



TRIATHLETE'S 20 BEST PLACES TO LIVE

BY THE EDITORS

We didn't use a scientific formula to put together this list. We didn't worry whether or not certain areas of the country were adequately represented. We just put a few of the world's biggest tri geeks in a conference room and asked ourselves one question: If you were moving, and triathlon training was the main criteria dictating your decision, where should you go?



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● Honorable Mention

BEST TERRAIN

No. 1: Tucson, Ariz.

POPULATION: 545,702

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$200,000

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: *There's a reason names like T.J. Tollakson, Peter Reid, Sheila Taormina and Lance Armstrong have made the college town of Tucson a training base, and why tri camps make annual pilgrimages to the city. And it's the same reason why current pros Samantha McGlone and Leanda Cave call it home: high-quality, year-round training.*

The variety of training options on predominantly sunny, warm, rainless days is astounding. Want flatland work on the bike? Head south along Old Nogales Highway. High tempo? Madera Canyon. How about a beautiful rolling cruise in the Sonoran Desert? Try Gates Pass and ride smooth and serpentine Kinney Road. Serious hill work? Make the 19-mile ascent up Mt. Lemmon. There are simply no shortages of options for any level of cyclist.

Running options are equally rife, with many school tracks having open access, and desert trails providing great technical trail running—just keep an eye out for the local flora (cactus) and fauna (rattlesnakes, bobcats and mule deer). Tollakson's staple run is along the ephemeral Santa Cruz River Park on the city's west side.

LIVE HERE IF: *You begin to twitch when you think about another winter of riding the trainer, running on the treadmill and doing indoor swim drills while staring at a wall and waiting for your spring race.*

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: *You can't take the heat. In the summer, be sure to get your workouts done before 9 a.m., when 100-plus degree temps make you fodder for one of those postcards of a skeleton clawing his way across the desert, the caption reading, "Yeah, but it's a dry heat!"*



Bruce Griffin



David Jewell

BEST PLACE TO FIND A TRAINING GROUP

No. 2: Boulder, Colo.

POPULATION: 103,100

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$545,000

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: We know, listing Boulder ahead of our hometown of San Diego might get us stoned the next time we're biking down the Pacific Coast Highway. Perhaps Boulder's only drawback is that the town doesn't provide year-round outdoor training. From April to October, Boulder is simply the best place in the country to train—and the best place to find others to train with. With perhaps a higher concentration of multisporters than any other town in the country, there's always somebody willing to swim, bike or run with you. Also, the trails are plentiful and the climbs are epic.

LIVE HERE IF: You're a true tri geek who can't get enough of the great outdoors.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You're not cool sharing your serene hometown with 45,000 college students. Boulder is home to the University of Colorado.



Dave Sutherland, City of Boulder

BEST CLIMATE

No. 3: Carlsbad, Calif. (and the North San Diego Area)

POPULATION: 90,000

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$588,795

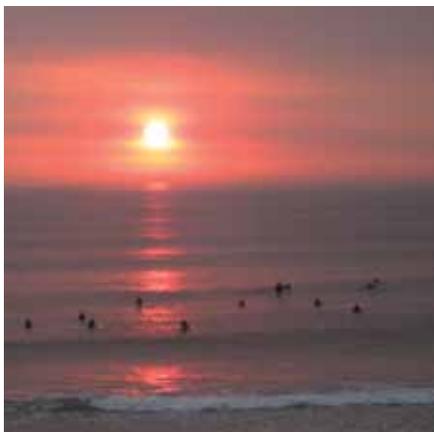
WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: San Diego gets all the credit for being a tri mecca, but the city itself is too congested for many multisporters. About 40 miles up the coast you'll find the City of Carlsbad as well as a ton of triathletes. Some of our sport's all-time greats like Michelle Jones, Paula Newby-Fraser, Scott Tinley, Heather Fuhr and Kate Major have all made San Diego's North County home for good reasons: The weather is unbeatable; the Pacific is way more exciting than a pool; and you can never run out of people to train with.

The terrain in and around Carlsbad makes it almost impossible not to add variety to your training. On the coast you'll find your flat roads, about 10 miles inland you'll find endless short-and-steep hills and about 40 miles inland you'll find punishing climbs like on Palomar Mountain.

