



Top 100 Place to Live

**OLYMPIA,
WASHINGTON**

Travel

Everywhere you look, this port city is alive with the spirit of the Northwest, from cutting-edge food to artisanal crafts to live music. By Rebekah Denn



OLYMPIA



Over the past few years, Olympia has evolved from Seattle's edgy little sister into a creative capital. No wonder—it's a place that's awash in beauty. Mt. Rainier, with its year-round snowcapped peak, can be seen in the distance from most anywhere, and about 175 miles of bike lanes and hiking trails offer views of Puget Sound. That natural landscape has inspired sculptures and murals around town (made possible by a recent injection of public arts funding). Home of the riot grrrl movement, Olympia has held onto its reputation for cool too, with new distilleries and craft breweries, as well as visiting bands and cultural events at the 1924 Capitol Theatre.

DOUG WANKER

Travel



GETTING HERE
Olympia is located roughly 60 miles southwest of Seattle.

that includes earthenware coffee mugs, skateboard decks recycled into backdrops for acrylic paintings, and steampunk-style brooches made with watch gears. There's even a palm-reading studio.

1 P.M. Down a boilermaker and make an early dinner out of happy-hour plates at the speakeasy-style **Dillinger's Cocktails & Kitchen** (dillingerscocktailsandkitchen.com). An old bank vault doubles as a rear lounge room.

1 P.M. See a show at the historic **Capitol Theatre** (olympiafilmsociety.org), which has an impressive calendar of films and live music, like a May 13 concert from Grammy-winning Americana singer Rodney Crowell. **▲**

9 A.M. Caffeinate for the day with a nitro cold brew at **Olympia Coffee Roasting Co.** (olympiacoffee.com), downtown across from city hall.

10 A.M. Stock up on things Northwest—local greens, bath salts, hairloom seeds, even tattoo balm—at the **Olympia Farmers Market** (olympiafarmersmarket.com).

11:30 A.M. Work up an appetite with a walk along the wooded trails of **Priest Point Park** (olympiawa.gov), a 314-acre oasis with pristine shoreline access and quiet picnic areas. To take in more terrain, bike or drive a leg of the 60-mile **Bountiful Byway** of farms, breweries, and historic landmarks, like a perfectly preserved 1910 one-room schoolhouse (bountifulbyway.com).

1 P.M. Every-of-the-moment trend is featured at the new **222 Market** building in the Market District (222market.com), from a bone-broth counter (try the kimchi-pickled duck egg and housemade

gomashio seasoning) to a craft distillery. You'll find designer ketchup (worth it!) as well as dreamy bouquets of fresh-cut flowers at Fleurac.

3 P.M. Take in the downtown arts scene. **Gallery Boom** (galleryboom.com), which recently expanded from tiny shop to 5,400-square-foot hub, is a full-on craft emporium.



LOCAL LOWDOWN "From the boardwalk during high tide, you can see jellies and seals. Stop over at **Sofie's Scoops** at 222 Market and try the sorbets. The coconut milk ones make me not regret being dairy-free."
—Nikki McClure, artist and author

132 FEBRUARY 2017

Gem of the South Puget Sound

The City of Olympia is known worldwide for its many tourist attractions, tremendous scenery, thriving arts community, unique historic downtown and more. The city welcomes visitors, artists, entrepreneurs, and residents who appreciate the natural beauty, rich culture, and splendor offered by the Pacific Northwest and the Puget Sound area.



Written by Robert Hoshowsky

Olympia is the capital city of the state of Washington and the county seat of Thurston County, located at the southern end of Puget Sound with views of Mount Rainier and the magnificent Olympic and Cascade Mountains. The city is approximately fifty-five miles from Seattle and about one hundred miles from Portland, the largest city in Oregon. The city is centrally located with access to several ports and coastal communities. Conveniently, Interstate 5, the main highway on the West Coast, runs through the city.

