

World's

BEST CITIES

A RANKING OF GLOBAL PLACE EQUITY

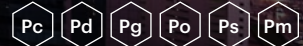
2021

Where to live, work,
invest and visit in a
new global reality

How We Chose The World's Best Cities For 2021 — 06

World's Top 100 Cities Profiles — 08

Global City Performance By Category — 55



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THESE ARE THE WORLD'S BEST CITIES NOW

Resonance is building the most comprehensive city rankings on the planet at a time when the performance and competitive identity of our cities matters more than ever.



As leading advisors in tourism, real estate and economic development for nearly two decades, our team has conducted extensive research on the rise of cities, the key trends propelling their growth and the factors that shape our perception of urban centers as desirable places to live, visit and invest.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, of course, changed everything about our businesses and our cities. It's caused us to rethink the ways we'll want to live, work and play in the future. If there's one thing that social distancing and working from home has taught us, it's that the shared spaces we were asked to close and avoid—from restaurants to sporting venues, museums to shops—are what we cherish most about the cities we live in or love to visit.

As our cities and borders gradually reopen, it is clear that cities have been changed by the pandemic—in some ways for the better and in others for the worse. On the bright side, placemaking and creative approaches to how we use our streets for people rather than cars has blossomed. The development of bike lanes and cycling networks has accelerated. Recognition of inequality and disparities between communities within cities has heightened.

But the ailments our cities were facing before the pandemic are still there, and may, in fact, get worse. For example, if more people commute by car rather than public transit when they return to the office, we'll see more traffic congestion and a dramatic rise in the carbon footprint of cities. If they stay home and work remotely, the planet will benefit, but the vibrancy of our urban centers and the viability of public

transit systems will suffer. Cities face imminent and myriad challenges that will define their next decade and beyond. To say a reinvention is upon us is an understatement.

Some will be more successful than others in adapting to this new post-pandemic reality and to the next crisis looming on the horizon—climate change. In the data we collect to produce these rankings, we can already see signs of significant change from one category to the next.

For the most part, city performance declined this year in many categories and the overall rankings were determined more by which places fell the least rather than which improved the most. But there were a few bright spots. Income inequality is shrinking in Doha. Crime fell substantially in cities like Rome, Madrid and Jerusalem (most likely as a result of lockdowns). The promotion scores of South American cities like Santiago, São Paulo and Rio De Janeiro rose.

While the long-term effects of the pandemic on the world's cities remain to be seen, they will recover. In fact, many will thrive. And our team at Resonance will be following them closely, identifying the Best Cities to live, work and visit now, and in the years to come.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Fair'.

Chris Fair, President & CEO
Resonance Consultancy
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TRAVEL IS A FORCE FOR GOOD

We can play a part in the remaking of the world's great cities, by supporting local businesses and investing in the same things that make a city great—its culture, its people, and its infrastructure.



On a recent solo trip to Washington, D.C.—one of the top 25 cities in the world, newly ranked by Resonance Consultancy—I struck up a conversation with my Uber driver. Mia was from “a country that begins with an A, on a continent that begins with an A,” she said by way of introductory quiz. On my second guess (“Azerbaijan in Asia?” “Algeria in Africa!”) she confirmed she had been trying to get home to visit family since being vaccinated against coronavirus, but her flights were continually canceled due to border closures. Two weeks after yet another canceled flight, she learned her brother had passed away—possibly from complications related to COVID. She never got to say goodbye.

We have all heard too many stories like this one, asking ourselves why vaccines haven't become the green light to resume the life we had hoped for. Still, Mia didn't plan to stay isolated. It had been two years since she'd taken a trip anywhere, and New York City in the fall—“a breath of fresh air”—beckoned.

I had answered the siren call of D.C. in much the same way, craving the thrum of a different rhythm, a city rich with history and culture, equally familiar and new. I ate at José Andrés institution Jaleo, sipped cocktails in reopened hotel bars, celebrated 100 years of modern art at the Phillips Collection, and walked the Wharf and the National Mall feeling inspired. Cities big and small still have a long way to go in their pandemic recovery—“help wanted” signs adorn so many shops and restaurants—but much like Mia, their spirit hasn't waned.

There's never been a better time for renovations, for innovations. Major cities have been the earliest adopters of “vaccine passports” or apps for entry into concerts, restaurants, and museums. Street dining and green spaces are now staples in NYC and D.C.; Paris, under the leadership of Mayor Anne Hidalgo, has banned cars along the Seine, leading to a more pedestrian-friendly lifestyle. Slow travel is the new norm; people are taking longer trips, opting for a month abroad rather than a week. They're embracing the work-remote life. And visitors now get to enjoy previously overcrowded Barcelona, Venice, Reykjavik as a local might.

The world is still in a rebuilding phase—so why not rebuild things better? AFAR is committed to travel as a force for good, and we look to the world's best cities to help lead us to a more joyful, environmentally conscious, and socially inclusive future. As the exclusive media partner for Resonance Consultancy's 2021 World's Best Cities, we look forward to spotlighting and exploring these global destinations in the year ahead.

Laura Dannen Redman
Digital Content Director, AFAR Media

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HOW WE CHOSE THE WORLD'S BEST CITIES: THE METHODOLOGY

Resonance Consultancy ranks the world's cities (principal cities of metropolitan areas with populations of more than 1,000,000) by using a combination of statistical performance and qualitative evaluations by locals and visitors in 24 areas grouped into six core categories. Principal cities are defined as the largest city in each metropolitan statistical area.

THE SIX CORE CATEGORIES

Pc PLACE

Po PEOPLE

Pg PROGRAMMING

Pd PRODUCT

Ps PROSPERITY

Pm PROMOTION



Pc PLACE

Our most layered category quantifies a city's physical sense of place. To score a city within our Place category, we evaluate the perceived quality of its natural and built environments. From how often the sun shines to the safety of the streets, several readily measurable, oft-cited factors influence our perceptions.

Weather Average number of sunny days (Weatherbase)

Safety Homicide rate (Federal Bureau of Investigation national data sources)

Sights & Landmarks Number of quality neighborhoods and landmarks recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)

Parks & Outdoors Number of quality parks and outdoor activities recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor)



Pd PRODUCT

This is a ranking of the "hardware" of a city—often the most difficult metric for cities to get right. Our Product category studies a city's key institutions, attractions and infrastructure. A city's infrastructure and institutions shape its identity via the quantity, quality and reputation of these "products." Expensive and difficult to develop and maintain, exceptional, recognizable products are often found only in large, cosmopolitan cities.

Airport Connectivity Number of direct destinations served by the city's airports (Google Flights)

Attractions Number of quality attractions recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor)

Museums Number of quality museums and arts institutions recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor)

University Ranking Score of the top local university (US News Best National University Rankings)

Convention Center Size of the largest convention center (official convention center website)



Po PEOPLE

The more diverse a city's population, the more it produces global ideas... on a local scale. Human capital is often a city's most valuable resource. To evaluate the relative strength of human capital from one city to the next, we consider the diversity of the city's population—something of proven importance when it comes to attracting talent.

Foreign-Born Residents Percentage of foreign-born residents (Eurostat, IOM-UN Migration, OECD, U.S. Census and national data sources)

Educational Attainment Percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, OECD, U.S. Census and national data sources)



Ps PROSPERITY

A well-paid, economically secure citizenry facilitates stewardship and innovation. In general, beliefs about the wealth and prosperity of a city are shaped by statistics such as the income of citizens, the standard of living and the presence or absence of large, recognizable corporations—despite the fact that start-ups and innovation increasingly drive a city's development and economic growth.

Global 500 Number of Global Fortune 500 corporate headquarters (Fortune.com)

GDP Per Capita GDP per capita, in U.S. dollars (McKinsey Urban World)

Income Equality The city's Gini index, a simple measure of the distribution of income across income percentiles in a population (OECD, IMF, U.S. Census and national data sources)

Unemployment Rate The city's latest unemployment rate that captures job losses as a result of the economic recession caused by COVID-19 (OECD, World Bank, UN-Habitat, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and national data sources)



Pg PROGRAMMING

This category measures the experiential pillars of a great visit: food, shows, shopping and nightlife. If our Product category is the "hardware" of cities and destinations, the mosaic of cultural programming and lifestyle experiences they offer is the "software" that makes them run. While such programming initiatives are individually insignificant, their sum fosters a community's connection to place.

Culture Number of quality performing arts and cultural experiences recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor)

Nightlife Number of quality nightlife experiences recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor)

Dining Number of quality restaurants and culinary experiences recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor)

Shopping Number of quality shopping experiences recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor)



Pm PROMOTION

A city's ability to tell its story (and help others do the same) depends on how it incentivizes and rewards the sharing of experiences by locals and visitors. Media coverage, including the number and frequency of online articles, references and place-based recommendations influence our perception of cities, whether the news is good or bad. Today, residents, businesses and visitors promote a city to the world more than city marketers or chambers of commerce. Resonance ranks a city's Promotion performance based on the number of stories, references and recommendations shared online about that city.

Facebook Check-ins Number of Facebook check-ins (Facebook)

Google Search Number of Google search results (Google)

TripAdvisor Reviews Number of TripAdvisor reviews (TripAdvisor.com)

Instagram Hashtags Most Instagrammed city (Instagram)

Google Trends Popularity on Google Trends in the past 12 months (Trends.Google.com)

World's

TOP 100 CITIES PROFILES

Cities are the engines of the global economy and the badges of human ingenuity. Yes, they've been hobbled over the past 18 months, exposing the long-ignored foundational and institutional problems that manifested on their streets and in their hospitals and seniors homes. But they're also leading—like they always have—the recovery and future-defining next stage of human innovation. Given the new rules of pandemic migration, the rise of remote work and the never-ending search for housing affordability, new cities are catching the imagination of global talent, with urban wealth and vibrancy created in more places than ever before. The planet's urban citizens have begun to gather again, once more colliding and creating the global culture, wealth and energy that defines the zeitgeist and path forward for our planet. And the 100 cities that we profile over the next 50 pages will be at the heart of that renewal.



VIEW OF TOWER BRIDGE

POPULATION

METRO 11,120,000

HIGHLIGHTS

1 NIGHTLIFE

1 AIRPORT
CONNECTIVITY



AERIAL OF HEATHROW AIRPORT

1 LONDON UNITED KINGDOM

As the “capital of capitals”—still waist-deep in an opaque pandemic slurry—negotiates the uncharted, perilous terrain of a post-Brexit world, London continues to reign the planet’s best cities for the sixth year running. Its position at the top, however, has never been more tenuous.

As the “capital of capitals”—still waist-deep in an opaque pandemic slurry—negotiates the uncharted, perilous terrain of a post-Brexit world, London continues to reign the planet’s best cities for the sixth year running. Its position at the top, however, has never been more tenuous.

Since we first began ranking the world’s best cities, we’ve had a firm, data-driven idea about what “best” is—prosperity and opportunity; the magnetic aspects of cities that draw talent and visitors; growth. But as the pandemic grinds on, our clear understanding of “best” is losing some of its definitiveness.

In our pre-pandemic rankings, “best” had much to do with quality-of-life factors like Programming, and London is #1 for that category, which includes Culture, Restaurants, Shopping and Nightlife. Protecting culture and programming wasn’t, understandably, a priority in March 2020 for London authorities, and it remains eclipsed by larger storm clouds today. In the darkest days of the pandemic, the UK had the highest excess death rate in Europe. The coronavirus had killed more than 16,000 Londoners as of mid-August 2021.



The horrific death rate and subsequent lockdown have obliterated London economically unlike anything since wartime. As the pandemic wrapped its fingers around the world's windpipe in the first few months of 2020, Britain plunged to the lowest growth among the G7 countries and slipped into recession for the first time since 2008.

Recovery—London's and the UK's—is not a matter of post-pandemic re-emergence. There's also the small issue of Brexit, which was entirely eclipsed by the pandemic for months.

There's been speculation on the impact of Brexit on London's prosperity ever since the referendum vote was counted in 2016: for 2022, our rankings show the city at #5 for number of Fortune Global 500 companies (identical to the previous two years) and 29th for GDP per Capita (same as last year).

Where the Brexit and pandemic wrecking ball has hit the hardest, however, is in our Unemployment Rate subcategory, in which London plunged 91 spots—from #52 to #143 among global cities.

Leading the carnage, of course, was the obliteration of international visitors. With hotels, attractions and leisure shopping in a near-total shutdown, the industry's contribution to London's economy plunged from \$21.6 billion in 2019 to just \$4.1 billion in the past year, according to VisitBritain, the national tourism agency. It was a death blow, given the sector is responsible for 12% of the city's gross domestic product.

London's tourist attractions and other hospitality businesses made tentative plans to reopen this summer—a full-capacity Wimbledon and Euro 2020 (final match aside) pumped tens of millions into the economy. The "Let's Do London" campaign by London & Partners, which promotes business and investment in the capital, also had some success getting Britons to enjoy their capital without the usual crowds.

But while a pandemic recovery is slowly afoot, the Brexit second blow is hitting hard.

Even as jobs return, the people needed to fill them don't seem eager to jump into the opportunities that only London can provide.

The number of EU citizens searching for work in Britain has fallen by more than a third since Brexit, according to a recent Indeed study that exposed the impact on UK employers as they struggle to recruit staff.

Figures from the jobs website show that searches by EU-based jobseekers for work in the UK were down by 36% in May 2021 from the 2019 average. Worse still for a tourism industry getting off the mat, low-paid jobs in hospitality, the care sector and warehouses recorded the biggest declines, at 41%.

The city's ascendant culinary scene—London is #4 globally in our Restaurant subcategory—is also on the precipice.

Asma Khan, proprietor of locally loved Darjeeling Express—staffed by South Asian women who all earn the same

wage—told the Washington Post recently that worker shortages are here to stay. "Not because they are lazy, but because hospitality did not treat its staff properly. We deserve this. They have no reason to come back. We need to sell ourselves."

Dozens of globally renowned restaurants have closed in the past year—first from the lockdown and more recently from staff shortages—including Le Caprice, reputedly Princess Diana's favorite restaurant.

But it's not only pubs short of pint pullers. Schools throughout London are caught amid a slow-motion crisis that's afflicting the entire country, in which the number of students in state-funded main schools has fallen for the first time since 2010, down 0.3% year over year. The cause? A mixture of EU migrants returning to their home countries and households transferring out of the capital. According to the Financial Times, London is struggling with even steeper declines.

The Capital of Capitals will be back, of course. Venture capital investment into London's fintech sector was already at a record high only halfway through the year, according to Dealroom.co, and Heathrow Airport—ranked #1 in our Connectivity subcategory—estimates that passenger flows will return to 2019 levels around 2024. But the city's future will be defined by its resilience over the next 24 months as it fights to keep its global magnetism strong while keeping the people it depends on to do so from looking at greener pastures.



WEMBLEY STADIUM



CYCLING BETWEEN ARRONDISSEMENTS

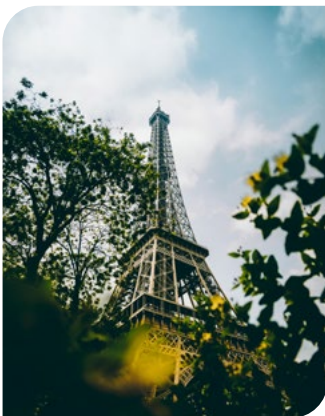
POPULATION

METRO 11,027,000

HIGHLIGHTS

3 SIGHTS & LANDMARKS

3 SHOPPING



EIFFEL TOWER

2 PARIS FRANCE

Paris attacked the pandemic not only with its doctors and health-care workers, but also with its urban planners.

For all the talk of learning from the pandemic, one city appears to be going all-in on the hard lessons it gave and their application to molecular urban change.

While the face of Paris's pandemic evolution is Mayor Anne Hidalgo and her aggressive empowerment of self-propelled mobility—from a city-wide speed limit of 30 km/h in August to the addition of more than 30 miles of bike paths reaching across most arrondissements—it's the citizenry's embrace of this boldness that is changing the city's fabric for good.

While the city has been wracked by the unemployment and economic calamity of the past 18 months (Paris

trails only London and Dubai for spiking unemployment levels year over year in our Top 10 cities) the walkable city ambition has aligned with the need for natural therapy and social distancing outdoors. Of course, being able to enjoy a city ranked #3 globally in our Sights & Landmarks subcategory, as well as Top 5 for Museums (the city has more than 100), has a tendency to distract one from the modern world's perils. Especially when there's hardly a tourist to trip over.

Almost as soon as the pandemic started, Parisians poured out of their close quarters onto the iconic Rue de Rivoli, the famed artery that intersects the heart of the capital, when it became off-limits to cars. Cars were also banned from the banks of the Seine and pretty much every other of the world's favorite spots where, surreally, flâneurs found themselves able to take a deep breath of air without a hint of exhaust while

actually hearing birdsong in what many say feels like a walk back in time.

The Champs-Élysées is next on the city leadership's list, set to be transformed over the next decade into a massive garden, with vehicle access cut in half and millions of euros invested in pedestrian-focused amenities.

The greening of the Parisian street level is simply catching up to the natural reclamation that has been happening across its rooftops for more than a decade. One of the newest and most striking of these elevated greenspaces just opened in mid-2020 in the 15th arrondissement. The urban oasis atop the exhibition complex Paris Expo Porte de Versailles is the largest urban rooftop farm on the planet. Tended by some 20 gardeners using organic methods, the three-acre farm will feature more than 30 different plant species and is expected to produce around 2,200 pounds of fruit and vegetables every day in high season.

"The goal is to make the farm a globally recognized model for sustainable production," said Pascal Hardy, founder of Agripolis, the urban farming company at the center of the project.

"We'll be using quality products, grown in rhythm with nature's cycles, all in the heart of Paris."

Run by the city's renowned chain of rooftop venues, Le Perchoir, the farm will have an on-site restaurant and bar with menus showcasing seasonal produce, as well as educational tours, team-building workshops and the chance for local residents to lease small vegetable plots of their own.

After a challenging but fruitful 18 months, Paris is eager to collect on its investment.

"Parisians, but also visitors, want more than ever to enjoy the benefits of 'slow tourism,'" Corinne Menegaux, director of the Paris tourism office, told France Today. "The city has already engaged in a huge transformation to meet these expectations: more spaces dedicated to pedestrians and sustainable mobility; significant greening of streets and rooftops; not to mention the commitment of hotels and chefs to a sustainable food supply."

She was as excited as any Parisian, then, when France reopened its doors in June to fully vaccinated travelers



from the United States. While the Delta variant has forced the French government to mandate proof of vaccinations to access public spaces and transit, it's done with the hope of showcasing the country and its revitalized capital to the world.

After a nine-month shutdown caused by the global pandemic, the Eiffel Tower reopened (with limited capacity) in July after its longest closure since World War II. Also ready to welcome the world are a trove of the city's unrivaled museums opening after major renovations. The Louvre, for one, seized the opportunity presented by no tourist traffic for a massive update. But it's the expansion and refurbishment of lesser-known cultural icons that will truly improve the city's #5 Museum ranking for years to come. Among the most anticipated is Musée Carnavalet, situated in a stunning former private mansion once belonging to Madame de Sévigné: an experiential ode to the City of Light that presents the history of Paris like no other. Another former home also just reopened—that of poet, novelist and playwright Victor Hugo—as the Paris Sewer Museum in Quai d'Orsay.

There are also plenty of other new openings—notably the Bourse de Commerce, situated in the city's landmark circular building that is the former Commodities Exchange, which will host the Pinault collection of contemporary art in a space designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando.

The city's #3 ranking in our Shopping subcategory should also improve with the anticipated reopening of Art Deco department store La Samaritaine, complete with multiple restaurants and an on-site luxury hotel.



SPECTACULAR PANORAMA OF PARIS FROM ARC DE TRIOMPHE



LITTLE ISLAND PARK, WEST SIDE MANHATTAN

POPULATION

METRO 19,294,000

HIGHLIGHTS

1 GOOGLE TRENDS

2 CULTURE



VIEW OF HUDSON YARDS

3 NEW YORK UNITED STATES

If New York City forgot about how bad life can get for its citizenry, the past 18 months were a hellish reminder.

