

## America's Prettiest Towns

As the sun casts its autumnal glow on thousands of picturesque U.S. cities and towns, it's the perfect time to recognize the proverbial winners of the country's civic-beauty contest.

Rob Baedeker



Guttenberg, Iowa

Photo: [guttenbergiowa.net](http://guttenbergiowa.net)

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Like all beauty pageants, this is a subjective one—but we've received help from several experts with keen eyes for architecture, aesthetics, and small-town charm. This year's pretty-town pickers include Salt Lake City-based architectural photographer Alan Blakely; residential designer Erin Anderson; and painter John Vander Stelt.

We left the definition of “pretty” up to the judges themselves.

**[In Pictures: See the full list of America's Prettiest Towns](#)**

### **Sedona, Ariz.**

"Inspiring vistas abound" says Vander Stelt of this high-desert northern Arizona town that is surrounded by stunning red-sandstone formations. Anderson puts it on her list, too, for its spirituality, artistry, and "architecture reflective of the desert surroundings." Sedona is home to numerous arts festivals, galleries and spas and a host of outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **Savannah, Ga.**

Called the "Hostess City of the South," Savannah was founded in 1733 and served as Georgia's colonial capital. Civil War Union General Sherman spared the city during his notorious march to the sea, and its antebellum character is still intact. Greg Ward, co-author of *The Rough Guide USA*, counts Savannah's "superb garden squares, dripping with Spanish moss, and its cobbled riverport" among the features that make it "the loveliest colonial town in the U.S."

### **Monterey, Calif.**

"Monterey is not only a beautiful coastal town known for its world-class aquarium," says Anderson, "but it has a rich California history. You can spend time wandering along Cannery Row (made famous by John Steinbeck) and visit the shops and restaurants, which pay tribute to the old sardine canneries, or make your way down to the waterfront and admire the bay, a natural marine sanctuary."

### **Lake Placid, N.Y.**

*101 Best Outdoor Towns* co-authors Sarah Tuff Dunn and Melville both put the upstate New York town of Lake Placid on their (independently compiled) lists. Dunn says its "classic Main Street, pine-speckled hills and pristine small lakes" appeal to her, while Melville describes Lake Placid as "the closest you can get to living out West when you're in the East. It's got the jagged mountain backdrop surrounding an unpretentious ski village bordered by two crystal lakes."

### **Lanesboro, Minn.**

Painter John Vander Stelt says, "Understated and self-assured, this Southeast Minnesota burg is a busy stop along the 60-mile-long Root River bike trail. The limestone bluffs, unpretentious shops and river bottoms offer visual delights."

### **Guttenberg, Iowa**

"It's like a page ripped out of a Mark Twain novel where the Main Street storefronts face the mighty Mississippi," says Vander Stelt. "The local city park hugs the shoreline and is reminiscent

of Seurat's painting 'A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte.' This quaint village is a laidback slice of Americana."

### **Burlington, Vt.**

"Burlington has it all," says Sarah Tuff Dunn, co-author of 101 Best Outdoor Towns. Dunn says the town's charms include "a brick pedestrian marketplace, Vermont's iconic white steeples and rolling hills that spill down toward a lively, green waterfront on Lake Champlain."