

The 12 Best Places to Live in 2019

Presenting America's new adventure capitals America's biggest burgs have become thriving adventure hubs, home to a new breed of outdoor athletes who paddleboard before work, bike singletrack at lunch, and hit the climbing gym before dinner. Here's where and how to join the fun.

Charleston, South Carolina



Kayaking through Four Holes Swamp, a small blackwater tributary to the Edisto River in South Carolina



The Watery Wonderland

Population: 139,906

Median Household Income: \$63,364

Park Acreage: 1,809

Stereotypical Resident: The preppy cocktail connoisseur with a year-round tan who divides time between surfing, paddleboarding, and hunting waterfowl.

What's Happening: The growth of Charleston's shipping port and investments in the auto industry have bolstered the economy of this historic southern city.

The Neighborhood: Park Circle is a planned community in North Charleston created in the early 1900s. It's boomed in recent years, with young families leaving downtown in search of a higher quality of life. Play a round of disc golf in its 30-acre park, sip a beer on the massive deck of Commonhouse Aleworks, and then head to dinner on East Montague Avenue, home to some of the city's best restaurants.

The Race: The Chucktown Showdown is an October paddleboard event on four- and nine-mile courses in Charleston Harbor.

The Hill Climb: The Ravenel Bridge rises 200 feet above the water and it's the only "hill" in the city. Run the 2.5-mile pedestrian path for views of downtown, the harbor, and the Atlantic.

The Taqueria: "Chico Feo is super laid-back and looks simple, but the tacos are really good," says Peter Melhado, who owns Charleston's Isla Surf School. Try the smoked pork taco topped with spicy kimchi.

Outside

The Shopping Spree: Half-Moon Outfitters has provided paddling gear and board shorts for more than 20 years. Watch for pint nights and the occasional live band at the West Ashley store, near downtown.

The Adventure: There's paddling in every direction, but Folly Creek, an undeveloped finger of saltwater estuary between Folly Island and Charleston proper, may be the most striking spot. "It's an incredibly wild experience full of oyster beds and dolphins," says Brittany Freeman, a reservations manager at Coastal Expeditions, which has been running paddling trips around Charleston since 1992.

The Escape: Load your kayak with beer, brats, and bug spray, and launch from the Isle of Palms Marina for a 4.5-mile paddle to Capers Island, an undeveloped barrier isle. Capers is the city's nearest legal beach-camping option. (Get a permit from the Department of Natural Resources.) Or skip the paddle and catch a ride with Barrier Island Eco Tours.

—G.A.