The greatest city in America—lauded and crowned in our ranking for the past six years and in countless others for many more—was a ghastly reminder during the pandemic of the vulnerability of even the colossal and seemingly all-powerful; we saw here what awaited the rest of the country. And the world. As early cases spiked, Gotham became the nation's nightmarish coronavirus core. Statewide, more than 18,000 COVID-19 patients were in hospitals at one point. Daily deaths peaked at 799 in April 2020, totaling more than 53,000 by mid-May 2021. There have been more than two million infections in this city alone.

The gruesome pandemic events in America's city of superlatives were, like everything in this global microcosmopolis, a proxy for our collective headspace. It was where so many of the common threads of the crisis were weaved together and worn wearily by those who, unlike hundreds of thousands with the means to head upstate or to Connecticut, had nowhere to hide. By the unprotected essential workers trying to keep the world together, like a shredded Peter Parker with the subway in Spider-Man 2, sacrificing himself for the good of his fellow New Yorkers.

It was this city-scale tragedy that first landed in the crosshairs of the sniping haters declaring that the big, vibrant, cheek-by-jowl city experiment was finally over. But for resilient New Yorkers, those attacks of course merely rallied their pride amid the death, the protest and the malaise.



Jerry Seinfeld penned the now famous Times opus “So You Think New York Is ‘Dead,’” in which he channeled all of us in declaring, “The last thing we need in the thick of so many challenges is some putz on LinkedIn wailing and whimpering, ‘Everyone’s gone!’” In what would be a prescient middle finger to the oncoming onslaught of Dear John letters from those who decided it was over, Seinfeld continued: “He says Everyone’s gone for good. How the hell do you know that? You moved to Miami. Yes, I also have a place out on Long Island. But I will never abandon New York City. Ever.”

While the vast majority of New Yorkers never abandoned their fortress, most of the 66.6 million people who visited in 2019 (a numerical omen, perhaps, but also a visitor record) had no choice but to shun it, obliterating the hospitality industry and the \$46 billion in annual spending that it generated before the pandemic. More acutely, the evaporation of the visitor economy also obliterated hundreds of thousands of jobs in a matter of weeks. If previous pandemics are any indication, these vital jobs will be the last to return.

The economic scars are all over the city’s 2021 rankings. New York still has the fourth-most Global 500 headquarters on the planet, but its ranking in this year’s Unemployment Rate subcategory is so low that it now ranks out of the Top 100, at #184.

One of our newest subcategories, the Gini coefficient (which we refer to as Income Equality), shows the city’s alarming disparity between rich and not: New York ranks #218 out of the 262 cities we examined.

The city is still beguiling as ever, of course—scoring well in the subcategories it has always dominated, like reaching #13 globally for Sights & Landmarks and #7 for Museums. But its Safety subcategory, which tracks homicides—the reduction of which was a point of pride for the city and its boosters in recent years—slipped by 11 spots in the past year, to #158 among the world’s largest cities.

According to NYPD data, murders in the city rose to 462 last year, up nearly 45%, from 319 in 2019. The city recorded 1,531 shootings in 2020—almost doubled from 2019.

But despite this unprecedented... everything, there is some solace from the beforetime.

“New York City is reawakening, with infrastructure upgrades, a packed cultural calendar, world-class hotels, a new outdoor dining scene, multicultural neighborhoods to explore and many more vibrant offerings on display across all five boroughs this year,” Fred Dixon, president and CEO of NYC & Company, told Resonance in May. He was two weeks removed from a late-April press

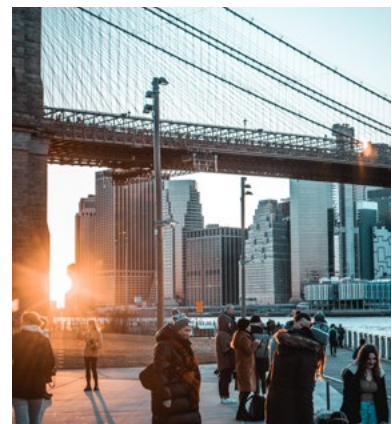
conference—almost a year to the day when the city touched 800 deaths in 24 hours—in which he and Mayor de Blasio announced the largest-ever marketing campaign for New York City tourism recovery, at \$30 million. The leaders spoke excitedly about the forecasted 36.4 million visitors expected in 2021, more than half of the 2019 record; they spoke about how 110,000 hotel rooms are expected to be available for booking by the end of the year, and how the city will start setting records again soon, with almost 70 million annual visitors expected by 2024.

Fortunately, NYC rarely misses an opportunity to welcome and profit from the world.

Even the gateways into town have been renovated: LaGuardia’s redesigned Terminal B features 35 new gates, along with retail, restaurants and amenities that more than double the previous offerings. Newark Liberty International Airport’s Terminal A opens in 2022 with 33 gates.

No fewer than a dozen high-profile hotels have opened or are opening in the next 18 months.

When it’s your turn to return to America’s best city, do yourself a favor and dedicate two hours to viewing the recovery from Summit NYC’s newest observation deck and the highest vantage point in Midtown. Stare eye level with the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building, and gaze north to Central Park. Then, walk the glass floor ledges that overhang Madison Avenue. And feel a deep gratitude for this place and its people.



VIEW OF BROOKLYN BRIDGE AT SUNSET

POPULATION
METRO 17,693,000

HIGHLIGHTS

1 MUSEUMS

1 SIGHTS & LANDMARKS

4 MOSCOW RUSSIA

Russia's beguiling capital is a cultural gold mine fighting for its life.

Any traveler to Russia will tell you that Russian influence—at least over visitors to the country's capital—is a very real thing: you'll fall under the spell of Moscow the minute you set foot in this endlessly fascinating and dynamic destination. Curiosity about Russia has increased as the political intrigue grows, which might explain why Moscow was the 15th-most on-the-rise city over the past year in our Google Trends ranking.

The worldwide fascination has as much to do with the spectacular international events—from the 2018 FIFA World Cup at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium in the city's 360-acre Olympic complex to cultural showcases—as with the Kremlin's global ambitions. Accessing all this excitement has never been easier as the curious and opportunistic can fly into Moscow with ease: the city ranks #4 for Airport Connectivity, up one spot over last year.

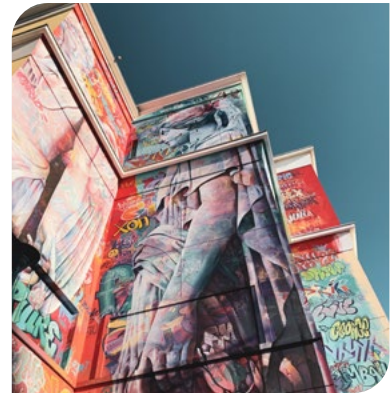
At least that was the case before Moscow's pandemic nightmare began.

The Russian capital reached daily highs in COVID-related deaths this past summer and has only managed to get less than 20% of residents vaccinated due to national skepticism around the homemade vaccines. Whatever life had returned earlier in the summer was again halted with the mandate requiring residents to show proof of vaccination or a negative test before being allowed into bars and restaurants.

The year's other wrath—extreme weather brought about by climate change—also hit Moscow hard when, in June, torrential rains and heavy winds tore through its urban grid, flooding streets and recently renovated subway lines and uprooting trees. The storm hit in the middle of a record-setting heat wave that baked Moscow and St. Petersburg at their highest June temperatures on record.

Once things get back to somewhat normal in Moscow (unlikely until well after September's federal election), visitors of all persuasions will be in for an experience at stark odds with the West's continuously dismaying news about Russia. Moscow is what Travel + Leisure calls a "revolution of creativity," giving it an atmosphere of young, free-thinking exuberance that has touched every aspect of city life, from its art and food scenes to quirky, only-in-Russia shared workspaces. The first so-called "post-Soviet generation"

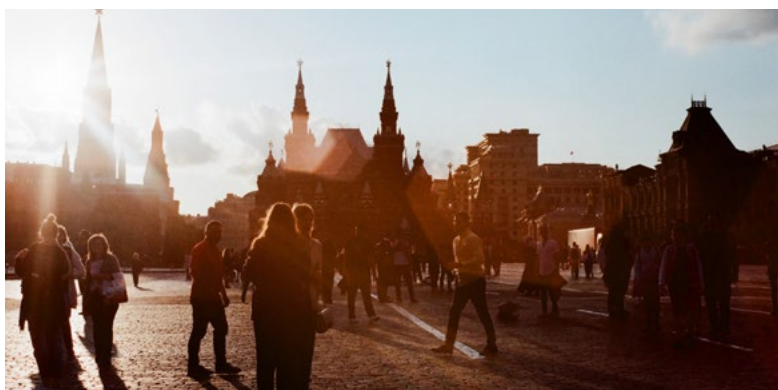
STREET ART IN MOSCOW



of Muscovites has traveled the world, returning with suitcases full of ideas that they're unpacking to huge effect in their always proud city, sanctions be damned. The fact that Moscow boasts the world's third-most educated citizenry in the world (behind only London and St. Petersburg) also helps.

But you need to be schooled in the classics to appreciate the contemporary. Moscow ranks #2 in our Place category (for the second year in a row, trailing only Dubai globally), which includes Sights & Landmarks and Parks & Outdoors. The Russian capital ascended this vital category rapidly over the past three years, powered by the aggressive (and divisive) My Street program that launched in 2015. Costing more than \$3 billion, according to local sources, My Street is narrowing Stalin's tank avenues (and Moscow's car-centric roads) into more walkable experiences. Small wonder it's ranked #6 for most hashtagged global city on Instagram.

Parks are also suddenly on the drawing board: Zaryadye, the city's first major park opening since the end of World War II, cut the ribbon on almost 20 green acres beside the Kremlin three years back—perfectly timed as a respite for socially distanced urban living. With a museum, concert hall and subterranean food hall, this multi-level space is very intentionally designed to be a gathering place in the bosom of Mother Russia.



VISITORS ENJOY RED SQUARE ON A BEAUTIFUL SUNNY DAY

POPULATION

METRO 6,595,000

HIGHLIGHTS

1 SAFETY

1 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

An alluring blend of over-the-top experiences, Arab heritage and luxury shopping, Dubai is so over the pandemic.

Dubai is a city of superlatives: you can ride the elevator to the top of the world's tallest building for a bird's-eye view, bet on the ponies at the world's richest horse race and pose for photos in front of the world's tallest choreographed fountains. These experiences are not by accident: the city reinvented itself yet again throughout the 2010s, growing from a sterile playground for a handful

5 DUBAI UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

of ultra-rich Emiratis to an international tourism and business destination. That has helped attract the highest proportion of foreign-born population of any city worldwide, and they're a sharp crowd, ranking #23 for Educational Attainment globally.

Dubai's next challenge will be not blowing its post-COVID-19 reopening by doing too much too fast. Dubai is hoping to bring back the tourists (16.7 million in 2019) who have become critical to its economy, and has spent its downtime building and recalibrating in a velocity unprecedented even for this Energizer Bunny of a metropolis.

The most visited mall on the planet is already here, and helps Dubai climb to #32 in our Shopping subcategory, a year-over-year drop of six spots. It would be a mistake to focus on the "mall" part of the name, however; like the city itself, the Dubai Mall is more of an attempt to capture every human experience and repackage it for consumption.

It has the aforementioned world's tallest tower, the Burj Khalifa, and one of the largest aquarium tanks anywhere. The city's reinvention goes on through Cityland Mall, the world's first "nature-inspired" shopping mall, opened in 2019 and packed with botanical touches, including 200,000 square feet of open-air gardens.

Likewise, the Burj Khalifa's time in the sun may be nearing an end: Santiago Calatrava's Tower at Dubai Creek will eclipse the skyscraper as the tallest building in the world when completed, in 2022 at the earliest. More certain for the city is Expo 2020 (to take place, in fact, in 2022), a multibillion-dollar half-year fair aiming to draw 25 million visitors. Nearly 200 nations will be showcased at the pavilions, adorned, like Italy's 3D-printed David by Michelangelo, with cultural celebrations of the future ahead.

Speaking of the future, the city's sensory overload of a Museum of the Future should also be completed later this year, providing more magnetism to a place eager for it post-lockdown. And joining the world's tallest building is the world's tallest Ferris wheel, and, for the family, a new John Wick roller coaster, part of the Motiongate Dubai theme park.

Visitors will also have plenty of new choices to sleep in style, notably at the St. Regis Dubai, The Palm, on the city's network of man-made islands. And lest you eschew it as an environment-modifying monstrosity, be cool: it has its own monorail station that whisks guests directly downtown. Also new is the 795-room Atlantis The Royal, with restaurants from celebrity chefs Ariana Bundy and José Andrés that will improve Dubai's already impressive Top 20 global ranking for Restaurants.

That all this economic development and influx of new residents has allowed Dubai to rank as the planet's safest city is truly astonishing.

Now, if only those drones the city is launching to zap clouds into producing much-needed rain would work so well.



THE DUBAI MALL PROMENADE

POPULATION

METRO 39,105,000

HIGHLIGHTS

1 RESTAURANTS

2 GLOBAL 500

The futuristic metropolis is tapping its ancient feudal roots by investing in street-level livability and resident well-being—in the wake of the Olympics.

Despite earthquakes, tsunamis and typhoons, Tokyo has long held on to its top spot as the safest metropolis on the planet. For the past six years in our global ranking, Tokyo ranked no lower than Top 3 in our Safety subcategory, including #1 last year. But in a year that has sideswiped Tokyo like few other cities, given the massive investment and subsequent uncertainty around the Summer Olympic Games, the Japanese capital has plummeted by 46 spots for Safety and now sits middle-of-the-pack among our Top 100.

The city remains incredibly safe, of course, even though the sight of young kids playing and walking to school unattended is today more rare given the wave after wave of COVID variants among a population that remains—at about a third as of August 2021—among the least vaccinated.

The delayed Olympics went on, of course, despite the country's fourth state of emergency being declared just days prior. Tourists were banned and local crowds were not allowed to watch the live events.

Tokyo's hosting of the Olympics could not have been more periled.

Tens of billions spent on infrastructure to welcome the world has been mostly ignored and the 2,000 hotels, inns and guest houses opened around the city will be underwater for years, to say

6 TOKYO JAPAN

THE BUZZING SHOPPING HUB OF AKIHABARA AT NIGHT



nothing of the shopping complexes and other tourist infrastructure.

Despite the pandemic and subsequent derailment of Japan's plans—or perhaps because of them—the Japanese government remains steadfast, keeping its target of 60 million visitors and \$136 billion in tourism revenue by 2030. It's not as delusional as it sounds: the country enjoyed record tourism for seven straight years and can now accommodate even more visitors to Tokyo, with the expansion of the international terminal at Haneda, the city's main airport.

The global reverence will soon return, of course, for a place with so much to explore and discover at all hours of the night. Tokyo continues to mesmerize global visitors with its innovation, efficiency and round-the-clock kinetic mobility.

It earned the #1 spot in Shopping for its world-class experiences, like Ginza's luxury department stores, newly enhanced with the art-bedecked and sharply designed Ginza Six shopping center.

The newly renovated Miyashita Park boasts 90 boutique shops and restaurants, plus a new hotel with a view of the famed Shibuya district, complete with volleyball courts and a skatepark sprawling over 2.5 acres. Early next year, the city will unveil the planet's first Netflix store.

Tokyo boasts the second-highest number of restaurants of any city—topping our Restaurant category (and taking the title from Seoul)—and is moving far beyond its internationally beloved food traditions. The metropolis offers as many restaurants as the rest of our Top 5 cities combined—more than 100,000 in total, so visitors and residents alike could never hope to experience them all. Iconic spots like Den (among the top restaurants in Asia) abound, while busy depachiku (food halls) can be explored below ground all over the city for a much more affordable price. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many restaurants have switched to take-out or reduced hours, but the overall sense is one of perseverance.

Despite its terrible year, Tokyo retains the #4 spot for Prosperity globally (slipping only by one position), buoyed by the second-highest number of Global 500 headquarters—bested only by Beijing.



SHIBUYA CROSSING

POPULATION

METRO 5,745,000

HIGHLIGHTS

3 SAFETY

5 GDP PER CAPITA

7 SINGAPORE

Asia's financial powerhouse turns its ambitions to elevated infrastructure and homegrown innovation.

Singapore's 50-year rise from politically unstable, resource-poor and unskilled ex-colony to talent- and capital-hungry shipping hub (the world's busiest) and, subsequently, Asia's wealth management capital, is place-brand engineering at its most ambitious. Small wonder, then, that the city has never finished out of the Top 10 in our six years of this ranking.

Singapore's reinvestment into research, talent and corporate headquarters recruitment ensures it will be home

to a sustainably wealthy citizenry for decades to come. It's why the city-state continues its ascent among the planet's most prosperous cities (ranking #12 for 2022), with a growing cluster of Global 500 companies (ranking 43rd).

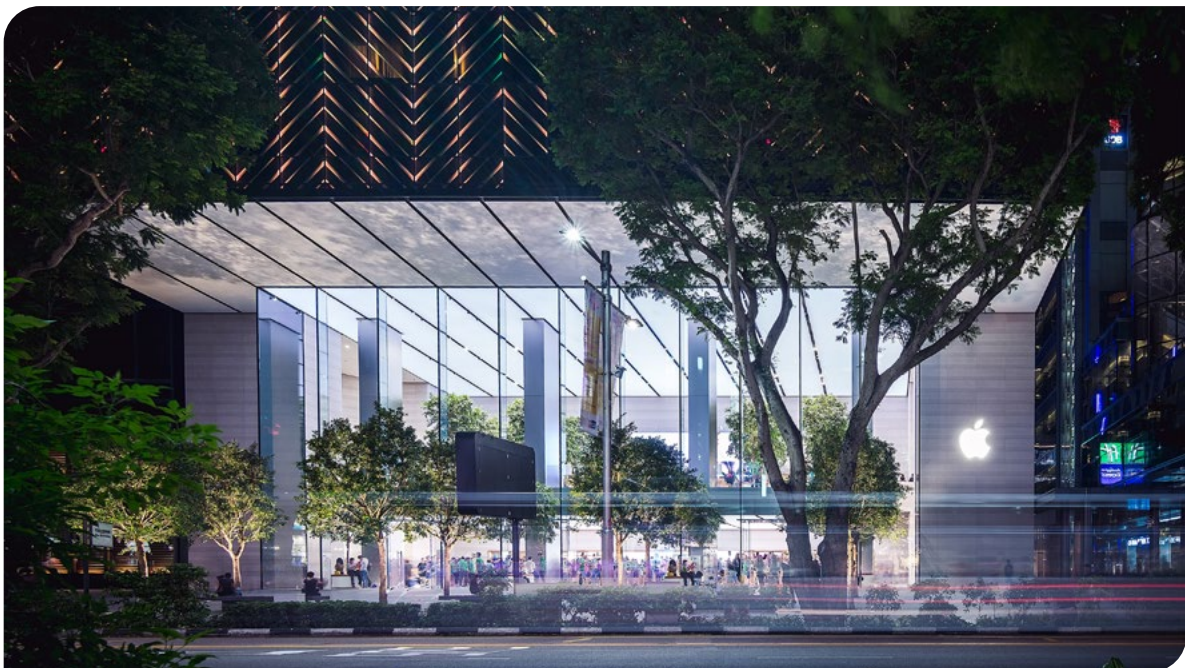
The government has already committed \$16 billion to establish Singapore as a global research and development hub. Its 2020 Research, Innovation and Enterprise Plan aimed to duplicate Nordic and Israeli innovation and R&D, much of which will strengthen local universities. This focus on research, medicine and tech is designed to open another front for Singapore—one that complements its financial dominance. It builds on the human capital of the citizenry, already Top 5 in our GDP per Capita subcategory.

Today, manifestations of this wealth and confident swagger are everywhere. From construction cranes to the gilded facades of Orchard Road—Singapore's version of Fifth Avenue for high-end fashion—the city knows its affluent global audience: moneyed wanderers

who seek efficiency, security and exoticism. Singapore ranks in the Top 10 for Foreign-Born Population and trails only Dubai in our Safety subcategory.

Visitors will have many places to stay in 2022, among them the newly opened Clan Hotel Singapore, which blends central convenience with the instant escape of a top-floor infinity pool (to say nothing of a Rolls-Royce guest airport transfer).

And only in Singapore does an airport become a must-see attraction. Opened in 2019 and designed by Safdie Architects, the \$1.7-billion Jewel Changi Airport features a canopy bridge and glass walkway shrouded in fog and suspended 75 feet in the air. But the real showstopper is the seven-story Rain Vortex, an indoor waterfall (the world's tallest) that cascades down from a central oculus in the roof. Although Singapore lands at #59 for Airport Connectivity, it would medal for its gateway's experience alone if we scored such things.