Incorporated in 1859, Olympia has a rich history and diverse economy. In the early 1850s, Olympia developed around the

BUSINESS IN FOCUS 133



waterfront and quickly became a hub of maritime commerce. Many people seeking new opportunity in the capital flocked to the city, which at one time had the largest population of any town on the Puget Sound. State government grew rapidly and a Supreme Court decision in 1954 mandated that State office headquarters would locate in Olympia.

In the 1960s, the time of smokestacks and plywood mills drew mostly to an end along Olympia's waterfront when several mills closed, victims of changing markets.

Today, most people still think "government" when they think of Olympia. With one third of wages paid by the public sector, »



Forbes List for Business & Careers



#35



Olympia, WA

Olympia-Tumwater, WA Metropolitan Statistical Area

At a Glance

Metro Population: **270,100**
Major Industries: **Agribusiness, Education**
Gross Metro Product: **\$11.7 B**
Median Household Income: **\$64,050**
Median Home Price: **\$214,300**
Unemployment: **5.9%**
Job Growth (2015): **2.9%**
Cost of Living: **% nat'l avg**
College Attainment: **32.7%**
Net Migration (2015): **690**

Forbes Lists

#35 Best Places for Business and Careers

#30 in Cost of Doing Business

#78 in Job Growth

#73 in Education

Profile

In 1851, the U.S. Congress established the Customs District of Puget Sound for Washington Territory and Olympia became the home of the customs house. The town settled on the name Olympia due to its view of the Olympic Mountains to the northwest. The area began to be served by a small fleet of steamboats known as the Puget Sound Mosquito Fleet. In 1896, Olympia became the home of the Olympia Brewing Company, which brewed Olympia Beer until 2003. Olympia has a wide array of public parks and nature conservation areas. [More »](#)

Numbers

Employment

Job Growth

2.9% ↑

Projected Annual Job Growth

1.8%



WalletHub Best State Capitals

#13

Overall Rank ↕	City ↕	State Capital Index ↕	'Affordability' Rank ↕	'Economic Well-Being' Rank ↕	'Quality of Education & Health' Rank ↕	'Quality of Life' Rank ↕
1	Austin, TX	64.89	9	2	7	16
2	Boise, ID	64.54	8	14	6	2
3	Bismarck, ND	64.50	3	1	10	23
4	Lincoln, NE	63.79	7	9	3	20
5	Madison, WI	62.99	27	16	2	8
6	Montpelier, VT	60.86	24	22	5	5
7	Concord, NH	60.11	5	10	19	25
8	Raleigh, NC	59.92	6	8	17	34
9	Salt Lake City, UT	58.97	22	13	11	15
10	Cheyenne, WY	58.34	1	6	37	37
11	Denver, CO	58.24	38	5	24	7
12	Juneau, AK	58.18	14	7	14	36
13	Olympia, WA	58.08	26	35	13	4
14	Pierre, SD	57.88	15	42	1	38
15	Columbus, OH	57.83	13	20	15	22
16	Des Moines, IA	57.07	11	34	8	29
17	Helena, MT	57.07	21	17	23	19
18	Nashville, TN	55.65	18	3	34	33
19	St. Paul, MN	55.64	33	15	9	27

2017 Top 100 Best Places to Live



places/top-100-best-places-to-li 2017 Top 100 Best Places to...

Our Top 100 Best Places to Live ranked more than 2,000 cities with populations between 20,000 and 350,000 in partnership with the Center for Innovation in Cities at New York University's Schools of Professional Studies. The program, directed by renowned urbanist

Our fourth annual...
the best small to...
cities in the U.S.



4. Olympia, WA

Population: 48,941

As the capital of Washington, Olympia's major employers are state and local government. Residents have access to 25 hospitals within a 60-mile radius, and beautiful scenery highlights include Puget Sound, Turnwater Falls Park, Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and Wolf Haven International. Olympia has a top transportation system in place, and students have the convenience of Evergreen State College, Saint Martin's University and South Puget Sound Community College.

Here's more about why Olympia is a Top 100 Best Place to Live.

