

Prescott Rated One of Best Places to Retire

bestplaces.net has rated Prescott, Arizona the #3 retirement location in the U.S.

Through much of life, our personal and professional obligations are spread across many areas. When the time comes to retire, we relax and reward ourselves for years of hard work and dedication by shifting our focus to what makes us happy.

With this in mind, it's important to choose a city for retirement that offers the specific amenities and activities we prefer. Everyone knows Florida and Arizona offer much in the way of traditional U.S. retirement, but we've selected cities that offer a completely unique lifestyle. How do you want to fill your days? Hiking or golfing? Cooking or oil painting? Shopping or attending college courses? Whatever your muse, one or more of these 2003 Best Cities for Retirement will soothe your spirit and kindle your passions.

1. **Olympia, Washington**

Lying on the shores of South Puget Sound at the foot of the Black Hills, Olympia is a city rich in natural beauty. Although home to a busy state capital, Olympians enjoy a relaxed pace of life. The arts are omnipresent, with more than 70 pieces of public art adorning the city. The Olympia Senior Center works hard to enhance the lives of retirees by organizing educational programs, recreational activities, health improvement seminars and volunteer opportunities. Thanks to the area's extremely mild climate, outdoor activities such as biking, boating, hiking, tennis, and golf are enjoyed year-round. The regal Mount Rainier, the Cascade Mountain Range, the Pacific Ocean and the Olympic National Forest are all within driving distance. Seattle to the north and Portland, Oregon to the south offer big-city attractions should you ever get the urge for some urban excitement. The median home price in Olympia is \$163,000, on par with the median home price for the United States.

2. **Williamstown, Massachusetts**

Perhaps you'd like to be directly involved in the governing of your town, just as our country's founding fathers were in colonial New England? If so, then Williamstown is for you. Williamstown is more than 220 years old and still operates on the principles of the old New England Town Meeting. Every citizen has a right to attend and voice his or her opinions and concerns. Williamstown also boasts the progressive Council on Aging (established in 1966), which actively promotes the well-being and prosperity of its beneficiaries by organizing grocery shopping assistance, fitness classes, a seniors-only transportation program, and other services. For active retirees, Williamstown is noted for the miles of cross-country skiing trails that wind their way through the 2,400 acres of neighboring Hopkins Forest. In addition, Williamstown is home to Williams

College, an outstanding liberal arts school and home to The Williams College Museum of Art, one of the most impressive American art museums in the country. Add to this the serene beauty of rural New England, and you have a community of involvement, tranquility, and inspiration. The median home price in Williamstown is \$275,000.

3. Prescott, Arizona

It may be Arizona, but Prescott offers much more than traditional retirement community golf courses and trailer parks. Nearby Prescott National Forest is one of the nation's largest ponderosa pine forests (more than 100,000 acres) and boasts more than 20 recreational facilities. Picnicking, camping, fishing, hiking, backpacking, are all easily accessible. Golfers need not worry—this is Arizona after all—as there are five challenging courses in the area. The Sharlot Hall, Phippen, and Smoki museums trace the history of the town through the eyes of both the settlers and the Native Americans. There are many art galleries for those interested in the arts and the Prescott Fine Arts Association works together with venues such as the Yavapai College Performance Hall and Blue Rose Theater to provide residents with rewarding cultural performances. Prescott is so rich in American history that it boasts more than 500 buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. When you also consider the perfectly warm summers and mild winters, Prescott is a very attractive retirement option. The median home price in Prescott is \$189,000.

4. Charleston, South Carolina

300-year-old Charleston is a mecca of South Atlantic culture and history. There's something for everyone to enjoy in Charleston, be it the unique regional cuisine, the vibrant fine arts scene, the many golf courses, or perhaps the simple and stunning beauty of its miles of beaches! Charleston was first landed upon in 1670, and its history is beautifully evident everywhere you look. The architecture is truly something to behold, from stately mansions of colonial times to lavish plantation estates of the antebellum era. If you're interested in U.S. history, Charleston offers a lifetime of museums and points of interest to explore, including the Charleston Museum (the nation's first museum) and Fort Sumter (the man-made island fortress where the Civil War began). Charleston was also the site of America's first golf course and this tradition continues at such world-class courses as the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Golf and Tennis Resort. The median home price in Charleston is \$165,000.

