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## Best Places To Live The Simple Life

By Sarah Mahoney, September & October 2009

**Rich culture, great food, low stress. Who wouldn't want to call these affordable cities home?**

### #1 Tucson, Arizona



**Vibe:** Latin culture embraces Native American spirit, cowboy grit, and Sunbelt growth

**Population:** 525,500

**Median housing price:** \$155,500

**Average commute:** 24 minutes

**Average number of sunny days:** 286 per year

**Most relaxing way to spend an afternoon:** Enjoying the cool breezes and plentiful hiking in the Santa Catalina Mountains, just north of town

**Simple fun for less than \$10:** Drinking a beer at the Hotel Congress, where famous criminal John Dillinger was nabbed back in 1934

It's hard to pin down residents on what exactly is so mesmerizing about this desert town, just an hour north of the Mexican border. Maybe it's the beautiful wilderness that rings the city, including about 1.8 million acres of the Coronado National Forest, with its 12 different mountain ranges. Or maybe it's the sweet smell of *pan dulce* that drifts from the Mexican bakeries. Or maybe it's the unique way the city's Mexican, Native American, and frontier roots have mingled to create a mosaic all its own. "This atmosphere just doesn't exist anywhere else—the people, the natural beauty, the cultural mix," says Elizabeth Rodriguez Miller, 55, who retired last year from her job as assistant city manager. "I feel lucky to live in a place where people can move so graciously from one culture to another." She and her husband, Marc, 57, also like the buzz of downtown—with its plentiful restaurants (a favorite is Casa Vicente), funky Fourth Avenue arts district, and world-renowned annual Mariachi Conference. And for simple pleasures, there's incomparable hiking and camping.

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**#2 Greenville, South Carolina**



**#3 Montpelier, Vermont**



**#4 Logan, Utah**



**#5 Ames, Iowa**

*All demographic information provided by Bert Sperling of [BestPlaces.net](http://BestPlaces.net). For black-and-white reprints of this article, call 866-888-3723.*