THE APPLE STORE ON ORCHARD ROAD

POPULATION

METRO 13,250,000

HIGHLIGHTS

3 GOOGLE SEARCH

4 UNIVERSITY

The City of Angels fell from great heights. But Angelenos are helping LA take flight once more.

The City of Angels fell from great heights. But Angelenos are helping LA take flight once more.

In a city famous for hyperbole, it's not an overstatement to declare that LA teetered on the verge of the COVID-19 abyss multiple times in 2020 and early 2021. The numbers are grim, of course, with the city's 1.3-million-plus cases and 25,000 deaths from COVID-19 as of early August 2021, and terms like "infection epicenter" on the lips of global media.

Spring and early summer arrived with the anticipated news that the city had met infection and vaccine thresholds to allow indoor bars to welcome people again, along with crowds to cheer on the Dodgers and to queue at Disneyland.

But the city has a long, long way back. As of early summer 2021, the unemployment rate was almost 10%, which was significantly higher than the national average of just 6.2%. LA sits toward the bottom of this year's Unemployment Rate subcategory, well out of the Top 100, at #199.

But given the pent-up demand to get past this nightmare and on with California dreaming, breaking tourism records and rolling out one multibillion-dollar infrastructure project after another, LA will not be down for long.

The city was on a culinary trajectory like few others in America and the momentum has returned. When it opens on Olvera Street at LA Plaza Village, LA Plaza Cocina will be the

8 LOS ANGELES UNITED STATES

VENICE BEACH BOARDWALK



first museum and teaching kitchen dedicated to Mexican food in the U.S. The multidisciplinary venue aims to educate visitors and celebrate Mexico's culinary heritage. The city's Mexican roots are also leading the bounty of new restaurants opening their doors. Cha Cha Chá is Chef Alejandro Guzman's new outdoor rooftop hotspot, featuring tacos, tostadas and more, all inspired by his Terraza Cha Cha Chá in Mexico City. Alma at the Grove is Grupo Hunan's first U.S. restaurant, with a menu filled with fresh and local ingredients, highlighting a rich culinary history in a traditional hacienda space. LA's #26 Restaurant ranking should be Top 20 by this time next year.

The city is also poised to improve its #17 Product ranking.

The new SoFi Stadium, the largest in the National Football League at 3.1 million square feet, officially opened last fall to host the NFL's Rams and Chargers home games. In February 2022, it will host the Super Bowl.

Adding to LA's #22 Museums ranking is the opening of the visually stunning Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, punctuated with a temporary exhibit of acclaimed artist Hayao Miyazaki.

Amazingly, all nine of LAX's terminals are in the midst of a combined \$14.3-billion modernization that includes the automated people mover (APM) train, scheduled to open in 2023. Mobility also makes it into the city with the new \$1.7-billion Regional Connector Transit Project, featuring a 1.9-mile underground light-rail system that will provide a one-seat ride across Los Angeles County. Imagine traveling from the Metro Gold Line to Long Beach and from East Los Angeles to Santa Monica without transferring lines. It's forecasted to open in 2022.

Given everything to experience in the City of Angels, it's a good thing there are more than two dozen hotels in the pipeline, with many recently opened.

And if you seem to be hearing a lot about LA of late, it's because the city's inspiring "Your Comeback Starts Here" campaign has rolled out across the U.S., a first for the destination marketer and an initiative that will further secure the city's Top 5 ranking in our vital Promotions category, in which LA already excels with a #3 ranking for Google Search and #9 for Facebook Check-ins.

POPULATION

METRO 4,735,000

HIGHLIGHTS

3 NIGHTLIFE

5 TRIPADVISOR
REVIEWS

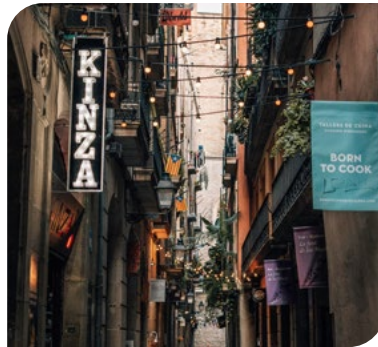
The defiant Catalan capital was the poster child of global overtourism—and its solutions. That is, before the pandemic.

Barcelona is an almost ideal European city, one with near-perfect weather year-round, miles and miles of beaches, iconic parks, striking architecture and colorful neighborhoods that march to their own beat—artistic, sophisticated, bohemian. No wonder it ranks Top 5 in our Place category, which measures both the natural and built environments of a city.

Steeped in history and wearing its cultural identity proudly on its sleeve, the capital of Catalonia is part of an autonomous region of Spain with a history of attempted secession—as

9 BARCELONA SPAIN

STREETS OF BARCELONA



the October 2017 attempt to leave and resulting police violence that flashed across the world's screens demonstrated yet again. Despite a difficult half-decade of terrorist attacks and mass protests, tourism dipped only momentarily before bouncing back—to the possible dismay of the many locals who see the crowds as a threat to their city. Barcelona responded with programs aimed at controlling the effects of runaway tourism—like real estate investors who snatch up apartments only to rent them on Airbnb, depleting an already limited supply.

Ultimately the pandemic took care of “the tourist problem,” with devastating results. Infection flare-ups meant that tourist founts like France have banned all citizen travel to the Barcelona region and local sources estimate that almost 40% of the shuttered bars and restaurants may never reopen. The country has seen more than 4.3 million infections and more than 81,300 deaths as of August 1, 2021.

For a city with the #3 ranking for global Nightlife, this has been catastrophic.

Fortunately for local shop and hotel owners facing a second canceled summer season, Spain decided to open its borders to fully vaccinated visitors in early June, despite neighboring countries like France watching closely for the need to reinstate its ban on citizens traveling there. Not surprisingly, the return of tourism has tripled visitor totals from 2020, with global tourists once again fueling up on tapas on Las Ramblas to get the night started before exploring the hidden speakeasies of Barri Gòtic, Europe's largest Gothic quarter and the heart of Barcelona, then grabbing an Uber to the industrial-sized clubbing of Port Olímpic.

For those not willing to risk infection, Barcelona's Top 5 ranking in our vital Place category is especially appealing, ranking Top 10 for Parks & Outdoors and #11 globally for Sights & Landmarks.

Sure there's the cable car and golden sands of Barceloneta, but new urban gems are always being uncovered. Take Barcelona's Passeig de Sant Joan, which will never outshine Las Ramblas but was just named one of the world's best streets by TimeOut. Sant Joan is one of Spain's first green corridors, designed for self-propelled mobility and exploration with its bicycle lanes, expansive sidewalks, greenery and sprawling outdoor seating. Extra bonus: it's also home to the city's beloved food market, Mercat de l'Abaceria (at least until it moves into more permanent digs later this decade).



VIEW OF LA SAGRADA FAMILIA AT SUNSET

POPULATION
METRO 6,006,000

10 MADRID SPAIN

HIGHLIGHTS

6 NIGHTLIFE

6 GOOGLE TRENDS

The people-powered rebirth of Spain's kinetic capital was sideswiped by the pandemic.

Madrid suffered greatly during the pandemic early on, when it was one of the planet's hardest hit capitals, as it does today, with the Delta variant running uncontrolled and various nations banning travel to Spain. But the city, in our Top 10 for only the second year in a row, is getting back on its feet, continuing a much-needed investment in its bounteous (but long-dormant) infrastructure and public assets that is fueling the Spanish capital's city-building legacy.

In Madrid, it starts with focusing on existing assets and the conviction that everything old can be new again. It's not just the well-known cultural bounty. Madrid is, more importantly, finally committed to the modern reinvention of the city focused on its citizenry. The Buen Retiro ("pleasant retreat") park in the city center was formerly owned by the monarchy, but in 1868 was handed to the public—who have made plenty of use of it ever since. It's been making news again this year, when Madrid's tree-lined Paseo del Prado boulevard and the adjoining Retiro Park were added to UNESCO's World Heritage list. Retiro Park occupies 1.3 square miles in the center of the city and Paseo del Prado, which includes a promenade for pedestrians, runs parallel to it, connecting the heart of the nation's art world, flanked by the Prado Museum, with the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum and the Reina Sofía art center.

Appropriately, both have been extensively expanded last year and this UNESCO

honor will only add much-needed magnetism to Madrid's dazzling #23-ranked museums.

It's an essential piece of infrastructure for a city that needs plentiful outdoor space, now more than ever. Madrid's #11 ranking in our Place category is well earned and will only improve in the future, given long overdue big-budget projects, like making the central Gran Vía boulevard far more pedestrian friendly.

Perhaps the biggest news is Madrid's beautiful measures to combat climate change and pollution, by way of a 47-mile urban forest network with nearly half a million new trees that will connect the city's existing forest masses and reuse derelict sites between roads and buildings. Upon completion, this "green wall" is projected to help absorb 175,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year, and mitigate heat generated by urban human activity. The investment in the city's outdoor realm will improve Madrid's middling #59 ranking in our Parks & Outdoors subcategory, especially combined with how safe the city has become (ranking #16 globally).

Thankfully, with investments in outdoor dining and walking infrastructure, the city with the #6 best Nightlife on the planet (just behind Berlin and ahead of Paris) is finally making it easier and more pleasant to stay out late. The near-perfect climate (ranking #30 in Weather) doesn't hurt, either.

The city is also investing in social housing and equitable development with the Madrid Nuevo Norte Project, currently Europe's largest urban redevelopment initiative, which will transform the industrial wasteland of railway lands and brownfields north of the city into social housing, a transit hub and new office spaces, with a focus on meeting UN Sustainable Development Goals. That bodes well for its current middling score (coming in at #82) for Income Equality.



CAROUSEL AT THE ROYAL PALACE OF MADRID



11 ROME ITALY

POPULATION METRO 3,207,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS
- 4 PLACE

The Eternal City has always been coveted. These days, the bounty is an immersive step back in time.

Few cities serve up the ability to walk Western history like Roma. Heck, Palatine Hill alone invites you into two millennia's worth if you've got an hour. Mix in a safe (#16), accessible modern city and its thousands of portals back in time (Sights & Landmarks are Top 5 globally) and it's easy to see how Rome almost cracked the Best Cities Top 10 again this year.

Declarations of love for the city have multiplied with social media channels, of course, and a #4 ranking in our extensive Place category (up three spots from last year) has directly fueled its #8 Promotion ranking, including the second-highest number of Tripadvisor reviews on the planet and very frequent Google searches. How can it not when so many sing its praises? Take the immortal Anthony Bourdain: "If I'm in Rome for only 48 hours, I would consider it a sin against God to not eat cacio e pepe, the most uniquely Roman of pastas, in some crummy little joint where Romans eat."

The curiosity about the Eternal City will only increase as Rome reopens carefully to visitors, who, after gorging on 18 months of local 'grams featuring empty streets with nary a tourist umbrella to clutter the shot, are keen to time their return before the crowds come back.



12 DOHA QATAR

POPULATION METRO 1,520,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 PROSPERITY
- 3 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

Qatar has its sights set on becoming the next tourism hot spot in the Middle East, with Doha as its crown jewel.

In less than a century, Qatar went from poor UK colony with a dwindling fishing industry to independent nation that today is the richest state per capita in the world—with booming infrastructural development to match. With shrewd investment of oil wealth, the Qatar Investment Authority is estimated to be worth more than \$300 billion, a portion of which is channeled back into the country and into Doha, up an astonishing 11 spots in this year's ranking, including topping the global list for Prosperity.

The flurry of investment has led to a #1 global ranking in our GDP per Capita and Unemployment subcategories as the country reinvests to build more highways, a metro system, universities, the I.M. Pei-designed Museum of Islamic Art and the breathtaking new National Museum of Qatar, which, when it opened, inspired the New York Times to say, "Skip the Vatican Museum. Go to the National Museum of Qatar Instead."

Doha will use the 2022 FIFA World Cup to show off its dynamic mix of traditional souks, iconic landmarks, ritzy shopping malls and five-star hotels, to say nothing of its #7 ranking in Safety. But with a poor migrant labor force toiling for an oligarchic elite (leading to a dismal ranking of #244 for Income Equality), there's work to do.



13 CHICAGO UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 9,509,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 GOOGLE SEARCH
- 8 PRODUCT

Chicago offers an abundance of programming and culture, with the deep infrastructure and affordability that eludes many other cities.

Few American cities fell harder in visitor numbers in recent months than Chicago. Whether for business or pleasure, the city had been attracting tourism at record-breaking levels year after year.

Its #12 ranking in our Programming category—including #7 in Culture and #11 in Nightlife—speaks to the plentiful buzz that Chicago was perfecting before everything ground to a halt. And what a far fall it's been, with the city's residents and prosperity hit the hardest. Chicago ranks #175 in Unemployment, with the real estate boom that has been washing over cities like San Diego, Phoenix and San José taking its time to blow into the Windy City. It's a surreal real estate plunge for an American urban icon.

The hardship of the past 18 months only means the city is spring-loaded to return to its quiet productivity—and even stronger than ever, with the seventh-highest number of Global 500 headquarters in the world, second only to New York in the U.S.

Of course, the biggest news is the legacy of one family of proud Chicagoans: the Obamas. This year ground broke on the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park on Chicago's South Side.



14 ABU DHABI

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

POPULATION METRO 2,022,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION
- 3 WEATHER

The UAE’s second city passes on the ostentatious and pursues the culturally significant.

While Dubai has massive shopping malls and the world’s biggest, tallest and most expensive everything, Abu Dhabi is quietly continuing its promotion and focus on heritage and a rich cultural tapestry. It invests in bringing artists and creators as guests for residencies and multi-show dates. The city has a knack for attracting permanent international talent as well, hitting #1 in our Foreign-Born Population subcategory and #23 in our Educational Attainment subcategory.

The buzz could be because the city is positioning itself as a leading global arts and culture hub, with the world’s largest mosque, and museums designed by just about every starchitect you can think of. While the Nouvel-designed Louvre Abu Dhabi is already open, the city is hard at work on Saadiyat Island on the construction of a Norman Foster-designed Zayed National Museum, a Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Tadao Ando’s Maritime Museum and a Performing Arts Centre by the late Zaha Hadid. The city’s #241 ranking for Museums is bound to improve in coming years. As will its #61 ranking for Promotion, a shockingly low score when you consider the buzz in this ambitious city of the future.



15 SAN FRANCISCO

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 4,701,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 UNIVERSITY
- 4 GOOGLE SEARCH

Job opportunities and infrastructure buildout pave the way as the world continues to rush in, despite the haters.

San Francisco has embraced seekers since the Gold Rush days. Along the way, these immigrants have sowed the seeds for the city’s open-minded attitude toward, well, everything. No wonder it ranks #7 globally in our Educational Attainment subcategory. The promise of high salaries brings a torrent of global workers, who fuel the city’s ambition and ideas and drive its #24 ranking for Global 500 companies. The Bay Area’s entrepreneurialism is uniquely connected to its world-renowned universities, able to accommodate local knowledge and fill skill gaps, as well as broker funding for nascent start-ups. Guidance and capital are rarely an issue for the right idea.

Still, the city is deeply wounded. Companies are leaving for Austin and Miami, and San Francisco ranks #123 for Global Unemployment. In what could be viewed as a silver lining, house prices have dropped significantly. Tourism, a golden goose that set records for the past decade, plunged. The pandemic shredded massive plans for 2020, including monumental anniversaries like Golden Gate Park’s 150th and San Francisco Pride’s 50th. But all of these delays have only filled a visitor pipeline.



16 AMSTERDAM

NETHERLANDS

POPULATION METRO 1,157,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY
- 9 SHOPPING

Surprised to see a midsize European capital with a fading party rep ranked so high? You obviously haven’t visited in a while.

It may be better known for its raunchy nightlife—still going strong at #10— but Amsterdam is stepping away from its seedier elements, going so far as to move the red-light district out of the famed De Wallen neighborhood to the outskirts of the city while banning non-residents from cannabis cafés and ditching tours that glorify the city’s baser side. Stepping into the pandemic tourism crater are tours focusing on the city’s enviable livability and Dutch history.

To that end, educating residents about their city is also paramount and, earlier this year, a book exploring the city’s role in the organization and management of the global slave trade was made available for free to residents. New museums open regularly, kicked off in 2016 by the Warhol and Banksy-stuffed Moco, followed by renovations to three of the city’s most important museums: the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh and the Stedelijk. Not surprisingly, Amsterdam ranks #14 globally in our Museums subcategory. The city is also embracing corporate Brexit refugees, who are setting up shop after leaving London, drawn by new rail and air connectivity.

TORONTO



FASTEST GROWING TECH
MARKET IN NORTH AMERICA



2ND LARGEST FINANCIAL
CENTRE IN NORTH AMERICA



"MOST DIVERSE CITY
IN THE WORLD" – BBC RADIO

Toronto's renowned multiculturalism is at the root of an inclusive and collaborative spirit, tangible upon arrival. The diversity of perspectives fuels innovation and new ideas, making Toronto a top global destination to visit, meet, invest, work and live.

[DestinationToronto.com](https://www.destinationtoronto.com)





17 ST. PETERSBURG

RUSSIA

POPULATION METRO 5,207,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
- 4 ATTRACTIONS

There are many cities that vie for the title of Venice of the North. Only St. Petersburg is worthy.

Imperial capital for two centuries, city of 40 islands and 342 bridges, St. Petersburg has been steadily climbing the rankings, from #54 to #35 to #16 and, now, just one spot down after one of the most challenging years in the city's recent memory.

Russia's Euro 2020, held over the summer of 2021, spiked the city's COVID infections to their highest levels yet. Around the same time, the year's other wrath—extreme weather brought about by climate change—also hit, baking St. Petersburg with the city's highest June temperatures ever recorded.

Still, Piter stands defiant, buoyed by its arts and education. Citizens hold the #1 spot for Educational Attainment in a city boasting more than 45 colleges and universities—some dating back nearly three centuries. The word “museum” gets redefined at the State Hermitage, one of the largest museums in the world, with an exquisite, sea-green Winter Palace so beautiful it could melt a czar's heart. Not surprisingly, the city ranks #2 for Museums and #4 for Attractions. St. Petersburg also places #2 in our Sights & Landmarks category—a one-point improvement over last year.



18 TORONTO

CANADA

POPULATION METRO 6,985,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 PEOPLE
- 9 UNIVERSITY

Economic growth, fueled by immigration and global investment, has Canada's largest city poised for big things.

With almost half of Toronto's population foreign-born, the city's #18 global ranking—five spots lower than its highest finish ever last year—is powered by diversity and education, the two components of our People category, for which the city ranks #4, just behind London. That impressive diversity is born from plentiful long-term opportunity: earlier this summer, the city was crowned as the fastest-growing metropolitan area in all of North America. As in, the continent. A Centre for Urban Research and Land Development study revealed that Toronto overtook Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington for the top spot. Getting less attention is the projection by the University of Toronto that, in less than 50 years, it will trail only New York and Mexico City in North American population.

Toronto's openness and ninth-highest number of Global 500 head offices has resulted in unprecedented density and a satisfaction with just staying put, sated by real estate wealth and the comfort that the world is already in town. And, as of late 2021, so are the good hotels, from the city's first W to the Ace Hotel's first Canadian property.



19 SYDNEY

AUSTRALIA

POPULATION METRO 4,645,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 PEOPLE
- 14 PARKS & OUTDOORS

Friendly, warm, young and rich, Sydney is a beauty with a growing line of suitors.

If Sydney weren't so (relatively) isolated, chances are it would be challenging Paris and London for visitor number supremacy. It's the laid-back, safe and sunny manifestation of the good life. Let's use new residents as a benchmark: according to local numbers, Sydney has been gaining more than 80,000 annually, ranking #7 in our People category (before its six COVID lockdowns as of mid-August 2021, of course). Many of those people are foreign-born, too, with a #7 ranking in the subcategory.

The city's staggering growth is indicative of the pull of the golden beaches, the big-city harbor and the mellow, generous, welcoming citizens who call this spectacular location home. Sydney's big outdoor spaces—ranked #14 globally—likely helped the city weather the pandemic during its first year, in addition to direct and drastic lockdown measures, and some green spaces saw double the usual number of visitors. Of course, the Delta variant was ravaging the city as of late summer 2021, with violent anti-lockdown protesters marching in the streets as COVID cases spiked to record numbers.