<< Prev Next >>

More Olympia, WA

LIV SCORE 672



LIV SCORE 695

2. Iowa City, IA
Population: 71,832

LIV SCORE 678

3. Ann Arbor, MI
Population: 116,194

LIV SCORE 674

4. Olympia, WA
Population: 48,941



2017 Top 100 Best Places to Live



2017 Top 100 Best Places to Live

For the fourth year in a row, our Top 100 Best Places to Live ranked more than 2,000 cities with populations between 20,000 and 350,000 in partnership with The Initiative for Creativity and Innovation in Cities at New York University's Schools of Professional Studies. The program, directed by renowned urbanists Richard Florida and Steven Pedigo, is training the next generation of 21st-century city leaders and conducting research that will enable them to succeed for the future. Also partnered with us again this year, is the team from Emsi, which models economic data into actionable intelligence for city leaders. Ultimately, 40 data points were used to determine our rankings in the categories of economics, housing, amenities, infrastructure, demographics, social and civic capital, education and health care. Visit the links below to see how each city scored in our ranking criteria, review methodology or view the bios of our stellar advisory board.

Be sure to click on the photos to read more about why each city made the list, and find out if one of these best places is your best place!

[RANKING DATA](#) | [METHODODOGY](#) | [RANKING CRITERIA](#) | [ADVISORY BOARD](#) | [MEDIA ROOM](#)

LIV SCORE **674**

Our fourth annual ranking of the best small to mid-sized cities in the U.S.



1. Rochester, MN LIV SCORE 695
Population: 110,275



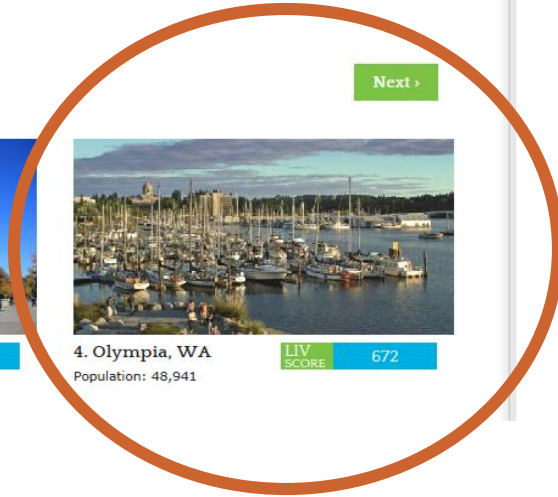
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Population: 71,832



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4. Olympia, WA LIV SCORE 672
Population: 48,941



Why Olympia Is One of America's Best Places to Live

A thriving arts scene and excellent schools helped Washington's capital land on our 100 Best Places to Live list.

By [Jessica Walker Boehm](#) on Sat, 07/30/2016 - 01:29



OLYMPIA-LACEY-TUMWATER VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

Recent top 100 lists



Best Cities for Entrepreneurs

For the second year in row, we worked with *Entrepreneur* magazine, we examine the best places in America for starting a business.



Top 100 Best Places to Live

Our fourth annual ranking of the best small to mid-sized cities in the U.S.

2017 Top 100 Best Places to Live: Ranking Data

Rank	City	Amenities	Civic	Demo.	Econ	Educat.	Health	Housing	Infrast.	LivScore
#1	Rochester	59	73	53	63	63	77	69	47	695
#2	Iowa City	54	65	42	59	68	85	63	47	678
#3	Ann Arbor	60	69	39	52	76	75	50	66	674
#4	Olympia	68	62	43	53	65	71	62	63	672
#5	Charlottesville	64	68	51	62	51	73	60	59	670
#6	Bellevue	72	72	59	50	60	61	49	63	669
#7	Palo Alto	63	69	59	49	61	68	47	69	669
#8	Madison	58	68	41	61	61	82	53	60	668
#9	Overland Park	57	74	55	62	66	75	52	45	668
#10	Bismarck	56	75	47	52	69	74	73	39	667



Thank You