5. Ashland, Oregon

Ashland is the perfect place to retire for theater lovers. The annual Oregon Shakespeare Festival is one of the most exciting and acclaimed festivals of its kind and attracts theater buffs from all around the world. Enjoy one of Shakespeare's masterpieces at the impressive outdoor Elizabethan Theater, faithfully modeled after the famous Globe Theater in England. After the dust of the Shakespeare Festival has settled, the performing arts scene continues in full swing throughout the year with musicals, opera, and comedy projects. Just a few

miles north of the California border, the Ashland climate is warm and pleasant (and much drier than you might expect in Oregon). Ashland also boasts an outstanding Senior Program Center that offers a complete support system, including preventative health care clinics, discounts on City utilities, weekly events, and more. The natural beauty of the West is easily accessible from Ashland, offering outdoor activities such as river rafting, cross-country skiing, biking and golfing. Thanks to Ashland's Southern Oregon State College, residents have access to the vigor and inspiration of college students and culture. The median home price in Ashland is \$227,000.

6. Billings, Montana

Nestled in a valley at the foot of four mountain ranges, the spirit of the American West pulses through the town of Billings. Rich in cowboy history and Native American lore, residents of Billings have access to raw beauty and rugged culture. Billings offers a variety of invigorating outdoor activities for retirees that still have a spirit of adventure, including backpacking, hunting, rafting, cross-country skiing, and canoeing. Some of the world's most famous fishing streams are found in the area, including Rock Creek and the Big Horn and Yellowstone rivers. The air is pure and the climate crisp, making for a healthy environment. Many educational programs are offered by the area's higher learning institutions such as Montana State University and the Lincoln Adult Education Center. Billings also has no shortage of more passive pursuits such as rodeo watching, shopping, and visiting the impressive array of cultural and natural history museums. To top it all off, three national parks (Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Teton) are within a day's drive. The median home price in Billings is \$113,000.

7. Ithaca, New York

Ithaca offers an intriguing mixture of history and progressive activity. The geography of central New York's Finger Lakes region provides endless opportunities for exploration. Cornell University offers continuing education classes, free lectures, and world-class academic and research facilities. Ithaca's Cayuga Lake is the longest of the Finger Lakes at 40 miles long, and rustic activities abound in the unique and fertile geography of the area's deep ravines, glens, and gorges. Cayuga Lake is a favorite for boating and fishing in the spring, summer, and fall. Finally, a spirit of civic involvement runs strong in Ithaca—City Council meetings are always crowded and lively. The median home price in Ithaca is \$123,000.

8. Sioux Falls, South Dakota

The scenery is beautiful in Sioux Falls, from the historic rose quartzite buildings downtown to the colorful sunsets overlooking the Falls of the Big Sioux River. In recent years Sioux Falls has become a paradigm of clean American living, featuring a strong economy, safe and friendly citizens, low unemployment, and a smooth public transportation system. The air is clean and the weather offers the best of all seasons. Six hospitals and numerous clinics make up a center of health resources that has been nationally recognized as one of the best in the

entire Midwest region. In terms of recreation, the beautiful Big Sioux River offers outdoor adventures while the city is filled with live music venues, theaters, museums, and art galleries. The median home price in Sioux Falls is \$114,000.

9. Kerrville-Fredericksburg-Marble Falls-Mason, Texas

The special beauty of the Texas Hill country offers a peaceful and relaxing lifestyle just a short drive from Dallas and San Antonio. The Guadalupe River offers residents serenity as every spring paints the surrounding hills with colorful wildflowers. Warm days and cool nights characterize summer in the area, while spring and fall are mild. The major source of employment in the area is health care and retirement services, which ensures seniors have a consistently high level of medical programs and easy access to clinics. The median home price in the Kerrville-Fredericksburg-Marble Falls-Mason area is only \$105,000, and the cost of living is also extremely low (often a full 20% lower than the national average).

10. Oxford, Mississippi

Have you always wanted to write your memoirs or pen a thriller? Oxford is just the place. Nobel Prize-winning author William Faulkner called Oxford home, as do contemporary authors John Grisham, Larry Brown, Cynthia Shearer, and Barry Hannah. Annual literary festivals like the Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference and the Oxford Conference for the Book draw bibliophiles from all over the globe. Prefer music? The University of Mississippi boasts the Blues Archive—the world's largest collection of blues recordings. Oxford is truly a town rich in history and tradition—retirees will feel right at home shopping at Neilson's, the South's oldest continuously operating department store. The median home price in Oxford is \$137,000.

Content provided by [Sperling's Best Places](#)