20 BERLIN GERMANY

POPULATION METRO 4,026,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 MUSEUMS
- 5 NIGHTLIFE

Germany has evolved into a symbol of tolerance. No other city in the country embodies these sentiments quite like its capital.

Berlin is a city where remnants of a fragile history mingle with a present where being whatever you want to be is not just encouraged but embraced. Though it was spared the initial death toll of the early pandemic (possibly thanks to the country’s science-friendly attitude and chancellor) the city that has held a Top 5 global Nightlife position since we started keeping track had to cancel its various celebrations of diversity for the first time ever, with parties like the Karneval der Kulturen and the famed Berlin Pride celebration not quite the same virtually.

But as soon as the sun comes out, the entire city still heads outdoors, to the parks, the beer gardens and, increasingly, back to street parties and parades. Berlin also ranks #8 for Museums, while its art galleries overflow. Soon, vital major cultural institutions will reopen in Museum Island after years of renovations, including the Pergamon Museum, which is the city’s most visited. In a much-needed boost for a decimated tourism industry and events business, the Berlin Brandenburg Airport opened in late 2020 after a decade of delays, fully ready for our pandemic reality with integrated on-site COVID-19 screening.



21 LAS VEGAS UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,182,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 ATTRACTIONS
- 7 WEATHER

COVID-19 decimated Sin City, but its resilience and response will define it for decades.

Tourism—the #1 economic driver for Southern Nevada—has long paid for Las Vegas’ roads, parks, school construction and teachers’ salaries. According to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, more than 41% of Southern Nevadans are employed directly or indirectly because of tourism. But this single reliance on the visitor economy also means that the COVID-19 outbreak decimated Las Vegas like few other American cities.

But this is Vegas, baby, home of the seventh-best weather in the world and its Top 5 Attractions, and America—and the world—is returning. What they’ll find are new casinos and restaurants (of course)—Resorts World Las Vegas, which opened in late June 2021, is ginormous, comprising three hotels, an old-school “hawker-style” food court and a new theater hosting Carrie Underwood’s residency. But the buzziest of all? The Elon Musk-developed 1.7-mile tunnel system—built by Musk’s Boring Co.—opened in June 2021 to transport visitors around the city’s sprawling Convention Center in Teslas. Add two newish professional sports teams (the NFL’s Raiders and NHL’s Golden Knights) and you have a town poised for a massive return to business.



22 WASHINGTON UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 6,197,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 GOOGLE SEARCH
- 6 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

America’s intriguing capital city has the world’s attention—and is working to keep it.

The ubiquity of D.C. in dramas on screens small and large, combined with the shocking events of the past year—from the most-watched presidential election campaign in history to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol—means we’re all thinking about Washington. In fact, D.C. was the planet’s most-googled U.S. city in the past year.

Given its omnipresence, there are few cities so poised to build on the exposure of the past year and surpass recent visitor records—for D.C., totaling 24.6 million visitors in 2019. Before COVID, 2020 was going to be one of the busiest ever for D.C. development, and a lost year will only accelerate the planned \$10 billion in the city-building pipeline. Food and dining are also helping D.C. pursue equity with Market 7, a sprawling food hall touting Black-owned businesses. The jewel in the city’s culinary crown is the \$250-million RiverPoint, two blocks from Audi Field, between Capitol Riverfront and the Wharf, with piers, waterfront activity and plans for new restaurants. With all of this culinary investment, the city’s disappointing #107 Restaurants ranking will surely improve.



23 ISTANBUL

TURKEY

POPULATION METRO 15,311,000

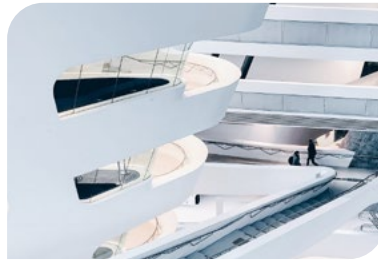
HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS
- 7 SHOPPING

Istanbul is the only major city that straddles two continents. Today, new investment is capitalizing on this strategic location.

The meeting of East and West, old and new, and conservatism and liberalism that Istanbul's history is built upon colors everything here. Minarets and church spires dot the bright skyline, while down at street level vendors plying their wares share the street with designer suits and form-fitting Armani dresses.

But on both sides of the Bosphorus Strait, everyone is talking about Kanal Istanbul, the \$15-billion artificial 28-mile waterway on the European side of Istanbul, which is proposed to run roughly parallel to the Bosphorus and is expected to significantly reduce congestion on the river—currently one of the busiest waterways in the world. The government's placemaking promises to the city—already the third-most Instagrammed on the planet—are tantalizing, including new archaeological parks lining the canal, and new, earthquake-resistant residential developments expected to house 500,000. But its many critics say it may also displace thousands of people, bulldoze endangered ecosystems and jeopardize the city's already-strained water supply.



24 VIENNA

AUSTRIA

POPULATION METRO 1,843,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 12 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY
- 15 WEATHER

Where modernism was born, the future is doing just fine.

Fresh ideas are blowing through the city that gave birth to modernism—creating a place that's becoming the benchmark for urban livability, sustainability and equity. Small wonder, then, that Vienna shot up eight spots in our rankings from last year.

Just consider housing: 60% of the city's population resides in subsidized apartments. The city also ranks #16 globally for Income Equality. Vienna is also the European standard for public transit, with almost half of the city's population holding an annual transit pass—and using it religiously.

It's a green city leader, too, with safe streets, great weather, clean air and water, and a history of methodical city planning that has given the world everything from the English garden-inspired City Park (opened in 1862) to an actual national park just outside of town (Nationalpark Donau-Auen). But it's not like the city lacks for urban pursuits, as indicated by its #16 ranking globally for Culture.

There are the UNESCO-ranked coffeehouses, of course, like the Landtmann and the Central—places where radical philosophical and aesthetic movements were hatched.



25 BEIJING

CHINA

POPULATION METRO 19,437,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 GLOBAL 500
- 5 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY

Come for the prosperity, stay for the mind-boggling urban infrastructure build-out.

If the 21st century belongs to China (Narrator: It does), Beijing will be the place to watch its rise. The capital city earned the #2 rank for Prosperity (losing the top spot to Doha this year), but it also performed well in two separate features within that category: the highest number of Global 500 headquarters, and a Top 5 Unemployment Rate ranking worldwide.

The sight of the grand Ming Dynasty Forbidden City deserted during the pandemic will not last long as travel restrictions ease, with Beijing's brand-new airport already busy. The spectacular, \$12-billion Zaha Hadid-designed Daxing International Airport opened its doors in late 2019, just in time to slam them shut as the pandemic hit. Airport officials say it will eventually see high-speed rail, inter-city services and downtown-to-airport express trains all stopping right beneath the terminal, making for quick connections to Beijing's roiling downtown. The city is already in the Top 5 in our Airport Connectivity subcategory.

Beijing's middling #75 Attractions rating will soon improve, with the 2021 opening of Universal Studios Beijing. And the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.



26 PRAGUE

CZECH REPUBLIC

POPULATION METRO 1,164,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 NIGHTLIFE
- 6 MUSEUMS

Still the fascinating gateway into Eastern Europe's secrets, Praha radiates confidence and dares visitors to keep up—and fall in line.

For a city reeling from the impact of the pandemic, Prague is taking bold steps to reinvent its cityscape and visitor economy, “return to normal” be damned. This demand for new rules of engagement comes at a time when, during the first three months of 2021, Prague recorded an almost 94% decrease in tourism compared to 2019. As it gets up off the mat, the city is making deliberate and long-lasting decisions to ensure its #6-ranked Museums and #7-ranked Attractions are accessible to everyone, not just the drunken lads who once descended on the historic splendor of the past, hunting for cheap laughs.

That’s not to say it’s abandoned the indulgent: Prague’s fairy-tale spirit can still be found in its century-old cobbled streets and its (publicly accessible) castle perched on a hilltop. But take a closer look and you’ll see a city constantly reshaped by citizens eager to write their own history. There’s shopping that’s at once sophisticated and daring (and ranked #11 globally), adventurous chefs creating a new Czech cuisine and an anything-goes club scene that has ascended to #4 on the planet, trailing only London, New York and Barcelona.



27 MILAN

ITALY

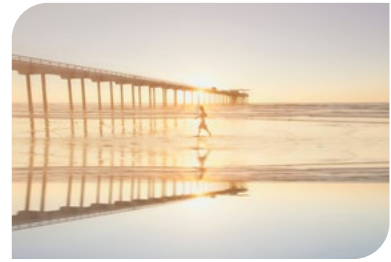
POPULATION METRO 4,994,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 SIGHTS & LANDMARKS
- 9 TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS

A no-nonsense devotion to the finer things makes Italy’s northern power a culture and fashion vanguard.

Formerly synonymous with fashion and culture, Milan grabbed the world’s attention in all the wrong ways with one of the first serious outbreaks of COVID-19 outside of Asia. Italy’s financial hub was hard hit, but its recovery will emanate from here as well. Let’s start with tourism: of any Italian city, Milan scores highest in the Product category, which measures the number of quality museums (it ranks #18 worldwide) as well as its convention centers (#8) and direct flights (#36). The two latter subcategories may well suffer in our new, smaller world, as fewer people are expected to travel internationally and large conferences, while returning, are doing so at a reduced capacity. The city’s museums have reopened with new distancing rules—great news for anyone hoping to see works by Italian masters in the gorgeous former monastery at Pinacoteca di Brera, or to immerse themselves in the clean lines and surprising cultural variety of Armani designs at Armani/Silos. Not sure where to go first? The city’s sights are mapped to an impressive resolution by the ninth-highest number of Tripadvisor reviews.



28 SAN DIEGO

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 3,316,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 11 UNIVERSITY
- 14 PLACE

Southern California’s urban ideal offers free sunshine and keeps a good thing going—across two borders.

You could say that San Diego is where California began. It was here that Spanish settlers established the region’s very first mission in 1769. Today, it’s one of the fastest-growing cities in the U.S. It ranks #14 in our deep Place category—with an impressive finish for Parks & Outdoors, at #16 globally. And, of course, there’s its weather. San Diego is as naturally endowed as any place has a right to be—its sublime 263 full and partly sunny days annually help rank it #14 for Weather, while the 23 beaches—70 miles of them—within city limits make it synonymous with SoCal surf culture. Residents are returning to the city’s famous eponymous zoo—which is one year closer to the opening of its \$69-million children’s zoo, to be named after Denny Sanford, a local philanthropist who donated \$30 million to this endeavor, the largest single gift the San Diego Zoo has ever received. In what will surely be the exclamation point announcing that San Diego is back, Comic-Con will resume as an in-person event in late 2021, just in time for the much-anticipated opening of the Comic-Con Museum in Balboa Park’s former Hall of Champions building.

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29 HONG KONG

HONG KONG

POPULATION METRO 7,398,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 GOOGLE TRENDS
- 12 PROMOTION

Not quite China but no longer a Western colony, Hong Kong is fighting for its uncertain future.

The East-meets-West spirit of the place; the forest of skyscrapers as seen on a hike to Pok Fu Lam Reservoir; the sounds, smells and tastes from the dai pai dong (open-air food stalls) of Temple Street Night Market and the city's electric pulse all captivate visitors and locals alike. The sublime embrace of the city was shattered in April 2019 when Hong Kong citizens opposing a law to extradite criminal cases to China first took to the streets. The demands quickly spread to broader human rights reforms targeting China's encroachment on the region—and, now, new security laws imposed by Beijing have cast a pall on Hong Kong's Safety (down to #47 globally after years in the Top 10), currently a high point of its score for Place (#29). The political upheaval hit Hong Kong's tourism economy in 2019, months before the world ground to a halt. These days, even if tourists wanted to come, Hong Kong's near-lockdown since January 2020 makes it nearly impossible to get in or out. The result has been an effective, if uncompromising, COVID-19 response, with acute memories of the last generation's SARS epidemic, that has kept the newer virus at bay better than most cities outside the region.



30 MELBOURNE

AUSTRALIA

POPULATION METRO 4,629,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 PEOPLE
- 12 UNIVERSITY

Cool, confident and never too eager to give up its secrets, Melbourne rewards citizens and curious, patient visitors.

While Sydney is known for its laid-back vibe and breezy style, Melbourne goes for edgy aesthetics and urban panache. For proof, explore a multitude of tiny alleys, where the city's spray-can artists turn dreary walls into colorful canvases. You might stumble upon a laneway, those locally loved narrow passageways open only to pedestrian traffic, with a charming little bar or an award-winning restaurant. In the art capital of Australia, you can while away the morning at Gertrude Contemporary, a gallery that showcases the work of emerging homegrown artists, or you can lose yourself in the happening Fitzroy neighborhood, where the city's street-art scene began in the aforementioned alleys. Melbourne ranks #22 for Sights & Landmarks and #24 for Culture, both improvements since last year. Its diversity is a major strength, ranking #12 for Foreign-Born Population, and a better educated populace ranking of #35—up a whopping 58 spots from last year—helped its People ranking skyrocket to #8 globally.



31 BOSTON

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 4,832,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 UNIVERSITY
- 8 GDP PER CAPIT

America's oldest big city has never been more current.

A hub of higher education and home to the 12th-best-educated workforce in the world, Beantown produces a steady stream of new talent to help attract start-ups and established companies alike. Future talent gravitates to Harvard, of course—the country's top school (and a big reason why the city is #1 in our University subcategory and scored #31 in our overall Product category, which measures hard-to-build infrastructure in subcategories like Airport Connectivity)—as well as to Boston's density of other world-class universities and colleges. Given this devotion to celebrating human potential, it's no wonder Boston ranks an impressive Top 25 in our People category. The city is getting back to its ambitious buildout, buoyed by billions in federal stimulus funds and cheap U.S. interest rates. Hotel inventory is projected to grow by almost 5,000 new rooms in the next five years alone, a 20% increase in supply, mostly planned for the South Boston Waterfront near the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, while the area south of North Station will undergo transformative projects not seen in decades.



32 HOUSTON

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 6,884,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 GOOGLE SEARCH
- 10 GDP PER CAPITA

Educated, diverse and hard-working, Houston is America's stealthy powerhouse on the rise.

International immigration in the past decade has contributed to explosive population growth here, making Houston one of the most ethnically diverse big cities in America and ranking it #32 globally for Foreign-Born Population, with more than 145 different languages spoken at home, according to the latest census—about even with New York. No wonder it ranks #28 for Culture globally and #33 for Restaurants, with a flurry of post-pandemic launches happening now—from food halls like Railway Heights and farmers' markets to Top Chef finalist Dawn Burrell's Late August. The fourth-largest city in the U.S. is also Top 10 globally for GDP per Capita and home to the 15th-highest number of Global 500 companies on the planet. Not surprisingly, it ranks an impressive #14 for global Prosperity. The city's ambitious plans are also driving rebirth. The recent development of the Houston Spaceport, a hub for innovation, education and commercial spaceflight, is the future of the region's space industry—and brings us all a step closer to space tourism. For now, Houston's 22.3 million annual visitors (2018)—of which 3.28 million were international travelers—arrive and depart by more conventional means (at least they did pre-pandemic).



33 DUBLIN

IRELAND

POPULATION METRO 1,371,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 SAFETY
- 13 NIGHTLIFE

The storied capital is made for flâneurs and entrepreneurs.

Dublin's Docklands area, known as Silicon Docks, is home to big tech and digital players including Google, Facebook, Amazon, eBay, Apple and Airbnb, to name just a few. These major international firms are attracted by the city's giveaway corporate tax rates—among the lowest in the world—but if taxes were the whole story the gleaming offices would be manned by skeleton crews. Among many other reasons to invest in earnest is Ireland's Local Enterprise Office, which supports international companies by providing mentoring and training as well as a number of financial grants. And it's not just household names setting up shop in the Irish capital. The site of several internationally ranked universities (Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and Dublin City University), the city continues to attract smaller start-ups that choose it over traditional head office cities like London and New York. It helps to be able to offer eager young employees something to do outside of work, which Dublin's famous—though increasingly costly—pub-centric nightlife (ranked #13) handily takes care of, along with an abundance of concerts, shows and events (ranking #21 for Culture). Of course, being the second-safest city on the planet helps, too.



34 MIAMI

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 6,091,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS
- 13 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

Miami's creativity is fueled by its arms-wide-open acceptance of newcomers.

The city's natural attributes have always captured the world's imagination and crystalized its hedonistic brand. But it is Miami's openness to immigrants (and, more recently, the LGBTQ+ community, and, even more recently than that, Silicon Valley migrants) that has the city ranking #23 in our Promotion category. From prominence on Instagram (#8 globally) to trending on Google (#23), the city where more than 100 languages are spoken across its households also wants to be the place where the new distributed workforce comes to work from home. Take tech-lusting mayor Francis Suarez: last year he helped erect a billboard near Twitter's San Francisco headquarters that read "Thinking of moving to Miami? DM me." Below was his handle. Miami's historic role as a crossroads of the Americas has long provided a business advantage few cities claim. It's home to one of the largest concentrations of international banks in the U.S., as well as one of North America's largest hubs—outside of Mexico City, New York and LA—of Spanish-language media. It's also at the crossroads of Latin America, both in geography and in culture: Miami intends to promote its connectivity and globalism, and the region's selection as a host city candidate for the 2026 World Cup will help.

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1. Go to Your device's app store 2. Install "Houston AR Scanner" 3. Scan this ad



Houston

"A city where if you dream big, big things can happen."
- Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner

Location: Graffiti Park
Mural by: PinkLoMein
Featuring: Arushi Garg
@The_Snazzy_Mom

#HoustonIsInspired



35 ZURICH SWITZERLAND

POPULATION METRO 1,369,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 PROSPERITY
- 12 PEOPLE

Often ranking among the world’s most livable cities, Zurich is exactly the kind of place you’d want to call home: efficient, clean and safe.

Switzerland’s financial center and largest metropolis is a magnet for foreigners who, along with multilingual Swiss nationals, enjoy one of the world’s highest standards of living—the city ranks #15 for GDP per Capita and #9 for Global 500 headquarters, with major European players like Migros, Credit Suisse and UBS AG based here. Zurich also lands at #12 in our People category, which includes our Educational Attainment (#8, up five spots from a year ago) and Foreign-Born Population (#26) subcategories.

For the uninitiated, Zurich may seem like a bourgeois and reserved kind of place, but under the buttoned-down oxford you’ll find a thriving arts landscape, an adventurous restaurant scene (including Bridge, a market and food hall with local purveyors) and plenty of vintage finds that won’t break the (Swiss) bank account. It has the highest concentration of creative-industry companies in Switzerland, nurtured and inspired by the Global 500 biggies. The next gen of entrepreneurs has set up shop in once-industrial west-end ‘hoods like Districts 4 and 5.



36 SEATTLE UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 3,871,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 UNIVERSITY
- 11 GDP PER CAPITA

America’s boomtown is playing the long game to keep the (supervised) party going.

Seattle’s self-reliance and dedication to taking care of its own has fostered over 150 years of city-building on the far-flung northwest coast of the U.S., setting the stage for its nearly decade-long run as America’s boomtown in the 2010s. That resilience was on display after the city became among the first in the U.S. to experience runaway COVID-19 outbreaks. But as the New York Times noted this past March, “One year later, the Seattle area has the lowest death rate of the 20 largest metropolitan regions in the country. If the rest of the United States had kept pace with Seattle, the nation could have avoided more than 300,000 coronavirus deaths.” In many ways, Sea Town reverse engineered its success. Keeping the talent pipeline stocked has always been Seattle’s secret—and it’s paid off. Today, its University of Washington ranks #5 globally and its citizenry propels it to #22 for Educational Attainment. And all of those executive salaries at Amazon, Starbucks, Microsoft and dozens of other companies defining modern commerce and society have elevated Seattle’s ranking of Global 500 companies to #19, up 11 spots from last year. The city has also become one of the most prosperous in the U.S.



37 BUDAPEST HUNGARY

POPULATION METRO 2,429,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 22 ATTRACTIONS
- 34 NIGHTLIFE

The Old World beguiles in the Hungarian capital.

