH
- Lexington, KY
- Lexington, VA
- Lexington, MO
- Ligonier, IN
- Littleton, NH
- Louisville, Ky
- Lynchburg, VA
- Macon, GA
- Madison, IN
- Mauricetown, NJ
- Medina, NY
- Memphis, TN
- Mesilla, NM
- Midway, KY
- Milan, OH
- Milledgeville, GA
- Milwaukee, WI
- Mineral Point, WI
- Mobile, AL
- Montpelier, VT
- Mount Dora, FL
- Natchez, MS
- Natchitoches, LA.
- New Albany, IN
- New Castle, DE
- New Harmony, IN
- Newburyport, MA
- Newport, VT
- Newport, RI
- Northfield, MN
- Norwalk, OH
- Ocean Springs, MS
- Ogden, UT
- Paducah, KY
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Portland, ME
- Providence, RI
- Red Wing, MN
- Rockport, MA
- Rome, GA
- St Genevieve, MO
- San Juan, PR
- San Marcos, TX
- Saratoga Springs, NY
- Silver City, NM
- Spokane, WA
- St Charles, MO
- Staunton, VA
- Superior, WI
- Tahlequah, OK
- Taos, NM
- Thomasville, GA
- Troy, NY
- Tulsa, OK
- Vermilion, OH
- Wallace, LA
- Warrenton, VA
- Waterford, VA
- Watkins Glen, NY
- Wheeling, WV
- Wichita, KS
- Wildwood, NJ
- Winchester, VA
- Winston-Salem, NC



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Historic Cities to Visit

Americans are traveling again, and millions will be visiting historic towns and cities. Here are what one British travel agency named as the best historic cities to visit:

1. Williamsburg
2. Savannah
3. Charleston
4. St. Augustine
5. Boston
6. Washington
7. Santa Fe
8. Philadelphia
9. New Orleans
10. San Antonio

All great places of course. But we want to know what American preservationists think are the best historic cities and towns to visit. Give us your list, by city size, and the "sleeper" historic cities more people should know about. You are welcome to include any of the above among your selections. We will release the results of the survey next week, in case you need to plan this summer's vacation.

1. Best large (over 500,000) historic American cities to visit. (list up to three)

2. Best mid-sized (50,000 to 500,000) historic American cities to visit. (list up to three)

3. Best small (10,000 to 50,000) historic American cities to visit. (List up the three)

4. Best small (under 10,000) historic American towns to visit. (List up to three)

5. What are some great "sleeper" historic towns or cities in America -- ones that you think are under-known and/or underappreciated. (List up to three)

PlaceEconomics is a private sector firm with over thirty years' experience in the thorough and robust analysis of the economic impacts of historic preservation. Our mission is to provide the preservation field with data-drive arguments and creative policy solutions to advance the public good of historic preservation. To that end, we conduct studies, surveys, and workshops in cities and states across the country that address issues of neighborhood and commercial district revitalization, affordable housing, heritage resilience, and intangible cultural heritage. We specialize in quality, defensible research, and we present findings clearly and effectively in formats that can be understood by any audience – academics, economists, mayors, city council members, property owners, and local stakeholders alike.

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