



Clairvoyant Brewing Co.

Boise, Idaho

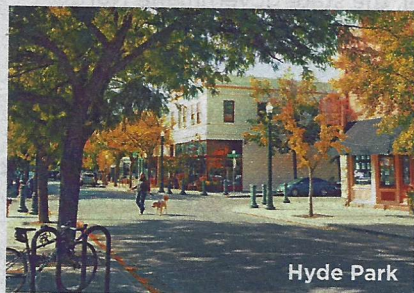
POPULATION: 236,634

THERE ARE UNSPOKEN rules in the Boise area: Don't reveal the location of the huckleberry patches. Keep your morel mushroom finds under wraps. Don't say too much about the hot springs you visit. Overall, keep Boise a secret.

But the secret is out.

A solid job market, quality health care and low crime rates—as well as earthy connections to nature—helped land Boise on a slew of top 10 lists in the 2010s. By the time the pandemic hit, transplants flocked to the high desert in search of wide-open spaces, or to take a short drive out of town to hit the ski slopes or go for hikes. Even within the city you can enjoy nature, as kayaking and fly-fishing are favorite activities on the Boise River.

Boise's small-town vibe comes with some big-city perks, including symphonies, concerts and a restaurant run by a James Beard Award winner. Boise State University, across the river from downtown, presents civic events and operates the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which engages intellectually curious adults 50 and older with noncredit, college-level programs.



Hyde Park

Boise's growth translates into ample opportunities for those still in the job market. Service, education and health care make up a sizable share of the employment sector, while manufacturing companies, including Micron and J.R. Simplot Co., employ large numbers.

With a low unemployment rate, Idaho became one of the first states to report economic recoveries from pandemic losses. But Boise's growth has also brought growing pains, as home prices creep up, meaning this may not be considered an affordable community forever. And development is taking over some of the prized land. But for now, don't be surprised if you encounter chatty locals and warm greetings while visiting. "Boise still has some of that small-town feel," says longtime resident Fred Blackburn, 70. "I think that's what makes it so special."

—Carissa Wolf

CHECK THIS OUT

SUNNY DAY LOCATION: The Boise River Greenbelt, a 25-mile walking and biking path that hugs the park-studded river and passes breweries and wineries. **WEEKDAY EVENING HANGOUT:** 8th Street, which is Boise's restaurant row and includes prime opportunities for alfresco dining and people watching. **WHERE TO TAKE VISITORS FIRST:** Chief Eagle Eye Reserve. The Shoshone, Bannock and Paiute tribes once frequented the area to bathe in the thermal pools near dramatic rock outcrops.

Lindsborg, Kansas

POPULATION: 3,801

KNOWN AS Little Sweden USA, this community was settled by Swedish immigrants in 1869. The biennial Svensk Hyllningsfest (Swedish Honoring Festival) draws some 30,000 visitors over two days with a parade, Swedish folk dancing, a smorgasbord and more.

Tourism is vital to the economy, but officials have worked to attract permanent residents. Underway is the Stockholm Estates housing development, which uses state funds for moderately priced housing.

Lindsborg also has its own community hospital, which is part of a larger regional health system, and a senior center with health programs. "They have a huge senior care philosophy," says resident Mike Goodier, 75. "It's going to be very easy to transition from our condo to whatever kind of housing and care comes next." —Mike Snider

CHECK THIS OUT

SUNNY DAY LOCATION:

Coronado Heights, with an expansive view of the Smoky Valley. It's a favorite spot for picnics and kite flying.

WEEKDAY EVENING HANGOUT: Spelbok Games & Comics, which hosts board game nights.

WHERE TO TAKE VISITORS FIRST: Small World Gallery, which displays photos by National Geographic's Jim Richardson.

Hemslöjd gift shop, with a Swedish-style Dala horse