Budapest is quickly emerging as a European second city on the rise, fueled, post-pandemic, by digital nomads looking for urban vibrancy on a budget. The city, which is split in half by the expansive bend of the Danube River, delivers in spades. On the west bank is medieval Buda, hilly and full of history, and on the east is Pest, modern and bohemian. The two were first linked in 1849 by the iconic Széchenyi Chain Bridge and together they now offer an alluring whole that ranks the city in the Top 10 for Attractions and Top 25 for Museums globally. Ornate baths, old-fashioned cafés, lively markets, Art Nouveau splendors and a fascinating history sweep visitors off their feet. At night, Budapest’s Communist-era factories and parkades come alive as “ruin bars,” a distinctly Eastern European approach that keeps the city’s nightlife (ranked #16) fresh and surprising. Places like Boutiq’Bar are world famous. Budapest is also suddenly a luxury property hotspot, with the new Matild Palace—the city’s first Luxury Collection hotel—opening inside a UNESCO landmark this year, joining newcomer Párisi Udvar Hotel and stalwarts like the Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace and the Aria Hotel Budapest.



38 SÃO PAULO

BRAZIL

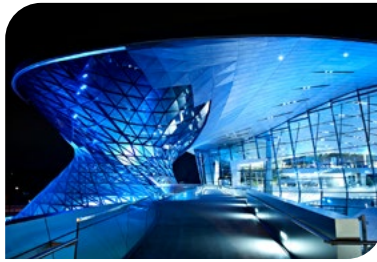
POPULATION METRO 22,495,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 RESTAURANTS
- 7 PROMOTION

The world is already in Brazil’s largest city. They all just happen to speak Portuguese.

Brazil’s biggest metropolis greets you not with beaches but with high-rises, traffic, smog and more than the occasional downpour. But as Paulistanos will tell you in person or via Facebook check-ins (#4), they live in the best city on the planet. With the largest population of Italian descendants outside of Italy, the largest community of people of Japanese descent outside Japan and a large Middle Eastern community fueled mostly by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants, culinary delights are a given. The city lands at #3 for Restaurants. Brazil’s late and half-hearted response to COVID-19 meant São Paulo suffered more cases of the virus than almost any non-U.S. city, and worse even than many parts of the particularly hard-hit U.S. That’s likely to put a damper on the city’s Top 5 ranking for Culture (encompassing concerts, shows and events) until big crowds are safe again. The city will be proceeding with an in-person presentation of its famous fashion week in October 2021—the biggest in Latin America—on the heels of its Pride Parade, the world’s biggest, in June 2021.



39 MUNICH

GERMANY

POPULATION METRO 2,008,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 CONVENTION CENTER
- 22 PROSPERITY

Bavaria’s party capital is also a business behemoth—an advantage highlighted during the pandemic.

Yes, there’s Oktoberfest every autumn, but Germany’s third-largest city works as hard as it plays, becoming one of Europe’s hottest destinations for new residents seeking this elusive balance. The pandemic has only highlighted the productivity of understated Bavarian innovation.

Munich boasts the world’s top ranking for its convention center—and its airport is ranked #10 (soon to improve after a \$550-million reno is done in 2023), ensuring ease of access to all that business. The local Technical University of Munich, which brands itself “the Entrepreneurial University,” also finished just outside the Top 25 in our University Ranking subcategory. All these attributes make up our Product category, for which the city ranks #4 globally, its highest ranking here ever in a one-spot improvement over last year. Small wonder, with all that infrastructure and entrepreneurship, that Munich is also ranked Top 25 for Global 500 headquarters (made up primarily of automakers, media and manufacturing, but being quickly joined by biotech and IT giants). The city’s economic resilience shined through the pandemic, as it improved by a staggering 25 spots in our Prosperity category, to #22 globally.



40 BANGKOK

THAILAND

POPULATION METRO 17,573,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 UNEMPLOYMENT
- 6 SHOPPING

Eat, shop and repeat in Thailand’s intoxicating capital city and, increasingly, Southeast Asia’s transportation hub.

Bangkok is about to get even more kinetic, bustling and relevant. Start with the city as global culinary powerhouse, ranking #18 worldwide in our Restaurants subcategory (up three spots since last year), despite the pandemic’s rumored destruction of the industry. The industrious street food entrepreneurs in Bangkok’s Yaowarat (Chinatown) triumphantly relit their grills and started serving up heaping portions of curry and noodles, albeit across Plexiglas barriers, while sticking to strict COVID-19 protocols that helped the city fare exceptionally well against the virus early on. These days, restaurant openings are back and include must-try curry house Charmgang, which opened just before the lockdown, and David Thompson’s new Aksorn, serving meals inspired by vintage Thai recipes. The city also ranks Top 5 globally for Shopping, and the proof is in its plentiful markets, like Chatuchak, its largest, and Central, an upscale department store that carries local and traditional Thai merchandise like tableware and decorative items made by artisans in Chiang Mai. But the biggest buzz in town is the opening of Southeast Asia’s largest railway terminal in late 2021.



41 ORLANDO

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,509,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 ATTRACTIONS
- 8 TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS

Orlando tries reopening by focusing on being a better hometown.

Being the largest city in a region that generates more than \$60 billion in tourism-related revenue every year (2020 and '21 being the notable exceptions) gets you plenty of lift from a rising tide. That's a lot of visitors with a story to tell if you give them the means to tell it. Orlando knows how to get people talking. Its #33 ranking in our Promotion category drove its overall ranking, including collecting the eighth-most Tripadvisor reviews of any city on the planet. Orlando plans buzzy product releases with military precision—and suffered deeply when confronted with an invisible enemy it couldn't defeat quickly. Its many high-budget, tourism-reliant initiatives were cut short, from SeaWorld's new Sesame Street, rolled out for the show's 50th anniversary, to LEGOLAND Resort's debut of Lego Movie World. The city has also expanded its attention beyond family fun. The new Exploria Stadium houses the local MLS men's and women's teams, with seats for 25,500 fans and plenty of placemaking rising around the emerging neighborhood. Not surprisingly, Orlando ranks #6 globally in our Attractions category, a vital metric for the city's tourism economy.

42 SEOUL

SOUTH KOREA

POPULATION METRO 22,394,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 RESTAURANTS
- 6 GLOBAL 500

Multifaceted Seoul ranks as impressively high for culture and entertainment as it does for institutions, attractions and infrastructure.

Throughout the first six months of the coronavirus pandemic, Seoul emerged as the envy of the world. Its secret? A high-tech sector and experienced government collaborating to detect, contain and treat cases early. That response was a blessing to the city's dining scene, ranked #2 globally (down a spot to Tokyo) for the sheer volume of places to eat in town. Experience the city's culinary bounty at Mukja Golmok, literally "Let's Eat Alley"; the vegetable-centric temple cuisine at Dooreyoo, Michelin-starred chef Tony Yoo's oasis; and Gwangjang Market, a century-old food hall where you can eat everything from a soup of rice cakes and kimchi-tofu dumplings to squirmy live octopus (really). The South Korean capital is also home to the sixth-highest number of Global 500 companies on the planet (and Top 30 for overall Prosperity). To see the city's next wave of entrepreneurialism, head to the isolated (for now) Seongsu district, where empty factories are being reclaimed by artists and the city's young innovator class. A commitment to independent and artisanal shops and cafés has transformed the district into a unique retail hub.

43 ATLANTA

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 5,862,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 12 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY
- 12 GOOGLE SEARCH

Affluent, charming and dripping with history, ATL is creating the future on its own terms.

Long a progressive beacon of diversity in Georgia, Atlanta's rich legacy of American civil rights—the city is the birthplace of Martin Luther King Jr.—powered the long-conservative state to flip to the Democrats in the 2020 election. The eyes of the world were on Atlanta in November and January, and saw the city's embrace of a rich, living history, from the must-see National Center for Civil and Human Rights to the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change. Small wonder, then, that ATL performed well in our Promotion category, including #12 globally for Google Search. This bodes well for the city once travel returns. Atlanta has always been a crossroads—open to new ideas and to the new arrivals who came to this lush, hot, rolling land when the city rose as a railroad terminus. Today, it's still a transportation hub, with Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport one of the busiest airports in the world (80% of the U.S. population resides within a two-hour flight). It's why the city ranks #12 for Airport Connectivity nationally, as well as #35 in our Convention Center subcategory, resulting in an overall #25 ranking for Product.



44 DALLAS UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 7,321,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY
- 19 GLOBAL 500

Dallas-boosters like to say that “Big Things Happen Here.” We’d have to agree.

It’s not only city sloganeering that’s big in Dallas. It’s an economic reality, too—The Big D is home to more than 10,000 corporate headquarters—the largest corporate head office concentration in the U.S.—and ranks Top 20 globally for Global 500 companies headquartered in town. Of course, a city with lots of corporate headquarters is a city that’s easy to get to: Dallas ranks an impressive #7 globally in our Airport Connectivity subcategory, a measure of direct flight access into a city’s principal airport. The Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport’s planned \$3-billion Terminal F project is on hold until travel rebounds, which, given the city’s trajectory pre-pandemic, shouldn’t take long. But Dallas isn’t just big on money; it’s big on fun and culture, too. This is the home of America’s sixth-largest LGBTQ+ community. On 20 square blocks of mixed-use space, institutions like the Dallas Museum of Art, the Crow Museum of Asian Art and the renowned Nasher Sculpture Center—as well as theaters, symphony and opera venues, plus restaurants and bars—all contribute to a #58 ranking in our Culture subcategory.



45 FRANKFURT GERMANY

POPULATION METRO 1,941,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 PRODUCT
- 19 GLOBAL 500

Frankfurt is quickly growing into a European business capital.

Frankfurt has perfected the art of air access. Germany is in the middle of Europe, Frankfurt is in the middle of Germany, and its airport—the largest in the country—is one of the world’s aviation hubs (#3 in our Airport Connectivity subcategory). The city rises above most others with its #2-ranked convention center, which draws more than 4.5 million visitors annually (pandemic years excepted). In 15 minutes, conventioners who fly into FRA can find themselves at the massive Messe Frankfurt, the world’s largest trade fair and event organizer, featuring its own exhibition grounds. A short stroll in any direction takes visitors to shopping, restaurants, museums and other pleasures to mix with the business of the day. The convention center is scrambling to salvage its business during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has managed to quickly bounce back with the “hygiene concept,” a typically German comprehensive system for safely organizing an event. The city has also benefited from London’s Brexit uncertainty. JPMorgan is moving hundreds of employees from London to other European cities, mainly Paris and Frankfurt, as well as approximately 200 billion euros in assets to Frankfurt from London.



46 VANCOUVER CANADA

POPULATION METRO 2,429,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 PEOPLE
- 16 UNIVERSITY

The most Asian city outside of Asia is as smart as it is gorgeous. Too bad about the price of entry.

As the terminus of a cross-country railroad constructed by laborers from all over Asia, Vancouver was built with a foundation of Asian sensibility. It ranks #6 in our People category, a combination of Educational Attainment (for which it ranks #28 globally) and Foreign-Born Population (#11). Increasingly, the term “visible minority” doesn’t mean anything here. Despite the success of this Eden of coexistence, not all is calm. Always on the lookout for foreign investment, various incarnations of provincial and federal governments made citizenship available to foreigners with sufficient capital, with little oversight on taxing outside funds. As such, Vancouver’s housing prices are now mostly hitched to a global context, largely decoupled from local wages. Fortunately, Silicon Valley and Seattle tech giants are coming to town with plenty of jobs, coaxed by Canada’s openness to immigration from global tech talent largely spurned by four years of nationalist policies south of the border. Additionally, Canada’s—and Vancouver’s in particular—comparatively proactive response to and containment of the pandemic has endeared the city to even more global nomads who can work from anywhere.



47 AUSTIN UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,114,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 GOOGLE SEARCH
- 21 UNIVERSITY

The home of SXSW is quickly becoming America’s new hometown.

The rebellious Texas city—forged with the Longhorn State’s can-do persistence cut with a university town’s political activism and social diversity—has long attracted the misfits who don’t quite fit into the American south’s expectations. Today, it’s attracting everyone else—from Silicon Valley, New York and even Seattle. The result is a housing boom fueled by a talent inflow as eager to work as they are to experience the 30th-best nightlife on the planet. As a result, the city ranks #41 in our People category, including #27 for Educational Attainment. A lot of the brainpower arrives for the #21-ranked University of Texas at Austin, and many never leave. That foundation of thinking differently drew dreamers for decades. Local marketer Visit Austin trademarked the city as “the Live Music Capital of the World,” and, post-pandemic, the city’s entertainment districts will be fêted like never before. South by Southwest, the annual summit of business, music and creativity, has seeded the area’s magnetism for new ventures. As such, monikers like “Silicon Hills” have followed campus openings by Apple, Facebook, Google, Oracle, Dell, Cisco and Hewlett-Packard. A skills shortage is being mitigated somewhat by a steady flow of graduates pouring out from UT Austin and new talent from both coasts.



48 MONTREAL CANADA

POPULATION METRO 3,746,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 25 CULTURE
- 35 MUSEUMS

Canada’s exotic French heart was hit hard with COVID-19. But a return to brighter days is never far here, mes amis.

Outgoing, two-cheek-embracing, convivial-above-all Montreal took a hard, early hit as the pandemic struck. Deaths in residences for the elderly exposed the ugly underbelly of an underfunded industry and brought about a reckoning for both governments and families over the meaning of care. Despite the cancellation of iconic programming like the Grand Prix, the city acted swiftly to turn major streets into creatively styled outdoor hangouts with art and music, and vastly increased bike lanes. Montreal rank 25th in the world in our Culture subcategory—the number of quality activities, shows and events. Universities are well rated—highly respected McGill finished #29 globally—and Université de Montréal has become a hot spot of the artificial intelligence kind. Montreal’s growing tech expertise hasn’t put the city out of reach: it hit #29 in our Gini coefficient ranking for Income Equality. But it’s becoming increasingly clear: the city’s future may be more dependent on its growing brains than on its considerable heart. Case in point: foreign investment in Montreal hit a new high of C\$1.86-billion in the first half of 2021 as companies launched 40 new projects and created 6,300 jobs, according to the city’s investment promotion agency.



49 CALGARY CANADA

POPULATION METRO 1,349,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 13 PEOPLE
- 31 PROSPERITY

Canada’s energy capital is building for its future, despite a struggling oil industry.

Although Toronto is Canada’s business heart, it’s Calgary—featuring the country’s youngest population and home to its oil industry-forged entrepreneurialism—that’s always been the challenger. People here walk with the velocity of New Yorkers and cut to the chase like Texans. Ranking #23 globally in GDP per Capita, by far the highest in Canada, the city is now in the midst of an economic hardship not seen in decades due to the struggling oil and gas industry (the fortunes of Calgary rise and fall with the price of crude). The pandemic added to the misery, which has manifested into one of the highest unemployment rates among Canadian cities over the past year. The challenge in this city of risk-takers has always been to even things out by diversifying away from fossil fuels, building an economically resilient hometown for a place that ranks #13 globally in our People category, including #17 for Educational Attainment and #22 for Foreign-Born Population (up two spots from last year). New projects, like the recently opened Central Library in the burgeoning cultural hub of East Village, reinforce the city’s long-lauded quality of life, despite current struggles. Its relative housing affordability will also attract new talent priced out of other



50 DELHI

INDIA

POPULATION METRO 31,870,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 GOOGLE TRENDS
- 17 RESTAURANTS

Fast-rising but still as timeless as ever.

Honk, beep, moo! Vans, scooters, rickshaws, street-food sellers, beggars, cows and even monkeys come together in the Indian capital of almost 32 million, which moved up 12 spots to break into our Top 50 for the first time ever. Of course, that ascent means little when your population has some of the worst COVID-19 infection and mortality rates on the planet. Once the tsunami of the pandemic has exacted its terrible toll, Delhi can begin building on its impressive Top 10 global ranking for Promotion, including #5 for Google Trends and #10 for both Google Search and Facebook Check-ins. There are few places on earth with the hectic, pulsating pace of this city, which explains its #15 spot for Place (up three spots year over year), including a #17 on the planet for its Parks & Outdoors. Indeed, Delhi is a city built upon or near the ruins of a previous city, and today visitors can trace through the eras, exploring centuries-old forts, tombs, shrines and mosques. Old Delhi is where to soak it all in while weaving in and out of the chaos, shopping for trinkets and handicrafts in the frenetic street bazaars and gaping in wonder at the Red Fort. Unsurprisingly, Delhi also ranks highly (#17) for Restaurants, and sampling everything you can is a must.



51 LISBON

PORTUGAL

POPULATION METRO 2,719,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 12 SIGHTS & LANDMARKS
- 14 TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS

The once sleepy capital on the edge of Western Europe is today one of Europe's hottest destinations.

The Portuguese capital is a tactile, multisensory experience best explored on foot, allowing a few of the 2,799 hours of sunshine a year—the most of any European capital—to warm your sense of discovery. As walkable as Lisbon is, it will soon be equally bikeable, with 125 miles of bike paths planned for the end of 2021 that will further improve its #19 global ranking for Place. Its seven hills play with the senses, reverberating sounds, light and scents, to say nothing of providing perches from which to watch the sun setting ablaze the yellow and white architecture—and the Atlantic beyond. To save you some time, the best spot to do so is the Castelo de São Jorge, a view you have to earn by ascending through winding ancient alleys in one of Europe's oldest neighborhoods—like, 1,500 years old. Even among the darkest days of the pandemic, new international residents poured into the city, buoying the ascendant house prices while pursuing the coveted Golden Visa program, which allows real estate investors to acquire residency and citizenship, and its non-habitual resident program, which offers tax benefits to certain expats. Those good times end at the beginning of 2022, when high-density areas, like Lisbon and the Algarve, become excluded.



52 NAPLES

ITALY

POPULATION METRO 3,303,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 PLACE
- 6 PARKS & OUTDOORS

Italy's third-largest city is a 3,000-year-old treasure trove of urbanity, with the experiences to match.

Even by European secondary-city status, Naples is often overlooked and underestimated—both by international visitors and by Italy's power centers. The city's three millennia of existence make it one of the oldest urban hearts on the continent—with the accompanying layers of beauty, conflict and lore (grazie, Elena Ferrante). Naples ranks an impressive Top 3 globally in our deep Place category, including #6 for Sights & Landmarks—its centuries-old Naples Cathedral rivals any other in the sensual feast that is Italy. Like in Rome and Istanbul, a mere stroll here reveals forgotten history on every block. The city's waterfront, nearby beaches and green spaces result in a #6 ranking for Parks & Outdoors. Naples has long been associated with crime and mafia, but tourism has doubled over the past decade, and crime dropped by almost 50% between 2018 and 2019 according to local sources—resulting in a #69 Safety ranking for the city globally, an improvement of 19 spots since last year. Of course, both positive indicators are at risk given Napoli has Italy's highest unemployment rate and its historically high student dropout rate is far worse off today.



53 OSAKA

JAPAN

POPULATION METRO 15,490,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 SIGHTS & LANDMARKS
- 10 SHOPPING

Osaka does today what it's done well for centuries: entrepreneurialism, food distribution and living high off the spoils of both.

One thing that's apparent the second you stroll the controlled velocity of Osaka is the swagger of its citizens. This was the capital of what is today modern Japan a millennium before Tokyo, after all, when it served as "the nation's kitchen"—the distribution point for rice, the most important measure of wealth. Osaka still knows how to eat, ranking #14 globally for Restaurants, and is best known for its okonomiyaki—cabbage pancakes stuffed with an ever-changing lineup of fillings. It's also still an economic force, ranked #12 on the planet for most Global 500 companies. Amazingly, the city's economy dwarfs Hong Kong's. But it's the impressive #25 ranking in our Programming category—led by a #10 spot for its shopping scene—that made Osaka the fastest-rising Japanese tourist city prior to the pandemic. The return of visitors is eagerly anticipated, and many will be sure to check in at Japan's first W Hotel, which opened in early 2021 and was designed by Osakan Tadao Ando, who won the coveted Pritzker Prize for his body of work in 1995. Also newly opened is Super Nintendo World as part of Universal Studios Japan, featuring more Mario immersion than any human being could ever need.



54 SAN JOSE

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 1,988,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 GDP PER CAPITA
- 5 PEOPLE

Talent, smarts and money insulated San Jose from economic devastation while allowing its citizens to be bold with recovery.