LIVE HERE IF: You don't think 70 degrees F and sunny skies would ever get old.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF:

You only race off-road. You can find some OK running trails near Carlsbad, but most mountain bikers will be disappointed with North County's lack of legitimate riding trails.



No. 4: Austin, Texas

POPULATION: 680,900

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$258,000



ACVB Photo/Barton Wilder Custom Images

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: When a town can hold claim to Lance Armstrong, Dennis Rodman and the Whole Foods Market headquarters, you know it's worth considering. The city's local slogan is "Keep Austin Weird," so be prepared to feel like you stepped out of a spaghetti western and into a leftist sanctuary. Take a dip in Barton Springs, the largest natural swimming pool in the U.S., and then head out for a run or a ride around Lady Bird Lake, named after the former first lady. While this capital city's summers can be balmy, you'll have the last laugh in winter when you can still ride and swim outdoors while the only exercise your friends in the Midwest are getting involves a Nintendo Wii and a bag of Cheetos.

LIVE HERE IF: You want to live in Texas—but you're not a Texan.

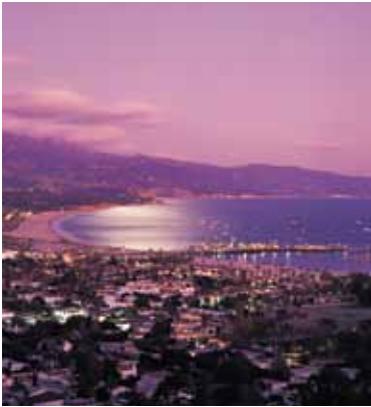
DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You don't know at least one line of a Dixie Chicks song.

Visit Carlsbad

No. 5: Santa Barbara, Calif.

POPULATION: 92,000
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$900,000

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: The American Riviera, as it's also known, should be on any list of the best places to call home. Santa Barbara's proximity to the Pacific provides a Mediterranean-like climate, while the Santa Ynez Mountains just east of the city offer some of the best climbs in Southern California. The University of California, Santa Barbara, also offers excellent facilities for swimming and weight training.



LIVE HERE IF: You're excited by the prospect of eating at a different restaurant every night for almost two years. With almost 700 restaurants in the greater Santa Barbara area, something will always sound good.



DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You hate having your runs disturbed by wayward drivers asking directions. Santa Barbara has a billion-dollar tourism industry, which means the city is always teeming with visitors.

No. 6: San Francisco

POPULATION: 824,525
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$780,102



Left: Jim Corwin, Right: Lewis Sommer

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: Typically big cities are not considered ideal places to live and train, but San Francisco is certainly proof to the contrary. Living in the vicinity of Golden Gate Park means immediate access to excellent road and trail loops for distance running, and by tacking on loops around Lake Merced, through the coastal trail along Land's End, or across the Golden Gate Bridge into the Marin headlands, one can fortify a log book with high-mileage training numbers. Biking is best done across the bridge and into Marin, and of the many popular swimming spots, local triathletes love to train in the salty, frigid waters of Aquatic Park at the west end of Fisherman's Wharf. The city has vibrant tri and running communities and, if you like food, restaurants to die for.

LIVE HERE IF: You can't imagine giving up the big city but want an outstanding place to train. Also, you don't mind staggeringly high rent.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You want nothing to do with a big city or if there's no way in hell you're going to blow \$2,000 per month on a one-bedroom, dishwasher-less apartment.

Greg Peterson

BEST QUIET ROADS

No. 7: Bend, Ore.

POPULATION: 80,995
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$289,450

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: This northwestern city might be a cyclist's paradise. Add to that the fact that Bend has six microbreweries in a town that's only 32 square miles large, and we're all wondering why the hell we don't live there. Home to the 2009 and 2010 USA Cycling Elite Road National Championships, the Cascade Cycling Classic and the 2008 and 2009 USA Winter Triathlon Championships, there's a reason Conrad "The Caveman" Stoltz and ProTeam Astana's Chris Horner call Bend home. Nestled in between the Cascade Mountains and the Deschutes River you'll find more than 300 miles of trails to play on year-round. Did we mention the beer?

