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THE BEST BIG CITIES

# The 5 Best Big Cities

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**Small towns not your thing? These 5 urban gems offer an abundance of amenities at livable prices.**

For some people there's nothing more all-American than a small town. But there are plenty of folks—from millennials searching for that first job to boomers eager for big-city convenience—who want something different. That's why this year, in addition to our list of top towns, MONEY crunched the numbers on urban centers with more than 300,000 residents—63 in all. As with our Best Places list, our city rankings put a premium on a robust job market, affordable housing, and factors such as accessibility to health care, culture, and open space. We also gave extra points to places with low crime and strong public schools and selected the top city in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West. Now that the hard work is done, all you have to do is pick a place and start packing.

## Best in the Southwest: Mesa



Dave G. Houser/Alamy

Mesa's upscale Las Sendas neighborhood nestled in desert splendor at the base of the Superstition Mountains

**Great schools (and great golf) create the newest Arizona star**

### AT A GLANCE

Population	461,0
Median Home Price	\$172,5

Average Property Tax	\$1,2
Unemployment Rate	4.

There are bigger cities in Arizona (Phoenix and Tucson) and bigger golf meccas too (Scottsdale). Mesa can hold its own in both categories, and it beats them all in one key way—it's a great, affordable city for raising a family.

One prime reason: education. Of the 51 schools that earned the Arizona Educational Foundation's A+ designation this year, nine were in Mesa. "That's more than any other district in the state," says Bobbie O'Boyle, the foundation's executive director. When it comes to college, [Arizona State](#) is just next door in Tempe, while ASU's Polytechnic campus, which focuses on engineering and aviation, was built on a former Air Force base in town.