It's fascinating what a well-educated, well-paid and diverse population can do for a city's rankings. In the case of San Jose, the economic, cultural and political capital of Silicon Valley and California's oldest civilian Spanish settlement, it's everything. The city's talent has propelled it to ascend by 10 spots in our ranking year over year, even amidst the pandemic and the crescendo in tech circles that "everyone is leaving the Valley." Despite crushing housing costs and a temporarily battered tech sector, San Jose still boasts one of the most educated populaces on the planet, ranking #4 in our Educational Attainment subcategory. But San Jose doesn't intend to lose its people—or jobs—for long. There's just too much support from America's titans of industry and innovation. The institutional prosperity in the city has minimized the economic devastation of the pandemic seen almost everywhere else in the U.S., with San Jose ranking #4 for GDP per Capita worldwide and in the Top 25 for Global 500 companies headquartered here.



55 RIYADH

SAUDI ARABIA

POPULATION METRO 6,889,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 WEATHER
- 6 GDP PER CAPITA

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's capital is beginning to pave the way for tourism.

Seeing the continued success of the tourism industry in neighboring Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Oman, and keen on moving the economy away from a dependency on oil, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia started issuing tourist visas in April 2018 for the first time in eight years. The gateway is Saudi's conservative capital, where anything qualifying as culture or entertainment is discouraged and where a rigid focus is kept on business—mostly around extractive industries—resulting in the sixth-highest GDP per Capita of any global city in our rankings. Not surprisingly, the convention center also ranks #6.

The city's #102-ranked airport—and, along with it, Riyadh stock—will rise soon enough, with the July 2021 announcement of a new national airline carrier and a commitment to invest over \$147 billion in transportation infrastructure by the end of the decade (including rumors of a new airport in the capital). Still, Saudi Arabia's ultraconservative leanings present a threat to the country's plans for tourism growth, as does its reputation for murdering journalists and other outspoken critics.



56 DENVER

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,892,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 16 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY
- 24 GDP PER CAPITA

Light rail, legal pot and buzzing 'hoods attract urban wanderers looking for a new post-pandemic home.

With its secondary-city affordability and epic location tucked at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Denver is an increasingly wealthy, healthy Millennial magnet of a place. But the city is no undiscovered secret, ranking #47 globally in our People category, buoyed by its #26 ranking for citizens with at least a postsecondary degree. Residents here are not only smart but productive, too, ranking Top 25 globally for GDP per Capita, plying their trades at large companies in town (including Western Union, Molson Coors Beverage and health-care giants DaVita and Centene) and start-ups in the emergent cannabis industry.

But Denver plays as hard as it works. Blessed with 300 days of sunshine a year and surrounded by mountains, hiking paths and numerous indoor/outdoor spaces, the city is in the vanguard of the growing trend toward office wellness. Increasingly, Denver's creative scene is something to behold, too. *Afar Magazine* even recently declared it the "Street Art Capital of the Country"—as good a title as any for a post-pandemic destination welcoming tourists back slowly and, for the most part, outdoors.



57 PHILADELPHIA

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 6,079,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 UNIVERSITY
- 32 CULTURE

The City of Brotherly Love gives locals and visitors plenty of Americana.

Given its deep roots in the creation of the Union almost 250 years ago, Philadelphia is a dense, cataloged embodiment of American values and traditions, easily accessible and eagerly shared. Small wonder, then, that it ranks an impressive #54 globally in our Sights & Landmarks subcategory, and #43 in our sprawling Product category (comprised of difficult-to-build big city infrastructure like airport connectivity and museums). Speaking of which, the city's #44 ranking in our Museums subcategory is likely to improve, given this cultural behemoth's recent investments (sure to also improve Philly's #32 ranking for Culture in the coming years). Joining icons like the Liberty Bell Center this year is 90,000 square feet of new public and exhibition space at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as part of the Frank Gehry-led expansion. The city is also investing outdoors, with the central section of the Delaware River Trail opening this year for those not ready to mingle quite yet. No wonder *National Geographic* and *Condé Nast Traveler* are heaping accolades. The City of Brotherly love has the same number of Global 500 companies as global destinations like Melbourne and Singapore, and its growing population ranks #35 globally for GDP per Capita, as its glittering skyline rises ever upward.



58 TEL AVIV

ISRAEL

POPULATION METRO 2,719,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 27 PEOPLE
- 39 MUSEUMS

Israel's smart, cosmopolitan and ambitious cultural capital prioritizes the hedonistic good life in its pursuit of global talent.

With its year-round perfect weather, laid-back lifestyle and burgeoning tech industry, it's no surprise that Tel Aviv has become a popular place to live for foreign-born Millennials, as well as a popular destination for Gen-Xers eager for a vaccinated vacation spot. What few expected was the 160 rockets that rained down on the city in May as beachgoers scrambled for safety and recently opened restaurants closed down again. But Tel Aviv doesn't stay shut for long, boasting a smart, cosmopolitan, curious populace that scores #27 in our vital People category.

The city also appreciates its culture as much as its Campari, ranking #39 for Museums. Located in the city center and opened in 1932, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art houses a comprehensive collection of works by local and international artists. The new building of twisting geometric surfaces, designed by Preston Scott Cohen, is one of the city's landmarks. Opened in 2018 and sited across the Yarkon River from the art museum is the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, a grand monument to the natural world that also makes allowances for the country's Abraham faith: Torah literalists can avoid the section on evolution.



59 COPENHAGEN

DENMARK

POPULATION METRO 1,618,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 19 UNIVERSITY
- 20 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

One of Europe’s most lauded capitals lets you eat it up and work it off.

René Redzepi put Nordic cuisine on the map when his restaurant Noma was recognized among the world’s best in 2010. Since then, a new location has opened in the countryside and the Danish capital has caught up to its culinary visionaries to become a hotbed for innovative cuisine, as well as for contemporary art and design. Surprisingly, Copenhagen only ranks #122 in our Restaurants subcategory, but trust us when we say you should come here hungry. Due its citizens’ compliance with isolating during the early days of the pandemic and thereby avoiding overly punitive lockdowns, Copenhagen’s restaurants have been a lot more active than most, globally, over the past 18 months.

It seems that the 20th-most educated citizenry on the planet was prescient enough to recognize short-term pain for long-term gain. Post-pandemic, the city, already compact enough to walk or bike almost everywhere, will add dozens of miles of tram and metro lines (most notably the much-needed Sydhavn connector in 2024).



60 BRUSSELS

BELGIUM

POPULATION METRO 2,041,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 14 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY
- 20 PEOPLE

Belgium’s capital and the de facto home of the European Union is a city with plenty of surprises up its stuffy sleeve.

Understated Brussels is a bounty of breathtaking architecture—surely the Grand Place is one of the most beautiful squares in the world—as well as the source of ugly buildings (there are entire blogs dedicated to it). Locals have used the tourist-free streets to double down on their cityscape obsession, resulting in initiatives like the Comic Strip Walk, where artists decorate local buildings with scenes from Tintin and other local faves. Despite the city being the EU’s administrative center, one of its most famous landmarks is the Manneken Pis, a statue of a naked boy peeing into a fountain—a symbol not just of the city’s contempt for authority but also of the locals’ enduring deadpan humor. The city never takes itself too seriously thanks to its vibrant, educated, multi-ethnic citizenry (ranking Top 25 globally for Foreign-Born Population), who elevate Brussels to a Top 20 ranking in our vital People category. Meet the locals at under-the-radar spots like the Congolese Matonge quarter—worth it for the flea markets and street art alone. For some classic fare, explore the city’s many museums (ranked #32), starting with the grand Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.



61 BRISBANE

AUSTRALIA

POPULATION METRO 2,213,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 18 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION
- 31 CONVENTION CENTER

Rugged and cultured, Australia’s capital of Queensland does it in balance.

You go to Sydney for beaches and to Melbourne for culture. So what does Brisbane offer that you can’t find elsewhere in Australia? And why did more than 30,000 Australians move here in the past year? The short answer is that, like Medellin and Boise, it’s riding the wave of demand for secondary cities post-pandemic, powered by new talent that’s confident working remotely and wants affordability, lifestyle and sophistication without big city price tags and drama. Cosmopolitan Brisbane, which scores in the Top 20 globally for Foreign-Born Population (#18), is sunny, urbane and offers outdoor adventures within city limits. Named after the river that runs through it, Brisbane is best explored from the water and should rank higher than its #69 for Parks & Outdoors (and will once Victoria Park gets remade into a massive public green space). Walking at all hours through streets and parks is a joy in a city that ranks #47 globally for Safety. Culture vultures soak up art at the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, Australia’s largest for modern and contemporary art. Much-needed infrastructure may come swiftly, with the announcement that Brisbane will host the 2032 Summer Olympics.



62 VALENCIA

INDIA

POPULATION METRO 1,493,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 16 PLACE
- 17 CONVENTION CENTER

Enigmatic customs and historically paramount places make this city an undiscovered gem.

Spain's third-largest city has big plans post-pandemic. Of course, with Spain's cases spiking, spread by ill tourists to a low-vaccinated populace as of August 2021, the tantalizing good times seem distant. Still, when the pandemic subsides, Valencia will reward its citizens, tourists and swelling newcomer population (it was voted the #1 city for expats by InterNations in 2021). Ranked #16 for both its Weather and Safety, Valencia is going all-in on sustainability, building on 1,200+ acres of carbon-absorbing urban gardens like the Turia Gardens and the Viveros, and its nearly 10 miles of European Blue Flag-status beaches. How? It just became the first city in the world to verify its carbon emissions from tourist activity. Look it up; it's a big deal. The Michelin Guide has also just confirmed eight Michelin stars for Valencia's restaurants, including the new Green Star recognition for Ricard Camarena Restaurant in honor of its environmental commitment—with a nod to its food waste reduction and a kitchen garden that is less than five miles away. That #75 global ranking for Restaurants will be improving quickly. The city will also add to its visual bounty when it becomes the World Design Capital for 2022, as named by the World Design Organization.



63 BUENOS AIRES

ARGENTINA

POPULATION METRO 16,216,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 10 CULTURE
- 13 MUSEUMS

Buenos Aires is a mesmerizing cocktail that blends a dash of European flair with a heavy dose of Latin passion.

Elegant mansions line cobblestone streets, drivers maneuver broad boulevards according to rules only they comprehend and the planet's Top 25 nightlife goes on until dawn. Porteños, as the local populace is called, have mastered the art of whiling away the hours at cafés, drinking espresso and arguing over politics or yesterday's fútbol match. But this chaotic, beautiful mess is getting harder to stay in love with as things deteriorate with every new COVID-19 wave. The city is down 49 spots from last year in our Unemployment subcategory (#168) and its already disconcerting Safety ranking is down six spots, to #182. Still, this is "Baires" third year in a row in the Top 100, led by its #18 spot for Sights & Landmarks, boosted by spots like La Boca, a vibrant quarter where everything—walls, lampposts, fire hydrants and even tree trunks—is painted in vibrant shades of green, red, yellow, purple and blue. Buenos Aires is also an emerging force in our Programming category (#18), ranking #10 for Culture thanks to its mid-pandemic lockdown easing and subsequent torrent of events and concerts—from tango in the park in Belgrano to the increasingly buzzy arteBA art fair.



64 TAIPEI

TAIWAN

POPULATION METRO 9,078,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 RESTAURANTS
- 15 GLOBAL 500

A stealthy Asian capital ascends rapidly.

This is the first time that Taiwan's capital appears in our Top 100, and it does so with style, improving by 46 spots to debut solidly middle-of-the-pack, led by its stealthy culinary chops and understated prosperity. Taipei has, over the past decade, emerged as one of Asia's magnetic cities among those who know. The ambitious and developing metropolis is a more accessible and affordable Hong Kong or Tokyo, with restaurants to match. The proof is in the xiao long bao, or soup dumpling, at local restaurant legend Din Tai Fung, home to, if local lore is to be believed, the best dumplings in the world. It's decades-old favorites like this that help Taipei's restaurants rank #9 globally. But the city is also a global shopping destination (ranking #14) buoyed as much by its myriad haute boutiques and the global chains in the luxe Ximending area as by the serpentine electronics bazaar of the Guang Hua Digital Plaza. The sense of livability for a city this large is threaded together by fantastic public transit—soon to be improved further with the new Circular Line—and casual affluence (not to mention almost non-existent unemployment, courtesy of the 15th-highest number of Global 500 companies in town).



65 RIO DE JANEIRO

BRAZIL

POPULATION METRO 12,486,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 PARKS & OUTDOORS
- 11 CULTURE

Cidade Maravilhosa oozes with sensory delights.

Tropical and sexy, with dazzling beaches, samba-fueled nightlife and lush mountains that rise to the heavens, Rio is stunning. And ascendant, rising 16 spots since last year. It ranks #8 for Parks & Outdoors and #33 for Sights & Landmarks, and you could certainly spend your entire visit exploring al fresco. Lapa is the edgy red-light district teeming with live-music clubs, and on weekends the party spills into the street, just reinforcing the city's ranking as having the 34th-best nightlife on the planet. In Copacabana there's the Museum of Image and Sound by the New York-based architects behind the High Line park. Once you've done the beach, swap your Havaianas for hikers and visit Tijuca Forest, a national park with waterfalls, wildlife and Christ the Redeemer, which stands in all its glory atop the 2,329-foot Corcovado Mountain. For a less crowded but still spectacular view of the city, Sugarloaf Mountain offers a cable car at the mouth of Guanabara Bay. Safety (#232) is Rio's biggest liability, further reinforced by the country's poor response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of mid-August 2021, the State of Rio de Janeiro had more than a million cases and 61,000 deaths.



66 PORTLAND

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,445,761

HIGHLIGHTS

- 12 GOOGLE SEARCH
- 14 GDP PER CAPITA

America's Left Coast runs deep in this ambitious city on the edge of the wilderness.

Portland's blissful isolation, ambivalence toward established norms and legacy of cooperation and neighborliness—to hew trees and carve out one's place among the encroaching wilderness—makes this one of the most earnest cities in America. One of the zingers in the popular TV show *Portlandia* identified its lampooned target as “a place young people go to retire.” But it's more like reinvent themselves. The proof of its people is in Portland's performance: its citizenry ranks #36 for Educational Attainment. After a healthy population growth pre-COVID-19 (almost 8,500 people moved to town in 2018 and 2019), the city held on to those citizens during the pandemic—good thing, too, given city's #14 global ranking for GDP per Capita. But Portlanders work hard to play hard. The city ranks #47 on the planet for its lively Programming, including #41 for Culture, #46 for Nightlife and #50 for Shopping. But Stumptown (referring to a logging past) isn't a hedonistic pacifist. As the eyes of the world focused on the city's battle against shadowy federal military deployed there to quell Black Lives Matter and social justice protests, Portlanders once again forged their reputation as an uncompromising citizenry.



67 HAMBURG

GERMANY

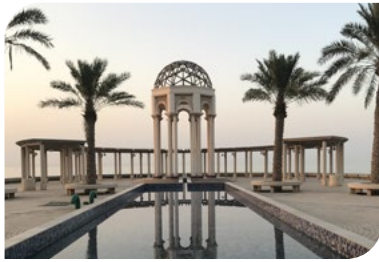
POPULATION METRO 2,048,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 20 INCOME EQUALITY
- 22 NIGHTLIFE

Germany's second city is a creative wild child with global impact.

Hamburg is both Europe's second-largest shipping port and a serious contender for “Venice of the North,” with a lake and a latticework of canals that elevate the city into visually stunning territory. Emblematic of this is the \$933-million Elbphilharmonie, a spectacular concert hall that combines 19th-century warehouses with the crystalline architecture and acoustics of the future. But don't let the opulence fool you: Hamburg boasts the 20th-best Income Equality worldwide. Lower-income people are not being left behind, even in its signature redevelopment project, HafenCity. In Europe's biggest inner-city urban development initiative—which, over more than a decade, is transforming almost a square mile of tumble-down docks along the city's port into a buzzing shopping and residential area—a third of housing must be subsidized while another third is set aside for rentals. The project is due to be completed within the next five years, and includes new additions to Hamburg's bustling nightlife (#22). This is the town that made The Beatles, after all. Ambitious city-building continues in the 'burbs, too, with a daring car-free neighborhood being built a 15-minute train ride from the city by Danish firms Karres + Brands and Adept.



68 KUWAIT CITY

KUWAIT

POPULATION METRO 4,307,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 GDP PER CAPITA
- 4 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

The Gulf’s next emerging city gleams with startling contradictions.

In one of the hottest cities on the planet, it’s fitting that Kuwait’s most prominent landmarks include its water towers. If you’re picturing the bucket-on-stilts aesthetic of Midwestern U.S. construction, though, you’re mistaken: this glittering cluster of towers projects a modernity and efficiency that the city has become known for, especially on Instagram (#7). And with the Silk City megaproject currently under construction, the city will soon have an impressive new series of landmarks to hashtag, including what could be a record-breaking Mubarak al-Kabir tower. Kuwait has attracted the fourth-largest foreign-born population, a ranking weight that is nearly canceled out by the low level of education among the citizenry (#229). But, overall, the city’s #17-ranked Weather and opportunities for expats reflect its global attraction. Extreme inequality (#261) similarly undoes its impressive global GDP per Capita (#3) and Unemployment (#9) rankings. Like much of its surrounding region, Kuwait suffered greatly from the COVID-19 pandemic and its financial crisis is only being compounded by a glut of cheap oil globally.



69 WARSAW

POLAND

POPULATION METRO 1,965,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
- 25 CONVENTION CENTER

Poland’s capital city is an economic and entrepreneurial hotbed with plenty of reasons to leave work early.

It’s been decades since Warsaw shook off its dreary Cold War cloak, and while other members of the EU have suffered financial woes in recent years, Poland has flourished, slowly but surely becoming an economic powerhouse in the region formerly known as “behind the Iron Curtain.” With the addition of high-profile architectural projects—including the upcoming rebuild of the Sasaki Palace, an iconic 17th-century building destroyed by the Nazis in World War II—plus new museums and a couple of Michelin-starred restaurants under its belt, the Polish capital is finally coming into its own as a tourist destination. It’s also an affordable one at that, where real estate and travel often costs half of what it does in most Western European capitals. But whereas the city was incredibly safe two years ago, that ranking plunged by a horrifying 76 spots in the past year, from #21 to #97. Hopefully, the Top 5 most-educated citizens on the planet can think of ways to fix this crisis. Ranking in the Top 25 for Attractions globally, and with visitors poised to arrive post-pandemic in record numbers, Warsaw’s time as a coveted European capital is now.



70 ATHENS

GREECE

POPULATION METRO 3,417,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 26 SHOPPING
- 27 NIGHTLIFE

As the 2,500-year-old cradle of Western civilization, Athens understands resilience.

The ancient capital has had a difficult decade, but it has come back stronger, just like always. Helping its cause this time around was a populace eager to be double-vaccinated, hitting 50% by early summer 2021. The city—and country—were one of the first global destinations to start welcoming vaccinated travelers, and officials are enforcing a simple yet stringent testing protocol to keep infections under control.

After a decade of financial crisis-induced austerity, cutbacks and sacrifice, the city’s heritage itself was rarely compromised. As such, the sustained investment is now blooming as jobs trickle back and tourists return. What those tourists find is the Grand Promenade, a 2.5-mile-long, car-free and tree-lined walkway running along the foot of the Acropolis and connecting the city’s major archaeological sites.

Greece’s newest museum, the Olympic Museum of Athens, opened to the public in May 2021 in the northern Athenian suburb of Maroussi, inviting visitors through the long and glorious history of the Olympic Games in the city. Athens’ #36 ranking for Museums will improve soon enough.



71 PERTH

AUSTRALIA

POPULATION METRO 2,005,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION
- 37 UNIVERSITY

A beautiful and wealthy city of more than two million awaits on a far-flung coast of Australia.

This year couldn't have started worse for Australia's fourth-largest city. Just days after residents were ordered into lockdown due to the pandemic, some had to flee their homes as wildfires encroached, eventually burning 20,000 acres and dozens of properties. Perth has always been an ancestral home for Australia's first peoples. At places like Six Seasons Gallery, you can see some 3,000 Indigenous works of art from across Australia, each offering insights into Aboriginal life and culture. The Noongar experience is woven throughout the 60,000-person Perth Stadium, in art installations, trails, interpretative storyboards and digital storytelling—an enriching foil for the cricket and football played there. Perth ranks #14 for People, up 13 spots year over year, including #9 for Foreign-Born Population. The big global draw is the coveted University of Western Australia, which reached 37th best on the planet in this year's ranking. Perthites of every provenance are avid outdoors people, and the city's #78 ranking for Parks & Outdoors—up 10 spots from last year—will improve as more people discover the city's investment in making all of that natural bounty accessible, including the 50 miles of beachfront on Perth's coastline.