LIVE HERE IF: You ride bikes so much that you've sewn chamois into all your pants.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You're an Adidas fan. Phil Knight is a seasonal resident and Nike sponsors both Oregon State and the University of Oregon.



Steve Tagatz/Northwest Crossing

BEST FACILITIES

No. 8: Clermont, Fla.

POPULATION: 23,476
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$113,700



WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: This suburb of Orlando is quickly building a reputation as one of the country's true tri meccas. With quiet roads, rolling terrain and year-round training, Clermont has plenty of upside. It's a favorite of Jarrod Shoemaker, Lisa Bentley, Sara Haskins and Nina Kraft—just not in mid-summer, when Clermont gets pummeled with rain.

To make rainy days bearable during the summer months athletes use the National Training Center, which is basically Disneyland for triathletes. The NTC is a lot like your gym, only 20 times bigger with way nicer equipment.

LIVE HERE IF: You like to train with other athletes but you don't like to stick to a schedule. Head to the NTC any time of day and you're likely to run into dozens of tri geeks.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You're turned off by air that you can actually feel. Winters in Clermont are gorgeous, but the relative humidity doesn't stray far from 100 percent in the summer.

BEST SMALL TOWN

No. 10: Park City, Utah (and the Snyderville Basin)

POPULATION: 8,000
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$1,806,250

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: The smallest town on our list has the biggest playground. Normally we'd never recommend moving to a place that has an average low temperature of 0 degrees F in February, but we'll make an exception here. That's because Park City's endless slopes serve up some of the best winter cross-training there is. Even people who hate winter won't hate it in Park City—many homes in town have ski-in/ski-out capability. And the riding isn't half bad either. The 48-mile Browns Canyon loop has long been a favorite of local riders looking to get in some hill work, and there's plenty of single track to keep the mountain bikers and trail runners happy.



LIVE HERE IF: Triathlon is your third-favorite sport—right behind snowboarding and skiing.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You can't bring yourself to train indoors during the off-season. Swimming, biking and running outside is simply not an option during Park City's snowy, cold winters.

No. 9: Alexandria, Va.

POPULATION: 138,621
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$386,000



WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: If you follow the campaign trail as much as the bike path, then this city is for you. It's located just eight miles from the nation's capital, and in the mornings you'll find dozens of Alexandrians hopping on the Mt. Vernon trail and commuting into the city via bicycle. Considering the city's largest employer is the Department of Defense, we recommend you don't cut any of them off.

Get your swim on in one of the city's six outdoor pools or head out for a run in the area's 950 acres of parks and trails.

LIVE HERE IF: The abbreviation in front of your name is Sen., Gen. or Capt.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: Discussing foreign policy on group rides makes you nauseous.

BEST BIG CLIMB

No. 11: Maui, Hawaii

POPULATION: 141,000
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$600,000

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: The Big Island hosts our sport's marquee event, but if you're looking to make Hawaii home, we suggest the state's second-biggest island. Our favorite feature of Maui is the massive (but dormant) Haleakala Volcano, which towers more than 10,000 feet over the coast. From the shore to the peak is simply the best 38-mile ride in the country—and the ride down is pretty fun too. The highlands around Haleakala also serve up some of the finest mountain biking and trail running Hawaii has to offer.

LIVE HERE IF: You can find a legitimate reason to.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You can't handle the slower pace of life on the islands. Nothing happens quickly on Maui.



Left: Lake County Tourism, Right: Richard Nowitz

Michael McRae

Nils Nilson

BEST TRAILS

No. 12: Reno, Nev. (and the Lake Tahoe Area)

POPULATION: 220,613
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$181,000

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: Reno often takes the brunt of many jokes, mostly because of Comedy Central's Reno 911 and the fact that the city used to tolerate prostitution. But Reno has undergone a huge revitalization over the past decade and is now an outdoor sports paradise. Casinos are being renovated into upscale condominiums, and it's definitely a buyer's market. When it comes time to train, Reno and nearby Lake Tahoe (it's about 40 miles to the north shore of Tahoe) offer plenty of variation. From trail running at Incline Village, Nev., to mountain biking in Kirkwood, Calif., to long rides through Reno's valley, there's more than enough to keep you occupied and fit. The 14 ski resorts surrounding Lake Tahoe makes winter pretty fun too.

