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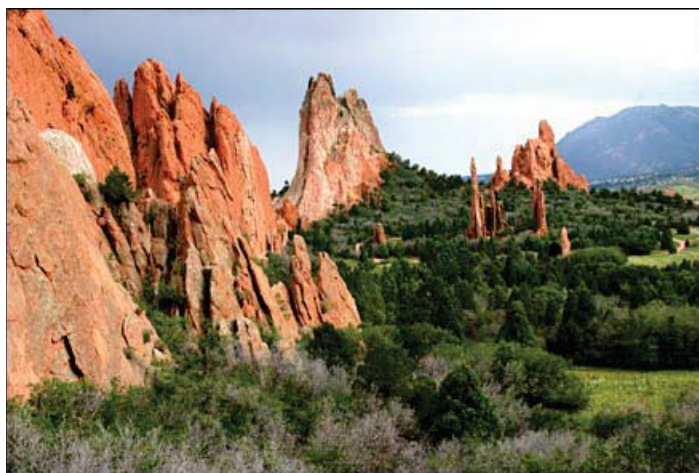
Best Towns 2009

America's Best Cities: Colorado Springs, Colorado

No. 1

By Sean Brander

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Garden of the Gods (courtesy of Garden of the Gods Visitor & Nature Center)

KEY STATS

- 617,000: Population (metro)
- \$180,000: Median home price
- A: Multisport grade
- 1,200: Number of Olympic athletes who live in town to train at the U.S. Olympic Complex

There's a reason 1.3 million people have rushed to Colorado's Front Range in the past two decades: With 249 annual days of sun, an ascendant, heavily tech-based economy, and quick access to nearly four million acres of Rocky Mountain wilderness and a dozen world-class ski resorts, it's simply a pretty awesome place to live. And while we love Denver's laid-back vibe (see right), the Springs simply outscored it this year. (Boulder wasn't large enough to qualify.) Considering that the town is base camp for both the Air Force Space Command, NORAD, and ultra-conservative advocacy groups like Focus on the Family, it may be a bit

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conservative for some. But regardless of your political bent, it scored extremely high in our education category, has the best weather of any city on our list, and, most important, blew away the competition when we compared average income to cost of living. The city is experiencing something of a cultural resurgence, too. Colorado College's ten-month-old, \$33 million performing-arts center has begun drawing national classical music and dance groups, and this year the city launched its own roots-and-blues festival, Meadowgrass. But you don't come to the Front Range for the music. You come for 14,117-foot Pikes Peak (directly above town); the Arkansas's Class IV rapids (two hours west); world-class athletic facilities (Carmichael Training Systems is based here); and 260 miles of multisport trails available within a ten-mile radius. Sure, there are a few other towns with this many outdoor options, but they generally cost twice as much—or, like Boulder, require you to shave your legs.

[Next Page: Our 10 favorite adventure burgs](#)

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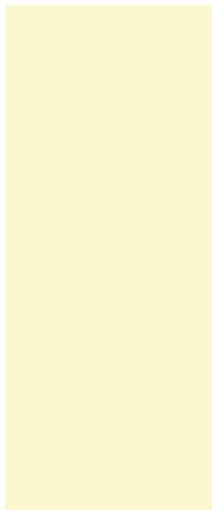
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