72 HELSINKI

FINLAND

POPULATION METRO 1,200,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 INCOME EQUALITY
- 13 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Irreverence and saunas are the thing in Northern Europe's emerging hot spot.

Few nations have managed the pandemic better than the country named the world's happiest while still in its grip... and for the fourth year in a row. And if a country is the happiest in the world, one can discern that so is its capital city.

As of late August 2021, Finland had fewer than 1,000 COVID-19-related deaths, among the least per capita. When the rest of the world was coming to grips with the pandemic, Helsinki's local government immediately took action—supporting local businesses, holding virtual info sessions and generally having everyone's back, so long as they had each others'. The city was among the first in the world to recognize the safety of al fresco dining, and public funds were used to purpose-build massive outdoor seating areas as communal infrastructure for local restaurants (while providing local jobs in doing so).

It's the kind of sensible urban cohesion you'd expect from a city that boasts the 13th-most educated citizenry on the planet and its 16th-safest streets, and where the workforce enjoys a Top 10 ranking for Income Equality (#9). So it won't be a surprise when the city re-emerges with robust infrastructure projects either completed or in the works.



73 MINNEAPOLIS

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 3,574,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 15 GLOBAL 500
- 21 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Culture, affordability and post-pandemic prosperity beckon.

Minneapolis has become a household name as the site of the George Floyd murder at the hands of local police officers, an event that sparked a global movement against systemic racism and police violence. In addition to their vital role in a fight for justice, residents have long advocated for their city, the results of which can be seen in numerous parks, bike trails and placemaking along a prime location on the mighty Mississippi. With 18 Fortune 500 companies—the most per capita of any American metro area—Minneapolis scores an impressive #15 in our Global 500 subcategory. The highly educated workforce (ranked #21 globally) enjoys easy access to the rest of the world via the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport (#47 for Airport Connectivity). With a #61 ranking in our Culture subcategory, the city's heart still belongs to beloved hometown recording artist Prince, whose suburban home and studio, Paisley Park, opened as a museum in 2016. The city is facing a long way back from a trying 18 months, with its ranking for Safety plunging by 44 spots year over year, all the way down to #156 globally.



74 OSLO

POLAND

POPULATION METRO 1,279,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 SAFETY
- 13 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Smart, practical and increasingly keen to share its idiosyncrasies with the world, Oslo is an economic powerhouse with swagger (as much as Norwegians swagger).

No longer playing second fiddle to Stockholm and Copenhagen, Oslo is proving itself a worthy destination all its own. Its middling Museum ranking will improve with the opening of Munch, a waterfront museum dedicated to Edvard Munch, Expressionist painter of *The Scream*. Above the city, Rose Castle hosts a new permanent installation of paintings and sculptures that tell the story of the invasion and resilience of Norway during World War II. The nascent culinary scene has been recently energized with Michelin-worthy restaurants, and will be again with the arrival of some Mexican spice, courtesy of *La Mayor*, which taps the local seafood bounty. The very Norwegian *ZZ Pizza* has recently started serving pizza pies out of a converted car wash. The holder of our #23 spot in the People category, Oslo has some of the planet's most educated residents (#13 for Educational Attainment). Oslo's high Income Equality ranking (#16) and access to education means that status symbols like the Teslas quietly prowling its streets are not just playthings for a rich few. In fact, thanks in part to generous subsidies and breaks on Oslo's downtown congestion pricing, the luxury electric vehicle brand is seemingly everywhere.

75 SHANGHAI

CHINA

POPULATION METRO 22,118,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 CONVENTION CENTE
- 7 RESTAURANTS

One of the world's largest cities (proper) is surprisingly navigable, inviting and ready to blow your mind.

This powerhouse of finance, international trade, culture, science and technology ranks #7 for the number of Global 500 companies headquartered here, up three points from last year amidst a pandemic. The city is lauded for its blend of past and present, industry and leisure. It ranks #21 for Shopping (up 14 spots from last year), #7 for Restaurants and #36 for Sights & Landmarks. This eminently walkable city—shocking to consider given the fact that more than 22 million people live here—is remarkably safe (#26 globally), a stat which, again, needs to be appreciated given the volume of humanity coexisting here. Shanghai's personality is split by the Huangpu River: Pudong (east bank) is the financial district, fringed with towers that include the landmark spike of the retro-futuristic Oriental Pearl. Puxi (west bank) is home to the Bund, lined with the neo-Renaissance edifices that were home to Western businesses in the 1930s, and to the wonderfully layered French Concession. A national push by the Chinese government means this megapolis will soon bloom with green spaces like Suzhou Creek, a former open sewer that today is a 26-mile waterway flanked by hundreds of trees and many more families.

76 PHOENIX

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 4,762,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 12 WEATHER
- 44 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY

Latin soul, daring architecture and a reverence for the outdoors blends a heady mix in the desert.

A thriving desert metropolis, Phoenix offers some of the best Mexican food this side of the border, a growing roster of fine museums, a vibrant artist community and 300 days of sunshine—with the #12-ranked Weather of any city on the planet. Get a street-level view of the city's increasingly considered urban planning with a stroll through Roosevelt Row Arts District, or *RoRo*, as locals have taken to calling it. Art galleries, studios, restaurants and bars sit side by side in this walkable creative district in the downtown core—helping move the city to its #55 ranking globally in our diverse Place category, which measures a city's sights and landmarks, the quality of its nature and parks, and its safety. Despite the built environment's ascent, Phoenix is still an outdoor city, year-round, and ranks #98 globally in our Parks & Outdoors subcategory. Take a close-up look at Camelback Mountain, where summit trails are not for the faint of heart, especially in 100-degree Fahrenheit heat—though the base of the mountain also offers easier and equally beautiful trails for beginners. Phoenix has been somewhat insulated from the economic ravages of the pandemic, but it does have a long way back with an unemployment rate and income equality levels well out of our Top 100.



77 AUCKLAND

NEW ZEALAND

POPULATION METRO 1,413,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 PARKS & OUTDOORS
- 30 ATTRACTIONS

On the north island of New Zealand is a spectacular checklist of a city virtually untouched by the pandemic.

No city on the planet insulated itself better from the pandemic than Auckland. Case in point: a national shutdown in August after one—one!—Delta variant case was discovered. Controlling cases almost immediately allowed New Zealand to lift restrictions earlier, and locked-in Kiwis have been going about life as almost-usual: movies, regular school days and coffee dates. Fortunately, natural bounty rules in Auckland, as far as visitor and resident perception is concerned. The city ranks #9 globally for its Parks & Outdoors, with almost too many green spaces to count despite its diminutive size. Roam the paths leading to one of the 48 dormant volcanic cones, or cross the island on foot (just a five-hour hike). Not surprisingly, the city is becoming more cosmopolitan—a coveted hometown for risk-averse, isolationist billionaires and young talent craving proximity to outdoor adventure alike. Given the state of the world, Auckland's ascent in this category is likely, as are more sales like the \$2-million teardown with no bathroom that sold in August 2021. Fortunately, the city's original inhabitants are not going anywhere, and Auckland remains home to the largest Polynesian population of any city on earth.



78 NEW ORLEANS

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 1,268,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 18 NIGHTLIFE
- 27 PROGRAMMING

Few cities work as hard as the Big Easy to get back up.

In the face of poverty and injustice—and environmental catastrophes (Hurricane Ida being the latest) compounded by both—NOLA has created a culture of presence, music and festivals that may pale in size to others in the world, but never in intensity. It's why the city ranks #27 globally for Programming, our category spanning shopping, dining and after-hours vibrancy. Given the need to celebrate, seize the day and revel in all that fusion of humanity and culture and sweaty new people and ideas, the city ranks #18 in our Nightlife subcategory. After all, the party only begins in the French Quarter. It grows more refined and local as it weaves into Marigny, Bywater or the timeless jazz seduction of Frenchmen Street. New Orleans also shines in our Shopping subcategory, ranking #23 and ahead of cities like Berlin and San Francisco, helped by the intoxicating treasures of Magazine Street convincing visitors that their finds are only available here and now. And they often are. In the last few years, the city has been renovating and expediting projects languishing since the Hurricane Katrina rebuild. Having been gutted by one of the highest COVID-19 infection rates among American cities, New Orleans is once again getting up off the mat.



79 JERUSALEM

ISRAEL

POPULATION METRO 1,584,00

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 SAFETY
- 34 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

Holy and storied, Jerusalem is rediscovering itself as an entrepreneurial hot spot.

It's taken the ancient city six years in our World's Best Cities rankings to break into the Top 100. But Jerusalem has done so with gusto, powered by its rapid improvements in Safety (#2 globally) and its improving Unemployment Rate. A vibrant scene has emerged, with new global arrivals coming into the Holy City less for religion and more for entrepreneurship and talent networks (there are more than 500 start-ups in the city). Of course, that access—from the ability to get mortgages to the ability to get a good job—is heavily favored to Jewish over Palestinian citizens. In fact, the city's #34 ranking in our Foreign-Born Population subcategory has everything to do with the ability for anyone of Jewish ancestry to be able to obtain Israeli citizenship. This city that ranks #7 in our expansive Place category is naturally an alluring home base. But this year hasn't been easy. The city sparked the horrific May 2021 escalation of new conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians as a result of the eviction of six Palestinian families from a neighborhood in East Jerusalem in favor of Jewish settlers. Meanwhile, waning vaccinations are spiking infections in a place that did all the right things early in the pandemic.



80 MUSCAT OMAN

POPULATION METRO 1,272,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 WEATHER
- 15 PROSPERITY

Oman’s ancient and oil-rich urban heart shares the wealth.

Muscat’s second year in a row in the Top 100 comes with ambitious plans to share this alluring city with the world post-pandemic. Visitors from 103 countries no longer need a visa to visit Oman for two weeks, making the country more accessible for short visits—including for Americans and Europeans. A new public bus route between Dubai and Muscat runs three times daily with stops at Dubai’s metro stations and international airport.

And Muscat is certainly worth the trip. The #3-ranked city for Weather and its relative Safety (#38 globally) attract a diverse population (ranking #6 for Foreign-Born Population) eager to tap its wealth and its ambition to build a meaningful capital. With a #7 spot in global GDP per Capita, Muscat has the talent and the means to chart its own path. The city on the Gulf of Oman shines with the white of its buildings—so painted to reflect the hot midday sun, with summer temperatures frequently rising above 104°F—and is referred to in writings by Ptolemy and Pliny the Elder, dating it back millennia. The oil-rich city saw the writing on the wall in the late 1990s and began diversifying its economy. The Arab Spring convinced leaders that a broader distribution of wealth would be prudent. Today, Muscat ranks #14 for Income Equality.



81 NASHVILLE UNITED STATES

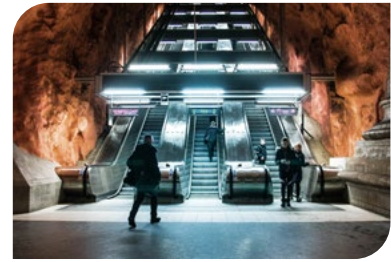
POPULATION METRO 1,872,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 34 UNIVERSITY
- 39 CULTURE

Music City lets you worship your idols, and toast them frequently.

Nashville and its citizens have always taken care to invest their money wisely, including for the preservation of historic buildings and to revitalize neighborhoods like Germantown, which was established in the 1850s by European immigrants. Such focus on placemaking and tactical urbanism will put the city on the map globally in future years. Until then, the music scene thrives here, particularly as a younger generation of musicians—Jack White and the Black Keys come to mind—has chosen to live and set up recording studios in town. With a #59 ranking for Programming (its highest in our main categories), the city is finally getting the recognition it deserves for its long but subtle influence on the American fabric. Should you need a respite from the global #39-ranked Culture and #53-ranked Nightlife, Nashville also offers a sprawling park system with more than 12,000 acres to explore by bike (B-Cycle rental stations are located at greenway trailheads), or by kayak and canoe on the Harpeth River. With a #34-ranked university (Vanderbilt), #43 ranking for Global 500 companies in town and its high COVID-19 infection rates in the rearview, Nashville is poised to return to its pre-pandemic upward trajectory. And fast.



82 STOCKHOLM SWEDEN

POPULATION METRO 1,584,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 16 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
- 26 CONVENTION CENTER

An ambitious tech scene and transit investment attempt to balance a spike in unemployment.

Very few Scandinavian cities are as dynamic as Stockholm, with its mix of rustic, traditional and New Nordic cuisine, its idyllic parks and outdoor swimming areas, quaint cobblestone streets lined with buildings erected in the 1700s, cutting-edge design and mid-century modern aesthetics. Throw in a varied, multicultural population that speaks near flawless English (Stockholm ranks #44 in our People category with a #16 ranking for Educational Attainment) and epic summer season with near-constant daylight, and you’ve got yourself one very attractive hometown. This truly international city underwent an IT boom in the late 1990s, which was followed a decade later by a second wave with the launch of global hits like Skype, Spotify and Minecraft—earning Stockholm the moniker “The Unicorn Factory” for its record of launching more billion-dollar start-ups than any city outside of Silicon Valley. A wander through the swanky, recently gentrified Södermalm neighborhood, the birthplace of many of these tech giants, will reveal why the city ranks #48 in our GDP per Capita subcategory. Despite all this, the city tumbled 23 spots in this year’s ranking due to its 52-spot drop in our Unemployment Rate subcategory.



83 SANTIAGO CHILE

POPULATION METRO 7,026,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 15 GOOGLE SEARCH
- 23 PLACE

The Andean capital is sowing its seeds of equity and democracy.

These are exciting times in the Chilean capital. In May 2021, the people of Chile cast a historic vote, selecting representatives who will draft a new constitution for the Andean nation to replace the one written 41 years earlier under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. In doing so, the country—led by its capital—booted career politicians in favor of progressive new leaders tasked with delivering a more egalitarian society long sought by citizens and increasingly reflected in Santiago. Before the political protests and historic change, Chile’s capital had flown under the radar. This, after all, is the city’s first appearance in the Top 100. The valley metropolis of seven million is home to an urban bounty, boasting rankings of #52 for Museums, Restaurants (#57 and up two spots) and Shopping (#54 and up 11). Even the once-understated nightlife in the city is up five spots to #93.

The city is also attracting post-pandemic digital nomads who love Santiago’s commitment to transit and easy access to mountain biking, hiking and even skiing and snowboarding. To say nothing of the winery day trips. The city ranks an impressive #23 globally for its Parks & Outdoors. Also compelling? Santiago’s embrace of start-ups both local and international.



84 OTTAWA CANADA

POPULATION METRO 1,048,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 21 PEOPLE
- 61 ATTRACTIONS

The cosmopolitan capital of Canada has a reputation for brainpower that’s attracting the world.

Canada’s capital—“the city that fun forgot” to Canadians—has forever lived in the shadow of its exciting big-city sisters, Toronto and Montreal. But a national 150th birthday in 2017 brought attention to the citizens (ranking #21 in People) of a city where one in four is an immigrant (Ottawa ranks #43 in the world for Foreign-Born Population). Ottawans are uncommonly intelligent: the city ranks #11 in Educational Attainment, and the highest-ranking of its four universities, Carleton, places #78 globally, an improvement of four spots since last year. All that brainpower has poured into some 1,750 knowledge-based businesses—everything from clean technology and life sciences to digital media, aerospace and software. About 68,000 new jobs are the result—along with an 80th-place ranking in global GDP per Capita. In a city with a relatively low cost of living (although house prices are ascending as insanely as anywhere else in Canada), that means there’s money to spend on its plentiful things to do (with a #61 ranking in Attractions) and underrated good times. But the city’s spike in unemployment (leading to a drop of 81 spots since last year), did sink its overall ranking by 17 this year.



85 BALTIMORE UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,797,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 UNIVERSITY
- 28 GDP PER CAPITA

Baltimore is far more than what you know about it from television. And that’s a very good thing.

Less than an hour’s commute from Washington, D.C., Baltimore offers a slower pace of life and significantly cheaper housing than its hyper-charged neighbor to the south. But the time to buy into one of Baltimore’s diverse, historic communities may just be right now—home prices in the city reached a 10-year record high in July 2020. Baltimore is also home to world-class institutions like Johns Hopkins University (ranked #6 globally) and the National Aquarium, as well as a quirky culture that makes Charm City a place like no other. Johns Hopkins is Baltimore’s largest employer, and while the city may be lacking in Global 500 companies (ranking #97 in that subcategory), Maryland boasts a \$35-billion aerospace industry, and the defense contractor Northrop Grumman is one of the top five employers of Baltimore residents. The city ranks an impressive #39 for Educational Attainment. It also earns a #72 ranking for Museums, and many—from historic ships to the highly acclaimed Port Discovery Children’s Museum—are clustered around the Inner Harbor, which for 50 years has served as a nationwide model for the reuse of post-industrial waterfront.



86 EDMONTON

CANADA

POPULATION METRO 1,172,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 29 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION
- 40 GDP PER CAPITA

Northern exposure, at long last.

The environment for a molecular evolution from chilly productive resource town into a curated hotbed sufficiently isolated to do its own thing has been here for years. The University of Alberta (ranked #58 globally), healthy immigration and the government dollars that come with being a provincial capital have already created a place known as “The City of Festivals.” From Fringe theater to street performers to an increasingly important international film festival, there are more than 50 large, city-sanctioned events every year—pandemic years excepted. A recent downtown revival has now catapulted the city into the “urban renewal” conversation that has been happening in other North American industrial regions. The catalyst has been the new Rogers Place arena downtown, occupied by the National Hockey League’s Edmonton Oilers. But it’s not all good news. The fossil-fuel-based economy was already in a tough position before the pandemic and has only descended since, making Alberta among Canada’s economically hardest hit provinces in 2021. But the city is still a beacon of opportunity, boasting the 40th-best GDP per Capita in the world, 39th-best Income Equality and, increasingly vital in a runaway Canadian real estate market, affordable homes relative to local incomes.



87 LYON

FRANCE

POPULATION METRO 1,448,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 23 INCOME EQUALITY
- 38 CONVENTION CENTER

Delicious and daring, Lyon is an ancient river city with big plans.

Lyon is a city to be savored nose to tail, past to future, literally and figuratively. If the city’s middling Attractions (#80—up by seven spots this year) and Museums (#125) rankings rise with the plentiful planned investment, that’s just icing on the gâteau. Besides being a UNESCO World Heritage site, the home of chef Paul Bocuse is also renowned for its cuisine, and its #109 Restaurant ranking will ascend in the future as visitors catch fragrant wind of it and pandemic lockdowns subside. Don’t miss La Confluence, a 370-acre urban redevelopment that not only brings together Lyon’s two fabled rivers—the Rhône and the Saône—but also gives new life to an industrial urban wasteland. Most notable in the new development’s crown is the Musée des Confluences, an architectural enigma glittering at the very point where the rivers meet, with an outstretched park disappearing into the flows. Lyon also takes care of its people, scoring an impressive #23 globally for Income Equality. But it’s also a business city, finishing #38 in our Convention Center subcategory. The city has work to do for post-pandemic recovery and global competitiveness: it’s down 13 spots overall, weighed by its 56-spot drop in its Unemployment Rate (#169) and the fact that Université de Lyon no longer has a global ranking.



88 MARSEILLE

FRANCE

POPULATION METRO 1,400,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 37 INCOME EQUALITY
- 57 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

The oldest city in France sparkles with an average of 300 days of sunshine annually and plenty of delights.

Leading up to its designation as Europe’s Capital of Culture, Marseille spent billions cleaning up and modernizing as it attempted to shed its seedy reputation. With a #131 ranking for Safety, it’s not certain that it has truly moved on (although it is a 30-spot improvement over last year), but a swath of new buildings on the waterfront is a sign that it is trying regardless. Don’t miss Vieux Port, designed by Norman Foster, who turned a site that’s been here for 26 centuries into a mesmerizing pedestrian-only zone with a buzzing sense of place. The showstopper is at Quai des Belges, where a dramatic blade of reflective stainless steel creates a dreamy canopy and shelter from the sun, which shines almost year-round (Marseille ranks #79 for Weather). Nearby is the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations with its fishnet-inspired design, linked by a pedestrian bridge to the 17th-century Fort Saint Jean—a perfect example of the ancient and new coming together. The city’s residents are looked after as well: Marseille ranks #37 for Income Equality globally. It’s also increasingly diverse, ranking #57 in our Foreign-Born Population subcategory.