LIVE HERE IF: You want that big city feel but you also want to be able to ride right out of your door.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You take issue with the gaming industry. Reno has improved leaps and bounds since the '80s, but it won't be casino-free anytime soon.



BEST PLACE TO FIND A RACE

No. 14: Wilmington, N.C.

POPULATION: 101,000
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$272,784

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: Believe it or not, North Carolina rivals Texas and California when it comes to the number of triathlons held each year. SetUp Events, the country's largest race-production company, calls North Carolina home, and that's a big benefit to triathletes from Tobacco Road. If you're looking to call the Tar Heel State home, coastal Wilmington is hard to beat. Like the rest of the state, the air is humid throughout summer, but the winds coming off the Atlantic help keep Wilmington a bit drier when the temperatures really heat up to an average high in July of 90 degrees F. Wilmington's roads are relatively quiet and well-maintained, and local drivers score above average when it comes to being kind to cyclists. An added bonus is the new Beach 2 Battleship iron-distance triathlon, which takes place in Wilmington each November.

LIVE HERE IF: You dream of an oceanfront home but the West Coast just isn't right for you.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You don't like the idea of boarding up your house from time to time. While North Carolina doesn't get hit with as many hurricanes as the Gulf Coast states, it does get hit with a major storm about once every three years.

No. 13: Madison, Wis.

POPULATION: 228,775
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$218,000



Eric Tafsen

RSCVA/VisitRenoTahoe.com

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: Wisconsin's capital city may have truly horrible winters, but the "cheeseheads" make up for it by packing more into summer than just about anyone else. "Mad-town" is a big city and a college town at the same time, which creates a fine balance of work and play. The city is built on an isthmus between two expansive lakes, which means there's always a place to swim. Madison also has some of the most challenging yet quiet roads in the Midwest just a few miles west of town.

LIVE HERE IF: You're looking for Berkeley, Calif., mixed with Chicago.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You hate being pestered to sign some progressive group's petition while you shop for groceries.

No. 15: Barrington, Ill. (and the North Chicago Area)

POPULATION: 10,000
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$528,600-\$678,800 (NORTH AND SOUTH BARRINGTON)

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: As home of the world's largest triathlon and one of the largest tri clubs, Chicago is a great place to be a triathlete. However, the city proper is only a great place to train for those who prefer staying indoors. Chicago is a huge city, and if you're looking for quiet roads, we suggest heading north to Barrington. Living in the affluent suburb near the Wisconsin state line will have you riding around gorgeous Lake Geneva in the morning and then having an overpriced steak on Michigan Avenue at night. Barrington's proximity to both country and city makes it possible to train like a pro while maintaining a real job.

LIVE HERE IF: You can't stand living in a big city but you still need one nearby.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You're not sure about your job security. Barrington is where many of Chicago's biggest money makers call home and that means everything from homes to milk is expensive.

No. 16: Bellevue, Wash.

POPULATION: 120,600
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$543,400



WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: Recently named CNNMoney.com's No. 1 city to live in and launch a business, Bellevue is the perfect location for those Type-A triathletes who want to be their own boss (and therefore train whenever they want to). The city is less than 20 miles from the hustle and bustle of Seattle and sits in between Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish, both of which offer excellent open-water swimming opportunities in the spring and summer. If you don't mind a little "Seattle-sunshine"—the city averages 37.5 inches of precipitation a year—you will enjoy year-round cycling and running routes in the city's more than 100 parks and open space areas.

LIVE HERE IF: You get turned on by flannel and khakis; Bellevue is home to Eddie Bauer's corporate headquarters.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You start to feel suicidal after more than a week without sunshine.

No. 18: Providence, R.I.

POPULATION: 176,365
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$256,500

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: Economic good times fueled a major revitalization that brought in a gorgeously redesigned waterfront, a new Performing Arts Center, upscale condominium projects and shopping centers, earning the city a new designation as "The Renaissance City." The recession has cut home prices in half, so there's never been a better time to move to Providence. The Ocean State's capital city is minutes from the ocean in several directions, and the swimming season lasts longer than you might think. The area also hosts several first-class events, including Ironman 70.3 Rhode Island.



LIVE HERE IF: You like your urban culture to come with the smell of the ocean.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You need access to quiet roads for cycling right outside your front door.

No. 17: Tempe, Ariz.

POPULATION: 169,712
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$220,000

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST:

Yes, we know it's brutally hot. But if your goal is to someday race in Kona, the heat's not so bad. Tempe's greatest advantage for its tri-minded residents is Tempe Town Lake. Ten years ago Tempe would have been left off this list, but the creation of Tempe Town Lake in 1999 has allowed the City of Tempe to build an impressive race lineup. This year the lake will host five triathlons that range from the Danskin women's-only sprint triathlon in May to Ironman Arizona in November. As a resident of Tempe, you have the option to race any distance right in your own backyard. Training in Tempe also comes with several options for triathlon clubs and group rides, as well as dozens of opportunities to hop in the lake as part of splash-n-dash events. As a bonus, the restaurants, bars and clubs along Tempe's Mill Avenue offer the perfect opportunity to let loose after a big training or racing day.



Left: Big Picture Photography; David Johanson, Right: Tempe CVB

LIVE HERE IF: Your post-training recovery tends to include happy hour.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You're the type of person who would miss winter.

No. 19: Cary, N.C.

POPULATION: 135,955
 MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$238,800

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: This suburb of Raleigh, squarely in the middle of North Carolina, is a hidden gem for endurance athletes, but it won't be hidden for long. The U.S. Census Bureau recently named the Raleigh-Cary metropolitan area as the fastest growing municipality in the country. This is great news for mega-retailer Inside Out Sports, which is headquartered in Cary. Our favorite feature of the area is William B. Umstead State Park, located just a few miles north of Cary. Surrounded on all sides by growing suburbs and sprawling cities, Umstead State Park remains an untouched escape from the real world. There are plenty of smooth roads traversing the park for road riding and endless miles of trail when you want to get off road.

LIVE HERE IF: You're looking to start a family. Cary is as safe a town as you'll find these days and the public schools will set your kids up nicely for four years in the Ivy League.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You prefer to stay inside on hot and humid summer days. Cary has rather mild winters, and it's possible to ride outdoors almost year-round, but expect July to be 90 degrees F and sticky.

Marianne Grosko

No. 20: Bloomington, Ind.

POPULATION: 183,733

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$155,400

WHY IT'S ON OUR LIST: In your ongoing quest to watch any triathlon-related movie ever made, you've likely rented, "Breaking Away," the 1979 surprise hit about cycling that won an Oscar for best original screenplay. "Breaking Away" tells the story of four blue-collar kids who have grown up in the college town of Bloomington, one of whom is a cycling nut. The movie casts Bloomington as one of the best places in the country to be a true cyclist, and based on the riding Indiana has to offer, this is fact, not fiction. And of course, thanks to the University of Indiana, Bloomington has the sports facilities all multisporters crave. Add in the college town feel and its proximity to Ironmans Wisconsin and Louisville, and you're set for great training and great road trips.

LIVE HERE IF: You not only want to revel in triathlon but also want to finish up that nagging post-grad degree.

DON'T LIVE HERE IF: You find Big Ten college towns fundamentally juvenile and annoying.



Bloomington Photo Tour

Honorable Mentions

These towns almost made our top-20 list, but each is an excellent place to train and worth consideration if you get the relocation bug.

Boise, Idaho

POPULATION: 208,219

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$248,900

Little Rock, Ark.

POPULATION: 184,055

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$134,500

Chattanooga, Tenn.

POPULATION: 168,293

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$140,000

Omaha, Neb.

POPULATION: 438,646

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$135,700

Columbia, Md.

POPULATION: 98,627

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$390,000

Plymouth, Minn.

POPULATION: 71,536

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$335,000

Coral Springs, Fla.

POPULATION: 128,930

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$212,000

State College, Pa.

POPULATION: 39,600

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$225,800

Des Moines, Iowa

POPULATION: 202,116

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$153,200

The Woodlands, Texas

POPULATION: 89,397

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$353,775

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