89 ADELAIDE

AUSTRALIA

POPULATION METRO 1,215,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION
- 35 UNIVERSITY

Alive with the energy of a diverse population and a dynamic music scene, Adelaide (literally) sings.

The southern coastal city earns a respectable ranking of #90 for its Parks & Outdoors, an improvement of 10 spots over last year. But where Adelaide shines is in the People category: it's an astounding #8 in the world for Foreign-Born Population and #35 in our University subcategory. That's generally a recipe for an emerging cultural scene—indeed, Adelaide is where to find the country's best Aboriginal art, and it's the only designated UNESCO City of Music in Australia. Some 300 live gigs a week can be savored in this city—or could, before the pandemic hit, largely sparing the city in terms of case numbers, but inflicting economic and cultural hardship as the region stamped out its cases. Did we mention the pandas? Wang Wang and Funi, which have been at the city's zoo for a decade, will continue to attract visitors, and hopefully to breed, until at least 2024, thanks to a new deal reached with China in late 2019. The city did slip by 14 spots this year compared to last, due to a plunge in the city's Educational Attainment ranking and higher unemployment related to the pandemic.



90 GOTHENBURG

SWEDEN

POPULATION METRO 1,022,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 15 INCOME EQUALITY
- 30 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

A 400-year-old industrial port town on Sweden's scenic west coast has smartened up for a sustainable future.

Among various ways that Gothenburg will mark four centuries, Sweden's second-largest city is, for the first time in the history of our rankings, in the Top 100. There are dozens of celebrations planned for its 400th anniversary, each highlighting this under-the-radar European second city that has always done things its own way.

Take the media attention around the city's Gothenburg Film Festival, fully virtual in 2021 but with the extra irreverent twist of inviting one cinema fan to spend seven days on an isolated lighthouse island, with only festival movies and the northern sea for companionship. Back in town, the main installation from the city museum, Gothenburg Stories, showcases interviews with 100 locals about city life.

One of Europe's most sustainable cities—named the European Capital of Smart Tourism by the European Commission three years in a row—is also building sustainable infrastructure like the expansion of Jubileumsparken (Centenary Park). The new Hisingsbron vertical-lift bridge, which can rise to accommodate river traffic, allows residents to bike and walk safely over the Göta River.



91 BILBAO

SPAIN

POPULATION METRO 1,042,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 SAFETY
- 50 GLOBAL 500

Northern Spain's capital city is quietly building a livable hometown for the design-minded.

Bilbao, in the heart of Basque Country in northern Spain, is approaching 25 years since the 1997 opening of the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Frank Gehry-designed titanium-clad museum that made the city, and its architect, global icons.

The city, one of the smallest by population in our Top 100 ranking and appearing for the first time here, is, under cover of its own obscurity and isolation, creating its own livability. Sure, the Guggenheim's destination architecture still draws hundreds of thousands annually, but as one of the safest cities on the planet (ranked #5), the city is building new green spaces and sustainably minded housing—with daring architecture inspired not just by Gehry but also, more recently, by English architect Norman Foster, who designed the distinct shrimp-like metro stops.

The design-minded city is also emerging as a stealthy, affordable business headquarters, ranking #43 for number of Global 500 companies located in town and #51 for Income Equality. The world definitely has this small urban dynamo on its radar—for starters, it's hosting the launch of the Tour de France cycling race in 2023.



92 MEXICO CITY

MEXICO

POPULATION METRO 21,505,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 15 MUSEUMS
- 15 FACEBOOK CHECK-INS

Latin America’s megalopolis has multitudes that can take a lifetime to unravel.

The largest city in North America is also one of its longest continually occupied urban centers. Founded as Tenochtitlan by the Aztecs in 1325—260 years before the Spanish invasion—Mexico City’s layers of struggle, beauty and triumph have been immortalized by its citizens like in few other places on the continent. In recent years, CDMX has been cleaning up its act, with safer streets and revamped public spaces, new designer hotels and exciting cultural offerings. And, of course, there’s the culinary scene, arguably one of the most intriguing and deeply complex on the planet, ranking #43 globally (up four spots over last year). Is it any wonder that Mexico City—known locally as D.F., or distrito federal—is holding on to its spot on our Top 100 list? In this cosmopolitan jungle of more than 20 million inhabitants, there’s plenty to see and do, from the Casa Luis Barragán, a UNESCO World Heritage site and social media eye candy (the city is #15 for Facebook Check-ins) to strolling the stylish neighborhoods of Roma and Condesa, which drip with greenery and explode with color in their century-old mansions. The city lands at #48 for Sights & Landmarks and #15 for Museums.



93 SALT LAKE CITY

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 1,201,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 18 GDP PER CAPITA
- 32 UNEMPLOYMENT

The Great Outdoors is calling, and Salt Lake is doing its best to keep you in town.

Combining spectacular natural and built environments, Salt Lake City is no longer just a gateway to the great outdoors—it’s also a welcoming destination with a high cool quotient. The transformation began with the arrival of the XIX Olympic Winter Games in 2002, as the city thawed its reputation as an über-conservative cowboy town with Mormon family values and instead presented a slew of quaint cafés and stylish restaurants. SLC continues to pour millions into development projects and the beautification of its downtown, and the city has matured into an urban experience as much as an outdoor one. Of course, the proximity of the Wasatch Range’s stunning canyons and 11,000-foot peaks is the reason many adrenaline junkies travel and move here. And they work as hard as they play: Salt Lake ranks #39 in our overall Prosperity category, led by its relative resilience to the pandemic’s economic devastation. The city is Top 20 in our GDP per Capita subcategory (#18), and its citizenry brings the smarts as much as the snowboards, ranking #59 globally for Educational Attainment. The University of Utah ensures the brainpower keeps flowing, with its #61 ranking globally in our University subcategory.



94 MUMBAI

INDIA

POPULATION METRO 22,186,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 FACEBOOK CHECK-INS
- 13 RESTAURANTS

Dozens of cities are described as contradictions. Mumbai is unequivocally worthy of the cliché.

Mumbai’s juxtapositions are often as overwhelming as the things to do here for newcomers. How can the icon of commercialism and cinema and Bollywood—as well as the home of the planet’s 24th-highest number of Global 500 companies—also house one of the world’s biggest slums? Before you spin too quickly, it’s best to first eat something in a city ranked #13 for its restaurants. The Taj Mahal Palace hotel, the extravagance of the Chhatrapati Shivaji train station and the Gateway of India arch are all global cultural touchstones that contribute to the city’s #49 and #38 ranking for Attractions and Sights & Landmarks, respectively. But this is also a place with live music speakeasies straight out of New Orleans, and craft breweries that rival those in Munich.

To see the city’s future today, check out the Powai district, and the daring Chedi Mumbai hotel, with 312 guestrooms and a perch over Powai Lake and the city’s skyline. Mumbai, appearing for the first time in our Top 100, is already looking to a brighter future (despite the horrors of its COVID-19 infection rates spiking and dipping wildly). The expanded Navi Mumbai International Airport will increase the city’s #85 Airport ranking, and India’s first bullet train is coming online soon.



95 SACRAMENTO

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,316,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 31 UNIVERSITY
- 34 WEATHER

Green, bountiful and affluent, California’s capital is big on local stewardship.

California’s state capital is peaceful and beautiful, ranking well for its natural attributes, including epic weather (#34). Although traditionally one of the Golden State’s wealthiest cities, the pandemic has ravaged it economically. The city ranks #145 in our Unemployment Rate subcategory and #164 for Income Inequality. The City of Trees—residents claim more trees per capita here than anywhere besides Paris—isn’t a stranger to cataclysms: the Great Conflagration of 1852 burned 40 square blocks of the fledgling city, leaving what is today called Old Sacramento, with its cobbled streets, historic buildings, horse-drawn carriages and the western terminus of the Pony Express. Hokey? Maybe, but it undoubtedly contributes to the city’s rising visitor numbers—at least it did before COVID-19. Some help from Mother Nature has stewarded the city toward declaring itself America’s “Farm to Fork Capital,” surrounded by fertile farms. Sacramento’s restaurants are only happy to tap the localism. Taste it for yourself at La Cosecha in Cesar Chavez Plaza and discover why Time magazine recently declared Sacramento “America’s most diverse city.” With its highly educated citizenry, California’s capital ranks an impressive #57 in our key People category.



96 SAN ANTONIO

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,468,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 36 ATTRACTIONS
- 43 GLOBAL 500

Rich in distinctly Texan attractions, San Antonio is a place for all seasons (and reasons).

The genius of San Antonio is that, ever since 1941, it has sagely leveraged, grown and enhanced its greatest asset and attraction: the River Walk. The idyllic pedestrian promenade along the San Antonio River, extended from three to 15 miles in 2013, is a scenic urban lifeline that connects visitors to everywhere they want to be. On one end of the River Walk, there’s the five colonial missions and a UNESCO heritage site. On the other, the San Antonio Zoo—and, in between, the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Texas Golf Hall of Fame and dozens of other curiosities, eclectic stops and riverside cafés. No wonder the city ranks #36 for Attractions globally.

Increasingly, Pearl is a destination within the destination: a mixed-use space in a former brewery, it’s a beguiling blend of retail, dining, offices, a riverside amphitheater, events and a campus of the Culinary Institute of America. Around the esteemed school, a host of grads and chefs have clustered, creating a smorgasbord of choices from Italian to ‘cue to bakery to vegetarian cuisine. It may surprise you that San Antonio ranks #67 globally for its restaurants, an important subcategory that will improve with a dozen high-profile openings this year alone.



97 TUCSON

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 1,027,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 24 WEATHER
- 45 UNIVERSITY

Arizona’s second city is ascending fast, with bold city leadership and placemaking.

Fast-growing Tucson is buoyed by its sense of place, ranking #24 in our Weather and #65 in our Parks & Outdoors subcategories. The second-smallest city by population in this year’s Top 100, Tucson is poised to ascend up future global rankings after its first appearance this year, due to a torrent of new investment in all manner of green and common space. Its new Sun Link LRT is sure to improve quality of life, creating a focus on fewer cars and more walkability that’s designed to pull the sprawling population together, closer to downtown. Urban innovation that taps its outdoor bounty by increasing access to it is not a hard sell for a town where almost 25% of residents are aged between 20 and 34. You can thank the University of Arizona (ranked #45 globally in our University subcategory) for the city’s youthful bounce. The desert city is also blooming economically. House prices are rising fast as the post-pandemic migration from larger urban centers powers Tucson. New arrivals are often surprised by the town’s impressive 74th-best shopping on the planet.



98 SEVILLE

SPAIN

POPULATION METRO 1,091,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 23 WEATHER
- 34 NIGHTLIFE

Seville’s millennia along the Guadalquivir River, an ancient highway that transported goods and people from Cadiz to Cordoba, means the place understands city building.

Despite its first-time appearance in our Top 100 list, as well as being one of the smallest Top 100 cities by population, Seville—or Sevilla in its mother tongue—is as complex and multilayered as the most ornate fan wielded by local flamenco dancers. The Andalusian capital revels in its warm, sunny climate (#23), and is proudly walkable, narrow and winding, perfect for exploring by foot or bike. Moorish and Baroque architecture radiates in panoramas out from its spectacular cathedral and the Giralda bell tower. Not content with masterpieces of the past, city builders are always looking to visually delight locals and visitors. Take the 10-year-old Metropal Parasol that rises over the medieval Plaza de la Encarnación. Six massive sculpted sunshades ascend 90 feet up and shade those below from the relentless Andalusian sun. Somehow, the architecture looks like it’s always been there, probably because Berlin-based architect Jürgen Mayer H. took cues from the area’s big trees and, of course, the expansive interior of the iconic cathedral.



99 CHARLOTTE

UNITED STATES

POPULATION METRO 2,546,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 26 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY
- 35 GLOBAL 500

Affluent, easy to love for its southern charm and open for business and pleasure.

America’s Old South is up to new tricks in Charlotte, a global banking powerhouse (the second-most important in the U.S. after New York) and tied for the #35 spot in our ranking for Global 500 companies in town. Locals in the Queen City are smart, too: Charlotte ranks #54 in our Educational Attainment subcategory. The prosperity is easily accessed and distributed, powered by Charlotte’s #26 ranking for Airport Connectivity globally. People call their downtown Uptown, but the good news is that it’s all walkable. Beneath its bankerly surface, Charlotte offers unexpected attractions: the NASCAR Hall of Fame, for instance, where you can trace the sport from its moonshine-running roots to today’s multi-billion-dollar powerhouse. Glory Road is a banked ramp featuring historic cars and tracks, and racing simulators let you become a pit crew member and see the world from the driver’s point of view. A Restaurants ranking finish out of the Top 100 will improve further once the more than three dozen new eateries open in town, including Vaulted Oak Brewing, appropriately housed in a former bank.



100 NANJING

CHINA

POPULATION METRO 7,729,000

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 INCOME EQUALITY
- 26 SAFETY

China’s often-overlooked ancient capital blends millennia of traditions with a prosperous present.

The sheer human history and urban potential of China comes into sharp relief when one considers Nanjing. Larger than Dallas, the birthplace of the Ming dynasty and one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China is only now, barely, making a first appearance in our World’s Best Cities list. Strategically situated in the Yangtze River Delta 190 miles northwest of Shanghai—just over an hour by bullet train—it has served as the capital city of 10 Chinese dynasties and regimes for almost two millennia. Not surprisingly, the city boasts some of China’s most significant historical attractions, including the Ming Xiaoling Tomb, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Its #138 global ranking for Sights & Landmarks will ascend rapidly with the return of global travel and the pursuit of history in the home of China’s oldest public library. Its eponymous museum is one of China’s first. There are also many new icons, like the stunning China International Practical Exhibition of Architecture and art museum. Listen for Nanjing in future conversations about next global design capitals. The city is also incredibly prosperous, boasting the best Income Equality on the planet—this is communist China, after all—as well as a safety ranking of #26.

World's

BEST CITIES PERFORMANCE BY CATEGORY

"SOARING BRIDGE" IN ZARYADYE PARK, MOSCOW



RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	PLACE	PRODUCT	PROGRAMMING	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PROMOTION
1	London	United Kingdom	35	2	1	3	8	2
2	Paris	France	8	3	4	26	6	3
3	New York	United States	34	10	3	24	7	1
4	Moscow	Russia	2	1	5	15	25	16
5	Dubai	United Arab Emirates	1	92	44	1	37	4
6	Tokyo	Japan	17	7	2	133	4	30
7	Singapore	Singapore	33	27	23	10	12	6
8	Los Angeles	United States	26	17	20	28	43	5
9	Barcelona	Spain	5	12	8	60	141	15
10	Madrid	Spain	11	24	7	37	63	11
11	Rome	Italy	4	20	6	137	81	8
12	Doha	Qatar	48	103	228	11	1	115
13	Chicago	United States	98	8	12	52	21	13
14	Abu Dhabi	United Arab Emirates	20	116	219	1	5	61
15	San Francisco	United States	27	23	21	9	20	27
16	Amsterdam	Netherlands	47	13	15	33	13	31
17	St.Petersburg	Russia	6	11	16	16	158	73
18	Toronto	Canada	131	18	34	4	35	28
19	Sydney	Australia	38	51	39	7	59	24
20	Berlin	Germany	187	14	13	51	112	18
21	Las Vegas	United States	21	37	17	87	134	17
22	Washington	United States	123	59	67	17	11	14
23	Istanbul	Turkey	39	22	14	157	174	9
24	Vienna	Austria	30	28	35	22	76	57
25	Beijing	China	9	9	41	237	2	134

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	PLACE	PRODUCT	PROGRAMMING	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PROMOTION
26	Prague	Czech Republic	101	16	9	82	87	45
27	Milan	Italy	18	15	26	142	91	25
28	San Diego	United States	14	57	45	36	56	37
29	Hong Kong	China: Hong Kong SAR	29	42	28	163	36	12
30	Melbourne	Australia	85	60	46	8	114	35
31	Boston	United States	135	31	72	25	17	36
32	Houston	United States	147	35	54	55	14	26
33	Dublin	Ireland	32	56	30	73	18	59
34	Miami	United States	110	65	68	19	125	23
35	Zurich	Switzerland	97	44	113	12	9	127
36	Seattle	United States	164	50	43	29	16	47
37	Budapest	Hungary	40	45	29	62	117	68
38	Sao Paulo	Brazil	159	34	10	186	173	7
39	Munich	Germany	201	4	69	96	22	54
40	Bangkok	Thailand	91	53	11	180	113	21
41	Orlando	United States	125	29	48	56	107	33
42	Seoul	South Korea	106	21	19	134	30	79
43	Atlanta	United States	166	25	90	61	49	29
44	Dallas	United States	115	30	83	63	32	40
45	Frankfurt	Germany	194	5	73	93	29	97
46	Vancouver	Canada	169	70	66	6	118	70
47	Austin	United States	87	95	56	41	71	43
48	Montréal	Canada	172	49	42	32	101	65
49	Calgary	Canada	117	98	108	13	31	104
50	Delhi	India	15	40	40	213	233	10

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	PLACE	PRODUCT	PROGRAMMING	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PROMOTION
51	Lisbon	Portugal	19	54	33	105	202	63
52	Naples	Italy	3	71	22	191	190	83
53	Osaka	Japan	73	80	25	139	41	50
54	San Jose	United States	94	208	184	5	10	185
55	Riyadh	Saudi Arabia	58	94	253	49	26	67
56	Denver	United States	122	62	81	47	47	62
57	Philadelphia	United States	148	43	53	69	55	66
58	Tel Aviv	Israel	70	78	57	27	131	143
59	Copenhagen	Denmark	193	32	50	38	77	144
60	Brussels	Belgium	249	33	52	20	78	96
61	Brisbane	Australia	99	47	100	35	127	98
62	Valencia	Spain	16	52	103	89	162	82
63	Buenos Aires	Argentina	46	89	18	161	161	38
64	Taipei	China: Taiwan	178	72	32	114	24	84
65	Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	37	96	24	195	209	20
66	Portland	United States	177	106	47	53	33	75
67	Hamburg	Germany	145	69	51	101	40	53
68	Kuwait	Kuwait	71	197	248	39	23	48
69	Warsaw	Poland	200	41	75	54	84	78
70	Athens	Greece	41	58	36	129	157	87
71	Perth	Australia	107	127	187	14	99	105
72	Helsinki	Finland	146	61	104	34	48	191
73	Minneapolis	United States	168	64	109	48	27	173
74	Oslo	Norway	211	73	130	23	42	147
75	Shanghai	China	93	6	31	234	94	101

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	PLACE	PRODUCT	PROGRAMMING	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PROMOTION
76	Phoenix	United States	55	66	138	77	126	85
77	Auckland	New Zealand	89	99	84	43	136	132
78	New Orleans	United States	140	109	27	124	64	80
79	Jerusalem	Israel	7	157	118	70	185	179
80	Muscat	Oman	24	190	259	65	15	233
81	Nashville	United States	173	97	59	85	69	74
82	Stockholm	Sweden	248	38	117	44	66	93
83	Santiago	Chile	23	126	60	151	179	41
84	Ottawa	Canada	196	135	122	21	88	128
85	Baltimore	United States	181	74	110	66	58	112
86	Edmonton	Canada	180	120	161	30	51	139
87	Lyon	France	139	87	101	71	95	95
88	Marseille	France	100	90	112	67	122	109
89	Adelaide	Australia	137	129	158	18	146	167
90	Goteborg	Sweden	92	82	233	45	104	235
91	Bilbao	Spain	76	125	164	46	108	220
92	Mexico City	Mexico	77	75	55	162	175	39
93	Salt Lake City	United States	103	101	167	68	39	195
94	Mumbai	India	63	118	49	222	159	19
95	Sacramento	United States	102	128	149	57	96	160
96	San Antonio	United States	104	136	86	111	106	76
97	Tucson	United States	57	131	97	75	142	165
98	Seville	Spain	31	134	58	135	178	90
99	Charlotte	United States	167	108	133	74	60	106
100	Nanjing	China	114	63	231	237	3	259



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